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THURSDAY, 20 AUGUST 2009

The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

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

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Daniel Knuth

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have invited into the Speaker's Gallery today young Daniel Knuth who is 12 years old. He attends the Richmond Hill State School at Charters Towers. He is sitting up there in the wrong place—

Honourable member: Like his father.

Mr SPEAKER: No, he is probably in the right place. Over the last six weeks, this young lad has undergone two major operations on his legs. I ran into him in the lift the other night and he said that he was undergoing an operation on his finger this week to get it straightened. He was as brave as all get-out. I said, 'For that sort of bravery, you can be my special guest today.' So that is why he is here.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Mr SPEAKER: He is not going to take incident reports on any member either.

PRIVILEGE

Comments by the Minister for Public Works and Information and Communication Technology

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—LNP) (9.32 am): I rise on a matter of privilege in relation to comments the Minister for Public Works and Information and Communication Technology made in this House yesterday that were directed at me. The minister's comments—'She's not cut out for a life in here, or a life full stop'—go beyond the bounds of unparliamentary language and robust banter. This statement from a minister of the Crown amounts to a threat against my physical wellbeing.

I find these comments grossly offensive on two fronts. Firstly, the minister implies that I as a woman am unable to serve in the Queensland parliament if I dare to ask that comments I find offensive be withdrawn. No person in any workplace should be expected to tolerate insulting or offensive language such as this targeted at them. Secondly, the latter part of the comment appears to suggest that Minister Schwarten is making a threat against my life.

Ms SPENCE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I think the member is debating the point. I have had a look at the debate in the *Hansard* from yesterday and I participated in that debate. All I can say is that the member for Currumbin does women no great service by acting so sensitively on an issue such as this.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will ask the member for Currumbin to quickly round off her statement.

Mrs STUCKEY: I would remind the House that it is not the first time I have been subjected to such behaviour—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I want you to round off your statement.

Mrs STUCKEY: I seek an unreserved apology from the minister in writing for his maliferous conduct. Further, I ask that this matter be referred to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee.

Mr SPEAKER: I will ask that the member write to me under the relevant standing order and I will consider the matter in detail.

PRIVILEGE

Speaker's Ruling, Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House by a Minister

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have ordered that a statement responding to a matter of privilege raised with me be circulated. The matter was raised by the member for Currumbin about the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning. I have read the material and I have decided not to refer the matter to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee. I seek leave to have my statement incorporated in the parliamentary record.

Leave granted.

Honourable Members,

I have examined the matters raised by the Member for Currumbin in the House on 6 August 2009, seeking to have statements to the House by the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning referred to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee and have perused the material provided. The Member subsequently wrote to me about this matter, as did the Minister.

The Member's complaints were substantially aired in the House of 6 August 2009. For the benefit of all Members, I table both the member's and the Minister's correspondence to me.

Report 81 of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee is a report which relates to a previous occasion where the Member sought the committee's adjudication of claims that a Minister had deliberately misled the House. In dismissing the Member's complaint, the committee's report stated:

There are three elements to be established when it is alleged that a member has committed the contempt of deliberately misleading the House:

- *first, the statement must, in fact, have been misleading;*
- *secondly, it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time the statement was made that it was incorrect; and*
- *thirdly, in making it, the member must have intended to mislead the House.*

I do not consider any of the necessary elements have been established in relation to any of the matters raised by the Member concerning the statements made by the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning to the House.

I have, therefore, decided not to refer the matters to the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee.

I take this opportunity to remind the Member, and all Members, that where an allegation of deliberately misleading the House is made, I will expect that the Member raising the matters will have fully taken into account the advice and provided some evidence of all the elements of the contempt contained in Report No. 81 of the Members' Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 5 August 2009, from Mrs Stuckey MP, member for Currumbin, to Mr Speaker relating to a matter of privilege [742].

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 6 August 2009, from the Hon. Hinchliffe MP, Minister for Infrastructure and Planning, relating to the matter of privilege raised by the member for Currumbin [743].

PETITION

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

Coochiemudlo Island, Police Resources

Mr Dowling, from 213 petitioners, requesting the House to provide a police presence on Coochiemudlo Island [744].

Petition received.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Cairns Indigenous Art Fair

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.35 am): Tonight I will travel to Cairns to open the inaugural Cairns Indigenous Art Fair. The Cairns Indigenous Art Fair will be a celebration of Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, dance, music and culture. This will be the first fair ever held and I am confident that it will become a very regular part of the landscape in the arts calendar. It is a new model in international art fairs, with commercial galleries exhibiting alongside Indigenous arts centres, a complementary exhibition, symposium and a rich cultural program of dance, music, demonstrations and workshops. Queensland, interstate and international art collectors will converge on our far northern city, with the works of more than 150 Indigenous artists on display and up for sale over the next three days.

I believe this will be a very strong first outing for this new event. It will reveal the remarkable Indigenous artists emerging across the state to a new audience of collectors, art lovers, visitors, Far North Queensland residents and, importantly, art buyers. The Cairns Indigenous Art Fair is the market component of the Queensland government's four-year \$10.7 million Backing Indigenous Arts program, which is dedicated to strengthening Indigenous arts from production to market in Far North Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

This fair aims to generate national and international demand for the work of Queensland Indigenous artists. It is absolutely clear that there is an untapped vein of economic opportunity and jobs for the many talented Indigenous artists of Queensland. I am pleased to report that there is a quite a buzz about this event, and it has the potential to become a signature event for Cairns as part of Festival Cairns, with important economic benefits for the region's cultural, tourism and hospitality sectors.

I want to acknowledge the good work of Arts Queensland, the Indigenous Business Development Unit and the Queensland Indigenous Arts Marketing and Export Agency in partnership with the federal government, the Cairns Regional Council and James Cook University in making this event a reality.

Schmierer, Mrs M

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.37 am): Today is a special day for one particular Queenslander. Mrs Miriam Schmierer is 110 today. She was born near Gatton and now lives at Pialba.

Mr Rickuss: A good Lockyer lady.

Ms BLIGH: I take the interjection: she is a good Lockyer lady who, as I said, was born near Gatton and now lives at Pialba. Mrs Schmierer is Queensland's oldest resident. Miriam says that God and a twice-daily cup of parsley tea are the secret to her longevity. She reminds us that life is a wonderful gift. I am sure that all members will join with me today in wishing her many happy returns. Flowers and greetings are on their way to her.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Bundaberg Community Cabinet

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.38 am): Before the House convenes again in September, our government will take government to the people with our next community cabinet. Our upcoming community cabinet in Bundaberg is set to be another success with 175 formal deputations already confirmed. This is onground proof that I and my cabinet will meet Queenslanders on their turf and on their terms on a regular basis.

This two-day community cabinet meeting will take place on 30 and 31 August. Our last community cabinet meeting in Bundaberg in February 2006 attracted 174 formal deputations, and there is still time for more to come in on this one. I am urging all Bundaberg and region residents to take advantage of the opportunity to have one-on-one contact with my ministers and senior public servants. This is a great opportunity for all to come along and meet the state's key decision makers, and director-generals will be on hand as well.

Community cabinet is about ensuring that as a government we are staying in touch with the residents of Queensland. Everyone is welcome to attend the community forum, and I look forward to spending time with the people of Bundaberg and the region talking to them about the issues that matter to them.

Climate Change

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.40 am): Climate change is the great challenge of our time. Over the course of the next few decades, governments and communities around the world will make vital decisions that will echo for centuries to come. Today my government further stamps Queensland as a national leader on climate change with a new strategy of sweeping initiatives and decisions—a strategy that will keep Queensland well positioned to successfully shift towards a lower carbon economy, and one that will show the rest of the nation how you can live and work more sustainably and reduce your footprint while protecting and growing jobs.

Last week's decision by federal coalition MPs to vote down the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme legislation in Canberra was a setback but only a setback. It remains inevitable that Australia will move to a regime that puts a price on carbon pollution. It will be one of the most significant economic reforms that this country has seen. Industrialisation powered by the burning of fossil fuels has shaped the societies of today and underpinned our material wellbeing and prosperity.

Australia's economic progress, like that of other industrialised countries, has increased the intensity of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere far beyond any natural cycle, and Queensland has been a classic example over generations. But, as the world moves to meet this challenge, I want Queensland to continue playing a lead in developing and implementing practical and innovative measures that will help each of us to tackle global warming issues.

In December 2007 I appointed the Premier's Climate Change Council. This 16-person expert panel is ensuring that Queensland's efforts to address climate change are informed by the best available knowledge and experience. This council has already done some significant and

groundbreaking work. The council has commissioned a report from the CSIRO that I, along with the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, will be releasing today. It is a scientific assessment of the carbon biosequestration potential of Queensland's rural and agricultural lands.

It is clear from the report that Queensland rural lands have an enormous potential to act as carbon sinks over 40 to 50 years. Putting a value on this biosequestration in Queensland could breathe new life into the restoration of our landscape and could generate another source of income for our farmers. This is groundbreaking work. It is the first of its kind done anywhere in Australia. I thank the members of the council, particularly AgForce, for their partnership in working with the government in delivering this report.

Members will be familiar with ClimateSmart 2050, which was released in 2007. This was an important first step in Queensland's response to climate change. It was the first comprehensive set of measures designed to reduce this state's greenhouse gas emissions and prepare our communities and businesses for the inevitable physical impacts of climate change. The government has also put its money where its mouth is by investing \$844 million directly into climate change responses. Our previous strategy set up a \$30 million per year Climate Change Fund to meet the emerging challenges of climate change. In February 2008 my government announced a review of our climate strategy. Today, along with the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, I will launch the results of that review with our updated climate change strategy *ClimateQ: toward a greener Queensland*. I table a copy of the document for the benefit of the parliament.

Tabled paper: Queensland government, Queensland's climate change strategy, 'ClimateQ: toward a greener Queensland.' [745]

The ClimateQ strategy sets out the next crucial steps for Queensland's transition to a low-carbon future. It extends and strengthens our climate change response to help everyone take action today for tomorrow. As the largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the country in both absolute and per capita terms, Queensland has much to gain from early action on climate change and forging new opportunities for all sectors of our economy. Our population is the most dispersed in the nation and it is growing the fastest, with over 2,000 new Queenslanders a week. Our industries and our households are energy intensive, and emissions from land clearing continue at a high level compared with other states.

My government's strategy *ClimateQ: toward a greener Queensland* consolidates and updates the approaches taken in recent years. It takes into account the latest national and international science and policy including the findings of the fourth assessment report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, from Australia's own Garnaut review and the Commonwealth's modelling of carbon pricing, which Queensland's own Treasury played such an important part in. Importantly, the new strategy complements the Commonwealth's proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme and the national renewable energy target by starting to prepare industry and households for higher energy costs.

The review of our climate change policy has produced a suite of new initiatives and investments to take Queensland's long-term response into a new phase. I believe this strategy gets the balance right between incentives, support and information for consumers. As our success in water efficiency has proven, Queensland householders and businesses can reduce consumption and reap the benefits at the same time.

ClimateQ includes eight sectoral strategies to reset and expand our policy approach for managing future greenhouse gas impacts and safeguarding tomorrow's Queensland. It incorporates a number of initiatives included in my government's 2009 election commitments and the 2009 state budget. Promoting energy efficiency at the commercial, household and community levels was a strong focus of those announcements, with a range of measures to increase energy conservation and demand management. The total package is \$196.5 million, \$88.8 million of which is from the Climate Change Fund and \$13.5 million of which was announced during the election campaign. A further \$95.8 million of climate initiatives was announced in this year's state budget. There are \$87.2 million of new initiatives being announced today with this new strategy.

The centrepiece of today's launch of ClimateQ is a \$60 million suite of transport policies and programs. Transport accounts for more than 10 per cent of Queensland's emissions. It is expanding as a result of our strong population growth, and it is a difficult sector in which to achieve emissions reductions in the short term. However, we acknowledge the importance of starting the process of curbing our transport emissions now, and we have responded to the fact that congested traffic produces up to 30 per cent more emissions than free-flowing roads. As part of the \$60 million transport package, ClimateQ includes \$39 million in new programs to reduce congestion on our roads and motorways including an intelligent traffic management system that will better coordinate traffic signals, on-ramps, speed limits and lane access.

We also want to encourage a shift in the way Queenslanders approach travel so that people consider walking, cycling or public transport options when they travel to and from school, work and major events, and leave the car at home when possible. We will support them by investing \$10 million to extend the popular TravelSmart program to these destinations. ClimateQ also encourages motorists to act in the short term to offset their own vehicle emissions. My government will match offset contributions

by motorists up to a total limit of \$4.5 million. This will create a \$9 million fund to purchase high-value corridors of land in Queensland to preserve biodiversity. When fully subscribed, we expect to offset about 100,000 vehicles, or about five per cent of cars in Queensland.

The other major new announcement in ClimateQ today relates to power generation and the role of coal fired power. Our state derives great economic benefit from our vast reserves of coal. We are absolutely committed to ensuring that the coal industry has a sustainable future through major public-private partnerships such as the \$900 million A21 Coal Fund to develop carbon capture and storage technologies. In addition, huge reserves of gas in Australia can initially support the transition from our current dependency on coal as an energy source.

In 2007 the previous ClimateSmart 2050 strategy set out a number of conditions under which investments in new coal fired power could be supported. We now have a better understanding of the impacts of climate change. The Commonwealth government is committed to introducing a CPRS and the renewable energy target, and significant investments have been made in demonstrating carbon capture and storage technologies around Australia. Together these provide the need and opportunity for Queensland to realign its approach to new coal fired power generation and position it for the future.

To support the transition of the energy sector towards a low-carbon future and equip it to take advantage of the opportunities presented, the government has revised the conditions on new coal fired electricity generation. No new coal fired power station will be approved in Queensland unless (a) it uses world's best low-emission technology in order to achieve the lowest possible levels of emissions and (b) it is carbon capture and storage ready and will retrofit that technology within five years of carbon capture and storage technology being made commercially viable.

In Queensland the term 'carbon capture and storage ready' means that the proponent must demonstrate plans and milestones to make their power plant CCS compatible. By acknowledging the critical importance of carbon capture and storage for the future, by building on our record investment in this technology and by understanding that traditional coal fired power stations will not be sustainable in the long term, I believe these conditions position our industry well for the future.

There are a range of new initiatives in this strategy. With this strategy we are breaking a lot of ground. ClimateQ includes a detailed analysis of climate change projections for 13 regions covering all of Queensland to help local governments, communities and industries better understand and plan for the impacts. I would recommend that all members look at the regions that they represent.

The effects of global warming will be with us for centuries to come. What we do now collectively as a state, as a nation and as a planet is vitally important to humanity. This strategy is not the last step in Queensland's fight against climate change, but it is the next big step. I urge all Queenslanders to get involved in the Queensland response where you can make the biggest difference because together we can make a difference.

ClimateQ

Hon. KJ JONES (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability) (9.51 am): As the Premier outlined earlier, ClimateQ is an all-encompassing vehicle for reform and transition toward a low-carbon future in Queensland. In our strategy is the potential for Queensland to hone its environmental qualities and characteristics to store significant amounts of carbon.

Since the industrial revolution approximately a quarter of all human induced greenhouse gas emissions have resulted from the clearing of forests, the conversion of grasslands to cropping and the loss of soil carbon from continual tillage of crop lands. In his 2008 review of climate change, Professor Ross Garnaut identified that the Australian rural landscape could be utilised to capture significant quantities of the country's greenhouse gas emissions in a process known as biosequestration.

To position Queensland to take advantage of any biosequestration opportunities, the Premier's Council on Climate Change commissioned the CSIRO to undertake a scientific assessment of the carbon biosequestration potential of Queensland land use. I table a copy of that report for the information of members.

Tabled paper: Report by CSIRO titled 'Submission to Premier's Council on Climate Change, restricted distribution' [746].

This Australian-first study provides a key input into the Commonwealth government's negotiations on the treatment of land use in the new international climate change framework to be determined in Copenhagen later this year.

The report from the CSIRO released today indicates that Queensland's rural lands have the potential to store large amounts of additional carbon. While a range of further work is required to examine the policy issues involved, it is clear from the report that Queensland's rural lands have a significant potential to act as carbon sinks for the next 40 to 50 years. Changed forestry activities including new plantings, reduced logging and land clearing as well as managed regrowth have the greatest potential to provide carbon sinks.

Putting a value on this biosequestration in Queensland could breathe new life into the restoration of our landscape and could generate another source of income for our farmers. The report found that other land uses, such as the production of feedstock for biofuels and biochar and managed fire regimes in savannah grasslands, may possibly deliver further emission reductions once technical and market issues are resolved.

However, other land use options, including restoring degraded grazing lands and reducing the level of methane emitted by livestock, are likely to require significant investment to overcome technical barriers. In looking at the various options, the report says policy makers will need to weigh up the benefits and trade-offs in areas such as carbon storage, food production, biodiversity conservation, water use and environmental health. In addition, a concerted effort is required to overcome technical, policy and management barriers.

While on balance the findings are positive, they do not displace the responsibility we all have for reducing emissions at their source in all sectors. The report addresses the longer term solutions which can provide a broader emissions reduction approach over coming decades thereby lowering the costs to the economy and community.

This report highlights the critical role that rural land use can play in Queensland's climate change response, and the key national role that Queensland can play in moves towards combating climate change. Sure, Queensland has some enormous challenges ahead, but we also have a number of untapped opportunities to capitalise on as this report demonstrates. The report is now available on my department's website. I refer all members who have expressed interest in it this morning—and I thank them for their bipartisan support—to the website www.derm.qld.gov.au.

ClimateQ

Hon. RG NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (Minister for Transport) (9.55 am): The Bligh government is committed to doing everything we can to protect our environment and mitigate the impact of climate change. Improving our public transport, providing more efficient freight movement, cutting congestion and reducing vehicle emissions will all be important parts of combating climate change.

The government's ClimateQ initiatives are aimed at helping combat congestion while promoting a cleaner, greener environment. The Queensland taxi industry consists of more than 3,000 vehicles and is responsible for about 100,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. That is why the government will spend \$70,000 to encourage the use of low-emission vehicles, such as petrol/electric hybrids, in the taxi fleet, by giving a preference to tenders for taxi licences where the operator agrees to operate a green vehicle. We will also expand the highly successful TravelSmart project that encourages communities to adopt more sustainable travel options by presenting detailed information about ways to get around without simply hopping in the car.

TravelSmart Workplaces and Events is a \$5.2 million project to engage with major Queensland workplaces and event managers to develop sustainable travel plans designed to encourage people to reduce car trips with walking, jogging, cycling or public transport. TravelSmart Schools is a \$5 million project to encourage school communities to adopt sustainable travel options such as walking, cycling and car pooling and minimising private car travel.

These programs will assist in reducing travel congestion and greenhouse gas emissions as well as provide opportunities for people to be more active. Commencing this year, the Bligh government will encourage motorists to offset their vehicle's greenhouse gas emissions by matching voluntary contributions from motorists dollar for dollar up to a maximum funding limit of \$4½ million. For example, if it costs \$80 to offset an average car for one year the Bligh government will match an individual motorist's voluntary contribution of \$40 with another \$40 in state funded subsidy to fully offset the vehicle.

We know that no government can fight climate change on its own. That is why we are committed to putting in place measures that help Queenslanders work with us to make a difference from the ground up.

Public Hospitals

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Health) (9.58 am): From the cape to Coolangatta, construction work is underway to build and rebuild hospitals across the state. The Bligh government made the tough decision to invest in the Capital Works Program to protect the jobs of Queenslanders in the midst of the global economic downturn. This week there are more than 520 workers on site at Queensland Health capital works projects around the state. Work is progressing on the expansion of the Robina Hospital. This week concrete is being poured, column reinforcement and vertical formwork is being done and the boulder retaining wall and new path along Robina Town Centre Drive will be completed.

Piling work began on the Gold Coast University Hospital site last week. Two piling rigs are boring holes for the contiguous pile foundations for major retaining walls on two extremities of the site. Site offices and the site compound are nearing completion in readiness for some 150 staff members who will be based permanently on the construction site. Numbers on site are set to increase from an average of 70 per day with the trade packages for roads and infrastructure, tunnels, temporary hydraulics, temporary high-voltage electrical works, surveying and site security because they have now been let.

Moving up the Queensland coast to Brisbane, there is further work happening this week at the Princess Alexandra Hospital. At the PA Hospital construction activities include lift pit excavation for the emergency department, as well as lower ground slab-on-ground construction and formwork to ground-level slab amongst other things, and the helipad is in transit to Brisbane. Further up the coast at Nambour, work continues on the new \$94 million ward block and the Nambour residential aged-care facility, which is ahead of schedule. In the Wide Bay area, workers are on site progressing work on the Bundaberg Hospital's mental health building refurbishment, and demolition is underway to enable construction of the new main building that will house the emergency department and the maternity area.

As an aside, not only are those on the other side of the House talking to the people of Queensland about fundraising and lobbyists, but they are clearly not talking to each other. The members for Rockhampton and Keppel will be pleased to hear that the new rehabilitation building is currently undergoing a fit-out and equipment is being installed. Work continues on the emergency department building. Further up the Queensland coast to Mackay, civil—water, sewerage and stormwater—and electrical works are nearing completion. In Townsville current activities for early works for North Block include the diversion of the main sewer—manhole and trench excavation are now 60 per cent complete—while the bus stop relocation is also underway. I opened the Ingham Hospital. The member for Hinchinbrook could not come. I make no reflection on him about that, because my diary changed at the last moment. He was going to be there but could not attend. I actually had a good chat with Marc Rowell, who was there. I know the member has supported the project.

Mr Johnson: Another good man.

Mr LUCAS: He is a good man. I got on very well with Marc actually, and I might add that he is looking well in retirement! You will look even better when you retire!

Mr Johnson: Do you want me to go, do you, Paul? I've got news for you, and it's all bad!

Mr LUCAS: Not as bad as it is for them; they want you to go. Landscaping and turfing along the McIllwraith Street frontage of the hospital is complete and landscaping of areas north of the new hospital building is underway, while fabrication of structural steelwork and window assemblies for the medical centre is underway. As I said, I acknowledge the support of the local member. In Cairns roof plumbing to the ambulance awning and the construction of the ambulance drivers' write-up room and amenities have commenced. The demountable temporary waiting room has been fabricated and is ready for delivery. External wall panelling, painting and caulking has commenced.

At Yarrabah the Primary Health Care Centre and Queensland Ambulance Service work continues with blockwork commenced for staff units 3, 4 and 5. There has been installation of roof battens, fascias and gutters for zones 1 and 5. There has been continuation of rough-in of mechanical, hydraulic and electrical services et cetera, and installation of roof battens in preparation for roof sheeting is currently underway. On Thursday Island work progresses at the Mura Mudh Hostel for expectant mothers with painting, electrical fit-out, mechanical air conditioning installation et cetera.

Finally, in the west the redevelopment of the Mount Isa Hospital is moving forward. Schematic designs have been completed and demolition of the old kiosk will be underway soon. The first early works include the upgrading of lifts, upgrading of air conditioning in Block C and the demolition of the kiosk. These early works mark the beginning of the redevelopment, which will be completed by the end of 2011. These are just some examples of how the Bligh government's \$6 billion Health capital works program is delivering more jobs and better health services for the people of Queensland.

Business and Industry Transformation Incentives Scheme

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Employment and Economic Development) (10.03 am): The global financial crisis has forced many people to rethink the future path of the economy. Here in Queensland the government has copped a massive \$15 billion wipe-out to our revenues, meaning that we have had to restructure our budget so that we can continue to fund our jobs-generating \$18 billion building program. But changes have also been forced on the private sector. Everyone, from multinationals to small and medium enterprises, has had to rethink also. The current environment has highlighted, more than ever, the need for innovation in businesses. The Bligh government recognises this need through the Business and Industry Transformation Incentives scheme that was up for the chop under the policy that the LNP took to the election.

This scheme provides up to \$250,000 to Queensland businesses that have the potential to meet the challenges of changing markets and, in doing so, continue to thrive. Today I can advise that the Laminex Group's Gympie business has been awarded \$180,000 under the scheme to help it develop new domestic and export markets. The company is a leader in manufacturing medium-density fibreboard, or MDF, and decorative surfaces such as laminex and formica, which are used mainly in kitchens, vanity units, furniture and doors. Its wood panel products have a substantial domestic market and are also exported mainly to northern and South-East Asia. The Laminex Group will use this funding to introduce a new online quality control system at its Gympie operation, which employs about 200 workers. The new system will help manage the quality of the manufacturing process, resulting in more consistent quality, less wastage and an increase in productivity.

This company is a worthy recipient of the Bligh government's business incentives scheme. It understands that innovation is the key to staying competitive and attracting new customers, and this will be welcome news in Gympie to secure the future of this operation and the workers in it. Since the scheme was introduced in 2007, 17 Queensland companies have been approved for grants totalling more than \$3.5 million. Now more than ever, businesses need to stand out by being innovative and efficient, and this scheme is all about showing how this can be done.

Energy Efficiency Retrofit Program

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Information and Communication Technology) (10.05 am): Following the Premier's announcement of the updated ClimateQ: Toward a Greener Queensland strategy, I want to inform members of the energy efficiency retrofit program being implemented by the Department of Public Works.

Ms Jones: Hear, hear!

Mr SCHWARTEN: I take the interjection from the Minister for Climate Change. The energy efficiency retrofit program for government buildings speeds up how agencies make their buildings more energy efficient and further reduce their energy consumption needs. This whole-of-government program will assist agencies already meeting the energy reduction targets established in the energy efficiency policy for Queensland government buildings. The program will cover a range of activities across government buildings, including incentives for energy retrofit projects to enable agencies to fast-track their energy efficiency measures and achieve maximum greenhouse gas emission reductions. Other activities under the program include demonstration pilot projects and trialling of low-emission technologies. The program will last for four years, starting in July next year with funding of \$8 million.

The department has already completed energy retrofit projects at a number of government office buildings which are delivering impressive energy savings. For example, a 24 per cent annual energy saving has been achieved at 61 Mary Street, 14 per cent at the Landcentre, 27 per cent at Gabba Towers, 62 Ann Street has achieved a saving of 21 per cent, and the CITEC building has achieved a 17 per cent saving. Two more retrofits are due for completion at the end of September at 111 George Street and the Neville Bonner Building at 75 William Street. A further four—Education House at 30 Mary Street and the government office buildings in Townsville, Maryborough and Rockhampton—will be completed by December this year. The retrofits of 80 and 100 George Street will be completed by June 2010.

By the end of 2009-10, energy consumption across the department's whole building portfolio will be reduced on average by 21 per cent. This equates to a reduction of 18 million kilowatt hours of energy per annum, saving over \$2 million annually in energy costs and reducing greenhouse gas emissions each year by over 16,400 tonnes of carbon dioxide, or the equivalent of removing 3,200 cars from the road in one year. It is clear that the energy efficiency retrofit program will complement the activities of my department's EnergySmart Buildings initiative, further supporting the government's ClimateQ: Toward a Greener Queensland climate change strategy. As we discussed the other day in this very parliament, there are many things that honourable members could do to assist such as turning the lights off in their offices when they leave them to come into the chamber, turning lights off in the foyers and so on. For far too long we have taken for granted the business of just leaving lights on and walking in and out of rooms.

Cleaner Energy

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade) (10.08 am): Energy powers the lifestyles of Queenslanders every day. Our robust, reliable network allows us to do everyday things we take for granted like boiling the kettle, turning on the air conditioner, listening to our favourite CD, watching TV and charging our phones and laptops. However, our ever-increasing reliance on electricity comes at a cost. The energy generation sector or stationary energy, like our coal fired power stations, is the greatest single contributor to the state's greenhouse gas emissions, representing 38 per cent of emissions in 2007. If we are to move towards a greener Queensland, this is one sector we really have to work with to tackle greenhouse gas emissions. The Bligh government is doing this in two ways. Firstly, we are investing in research and development

which aims to make the existing energy sector cleaner. Already we have committed \$300 million to the COAL21 Fund which is working to accelerate the development and deployment of carbon capture and storage technologies for power stations.

If CCS is proven, it will have major beneficial outcomes for Queensland and, in particular, the coal sector. We are also moving to ensure that any new coal fired power stations being built in Queensland use only the world's best practice low-emission technology. They will also need to be CCS ready and committed to retrofit that technology within five years of it being proven on a commercial scale. This will ensure that we are moving towards a low-carbon future.

The second front on which the Bligh government is addressing this issue is through diversifying our energy sector with renewable energy sources and a greater use of natural gas. The Queensland Renewable Energy Plan, which was launched earlier this year by the Premier and me, outlines a clear and comprehensive road map for expanding the renewable energy sector in Queensland. The plan aims to access up to \$3.5 billion in new investment, create up to 3,500 new jobs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 40 million tonnes.

This is an exciting growth area for Queensland which will bring great environmental benefits now and in the long run. The Bligh government knows that there are some tough challenges ahead for the energy sector. That is why we are working with it to ensure we are all part of the solution.

Tropical North Queensland, Japanese Charter Flights

Hon. PJ LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading) (10.10 am): It gives me great pleasure to announce that the Bligh government has helped secure four extra Japanese charter flights to tropical North Queensland. These charter flights are scheduled in September and October and signal an increasing confidence of the Japanese market in Queensland. The charter flights, supported by Tourism Australia, Tourism Queensland and Tourism Tropical North Queensland, would bring up to 1,300 Japanese visitors to the region, support important tourism jobs and create more local economic opportunities.

Three of the charters are carrying school excursion groups from Fukuoka to Cairns in October, having been organised by travel agency JTB and flown by All Nippon Airways. In addition, JTB will operate one charter to Cairns, which has already sold out. That will include a five-day holiday package for Japanese visitors during Japan's Silver Week long weekend, from 19 to 23 September.

Tourism Queensland, its Australian partners and its international office in Japan are continuing to seek opportunities with the Japanese travel and aviation industries to bring business into tropical North Queensland. This news follows a decision by Continental Airlines to continue operating four weekly flights between Japan and Cairns via Guam after they were introduced as a seasonal measure in April. In the year ending March, 252,000 Japanese visitors came to Queensland and 142,000 of them visited the tropical North Queensland region. Despite declines across Australia, Japan remains tropical North Queensland's largest international source market. My predecessor and member for Cairns, Desley Boyle, as well as the Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, Steve Wettenhall, continue to make strong representations to me about the need to assist where possible the tropical North Queensland tourism industry.

The Bligh government is committed to tourism. When it has been most needed this government has assisted. The difference between this government and the opposition is leadership. That means making tough decisions in tough times, be it popular or unpopular. That means listening and responding to the needs of Queenslanders. When the opposition leader matches the Premier's initiatives, other people might take him seriously, even other opposition members.

Taylor, Mr A and Mrs K

Hon. GJ WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Education and Training) (10.12 am): I wish to pay tribute today to a couple who have been influential in the lives of hundreds of Sunshine Coast schoolchildren. Allan and Kari Taylor were tragically killed in terrible circumstances last night. The couple were hit by another car as they arrived to help their daughter, who had been in a minor accident.

Allan and Kari were much loved in the Sunshine Coast community. Allan was the Sunshine Coast's first primary school chaplain and a former school principal—a mentor to many young children. His wife was a dance instructor who inspired thousands of children to reach for their dreams during her 25 years on the coast. I know their deaths have deeply affected the school communities of Woombye and Palmwoods, where Allan was a chaplain, and at Chevallum State School, where he was a religious education teacher. Allan had been a chaplain at both schools since May 2000.

Chaplains play such a critical role in the lives of students, staff and school communities as a whole. They are there if students need support, guidance or simply someone to talk to. Allan and his wife were willing and ready to help with any task, no matter how small. They worked tirelessly for their local communities. Schools need people like Allan and Kari. That is why the chaplaincy program is so

important. There is bipartisan support at both state and federal governmental levels for this program, because we know how much chaplains' presence in our schools benefits students, staff and the community as a whole.

It is clear from the tributes pouring in for Allan and Kari that they had an incredible impact on people throughout the region. So strong was Allan's desire to help state school students that he left a secure job as a private school principal to enter the chaplaincy program instead. It is this type of commitment, dedication and care that we see from our chaplains. Allan helped his community through their grief after the recent death of young twin girls and their grandmother. Now his community is again sadly grieving the loss of a loving couple who gave so much.

We know how deeply these schools will be affected. I spoke to the school principals this morning and they are understandably shaken. Education Queensland's Regional Executive Director, Rob McAlpine, is ensuring that guidance and support is available at all three schools for students and staff. Other Scripture Union chaplains in the region, who also lost a friend and colleague, are putting aside their own grief to help others, as Allan so often did. I wish to express on my own behalf and that of the government and everyone in this chamber our sincere condolences to Allan and Kari's daughter and son and to the Sunshine Coast community on the loss of two shining stars who gave so much.

Police Shooting; Climate Change, Disaster Management

Hon. NS ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (10.16 am): I would like to inform the House of an incident during which police shot and injured a woman at Runcorn at around 9.30 last night. I am advised that the woman was a person of interest to the police for a number of property offences committed in the previous 24 hours. Officers entered the premises and the woman allegedly stabbed a police dog with a knife before threatening officers with the same weapon. The woman was transported to hospital, where I am advised she is currently in a stable condition. The police dog was transported to a nearby 24-hour veterinary surgery. This morning it remains under anaesthetic with serious injuries.

The incident that occurred overnight again demonstrates the dangers faced by our police men and women on a regular basis. The Queensland Police Service's Ethical Standards Command is investigating the incident and the Crime and Misconduct Commission has been notified.

On another topic, the effects of climate change present a very real threat to our state and we must be well prepared for a potential increase in natural disasters and emergencies. Queenslanders are no strangers to severe weather events. Over three-quarters of the state's local government areas were flooded earlier this year following cyclonic weather, and the extraordinary storms that hit South-East Queensland so violently in May caused millions of dollars in damage.

The Queensland Climate Change Fund has allocated \$3.37 million to the Department of Community Safety over three years for the development of two new disaster emergency caches. This funding also provides for the purchases of vital emergency equipment such as sandbags, generators, chainsaws, tarpaulins and black sheeting for our disaster caches across the state. Disaster management caches were recently launched at Southport and Runaway Bay, providing 1,400 new tarpaulins to boost emergency responses in the Gold Coast region during the storm season.

In addition, the 2009 election commitment Support Our Heroes will see funding of \$12.98 million over five years to purchase additional vehicles, flood boats and trailers for our hardworking SES volunteers. The Support Our Heroes initiative will also see the state's dedicated Rural Fire Service receive 14 specialist fire appliances, each with a 3,000-litre water carrying capacity and essential communication equipment. A further 965 rural fire vehicles will be provided with fire reflective curtains and diesel driven pumps to improve volunteer safety.

The Bligh government's Climate Change Fund will also provide \$7.66 million over five years to help prepare communities vulnerable to the effects of climate variability. That includes coastal communities at risk from storm surges and sea level rises. A further \$2 million is being made available over three years for the Keeping Our Mob Safe program that supports Indigenous councils, particularly those in the gulf or the cape, to prepare for the disaster risks identified in local disaster management plans. The Bligh government is taking steps to ensure we are better prepared than ever before to respond to the disasters and emergencies that may accompany the threat of climate change.

ClimateQ

Hon. CA WALLACE (Thuringowa—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads) (10.19 am): Before I start, can I also add my condolences to those enunciated by the Minister for Education and Training. I wish to add my support for the announcement made today of the ClimateQ scheme detailing a range of initiatives for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. With the transport sector producing approximately 10 per cent of Queensland's total greenhouse gas emissions and 85 per cent of this being generated on our roads, it is appropriate that funding under the ClimateQ scheme be allocated to improving conditions

on the road network. In fact, one key initiative directly targets improving traffic flow for reducing emissions. I am very pleased that \$39.3 million has been allocated towards this initiative as part of the \$56 million transport and roads component of the ClimateQ program.

This is an integrated package of initiatives that targets priority congested sections on key roads and motorways in South-East Queensland to facilitate more efficient use of the existing road space. The aim is to improve flow and network reliability, allowing freight and people to get to destinations on time. Studies have confirmed the link between economic growth and congestion on our roads. As a government, we are keen to ensure that we can sustain continued economic activity for Queenslanders into the future.

One of the ways we are addressing this is to prioritise works to ensure that key links of the road network, in particular our motorways, are equipped with the latest technologies to allow traffic to flow more safely and reliably. There are multiple benefits which motorists, particularly those driving in South-East Queensland, will appreciate, including, as I have said, more reliable travel journeys and also reduced greenhouse emissions. For example, vehicles stuck in traffic can produce up to 30 per cent more greenhouse gas emissions than vehicles in free-flowing traffic. That is why we have seen the improving traffic flow initiative as a key component of the ClimateQ scheme and why we are keen to promote and support the types of initiatives that improve how the road system is used. Part of doing this also includes staying abreast of latest advances for improving transport systems and ensuring our traffic engineering capability also keeps up with best practice.

Responding positively to the current transport challenges will continue to be a focus for this government as will, importantly, improving travel efficiency and reducing the resultant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions that are generated from the road network.

Climate Change, Agricultural Industries

Hon. TS MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland) (10.21 am): Queensland's agricultural industries are facing challenging times. The United Nations has stated that by 2050 global food production will need to double and emissions will need to halve if we are to avoid a potential 50 per cent increase in food prices. To help combat climate change and to help protect our \$13 billion industry, QPIF is leading a number of research and policy initiatives. These initiatives will assist the state's primary industries sector to meet the challenges posed by adapting to climate change and mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. A key component in helping Queensland farmers adapt to climate change is the release of the 13 regional climate change projections. The projections are the best available science on potential seasonal rainfall and temperature variations for the decades ahead.

In addition, ClimateQ has earmarked \$3.2 million over four years from July 2010 to work with Queensland farmers and help them plan for the future. QPIF is already working with DERM to identify resources to allow this urgent work to begin earlier.

In addition to the valuable data provided by the regional climate change projections, QPIF has a range of research projects assessing the impacts of climate change on crops, livestock, horticulture, fisheries and pests and diseases. QPIF scientists are conducting groundbreaking research into bacteria in the hope of reducing the amount of methane released from beef cattle. At the same time, researchers are investigating water and energy efficiencies in crop farming and helping farmers adopt new technologies, such as GPS tracking and computer modelling, which will benefit both the environment and our primary producers. QPIF is also active in national discussions to ensure an integrated approach to climate change policy, emissions trading and drought preparedness.

Queensland's farms are at the front line on climate change. Assisting farmers to respond to the challenges ahead is of great importance to the community and Queensland's economy. We must keep producing food for domestic and international markets and we must change our practices to mitigate climate change and to protect the environment. QPIF will continue to work with our farmers to meet these challenges.

Torres Strait

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Local Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (10.24 am): The Torres Strait is a very beautiful part of Queensland with a unique history and a vibrant culture. As a collection of islands spread across a huge area, it also faces a number of challenges and barriers to development. The Bligh government is committed to partnering with the people of the Torres Strait to meet these challenges head on, to assist communities build infrastructure and to provide services that will deliver better social and economic outcomes.

From July 2006 through to 2011, the Queensland government will have provided in the order of \$66 million in local government funding for infrastructure and job creation, shared between the Torres Shire Council, the Torres Strait Island Regional Council and the Torres Strait Regional Authority. Some of the infrastructure projects that the big pool of funding has been instrumental in completing already

include the Boigu Community Workshop Complex with a state subsidy of \$600,000, the construction of a pontoon for the jetty at Dauan Island with state funding of \$255,098 and the Horn Island Sports Complex car park and youth centre with state funding of \$315,459.

This year, as part of this five-year commitment, the Bligh government is providing \$2.2 million under the Q150 Legacy Infrastructure Program for the beautification of Victoria Parade on Thursday Island, which is due for completion in December 2009. Our \$66 million investment includes over \$8.3 million under the state government financial aid funding program, over half a million under the Revenue Replacement Program funding and over \$1 million under the Environmental Health Worker initiative.

The Major Infrastructure Program is another key component of our funding and this attracts a Commonwealth contribution and supports critical infrastructure such as internal roads and regional waste management. Recent projects completed as part of the Major Infrastructure Program include the Moa sewerage project and the Horn Island sewerage project. I am pleased to report the Mabuia sewerage project and upgrades to Mabuia, Warraber and Poruma islands are also nearing completion.

The challenges facing the Torres Strait region are considerable from the obvious problems synonymous with distance such as freight and air transport to climate change. The Bligh government will continue working with the people of the Torres Strait, and I look forward to meeting with the communities again later this year. In the meantime, we will continue to support infrastructure, protect jobs and work in partnership to close the gap.

LAW, JUSTICE AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Extension of Time

Hon. JC SPENCE (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.27 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That the date for the Law, Justice and Safety Committee to report to the House in relation to this House's referral on 4 August 2009 to report on alcohol related violence in Queensland be extended from 26 November 2009 to 18 March 2010.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

SCRUTINY OF LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Report

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (10.27 am): I table the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's Report No. 40, the Annual Report 2008-09.

Tabled paper: Scrutiny of Legislation Committee, Report No. 40 titled 'Annual report 2008-09' [747].

REPORT

Expenditure of the Office of the Speaker

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay upon the table of the House the *Statement of public disclosure: expenditure of the Office of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly* under Speaker Reynolds for the period 1 July 2008 to 20 April 2009. I also table a statement under my Speakership from the period 21 April to 30 June 2009.

Tabled paper: Statement for public disclosure—Expenditure of the Office of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly for the period 1 July 2008 to 20 April 2009 [748].

Tabled paper: Statement for public disclosure—Expenditure of the Office of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly for the period 21 April 2009 to 30 June 2009 [749].

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

School Group Tours

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, today we will be visited in the public gallery by the following schools: the Inala West State School in the electorate of Inala, Brisbane School of Distance Education based in the electorate of South Brisbane, the Yeronga State High School in the electorate of Yeerongpilly, the Macgregor State High School in the electorate of Sunnybank, students from Miami State High School in the electorate of Burleigh and students from the Flagstone, Yugumbir, Browns Plains, Park Ridge, Regents Park and Logan Village in the electorate of Logan.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Mr SPEAKER: You ready for this, Daniel? I do not know whether this is going to be as painful as the operation.

Bombolas, Mr C

Mr LANGBROEK (10.30 am): My first question without notice is to the Premier. Yesterday the Premier's former parliamentary secretary for sport claimed—

No one has rung me up, no one's spoken to me, no one's given me any correspondence, no one has said 'Chris Bombolas, you can't have any contact with the government'. I'm in the dark.

Will the Premier explain how and why a parliamentary secretary appointed by her was kept in the dark over their ethical obligations?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am pleased to have an opportunity to outline for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition how this restriction on post-employment separation works for both former ministers and former parliamentary secretaries. It imposes an obligation on people who leave from a ministry or from a parliamentary secretary position to not work or seek to influence or lobby the government on an area in which they have previously had portfolio responsibility for a designated period of time.

The way that that is enforced is that the ban is effectively on ministers and parliamentary secretaries and senior bureaucrats who are currently in the government. So the requirement is that none of my cabinet, none of my senior public officials and none of the parliamentary secretaries of the government will meet with anybody who has previously left the government on any of those issues. As demonstrated by the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport yesterday, that has been fully complied with. There have been no meetings by any minister, by any parliamentary secretary or by any senior government official with the former parliamentary secretary for sport in relation to any of those issues. So the code has been fully and totally complied with.

If the former parliamentary secretary is unaware of it, frankly that is irrelevant. What is relevant is that the current people who are prohibited from meeting with him know it and understand it. It is very, very simple. This government put in place post-employment separation arrangements that are among the toughest in the country, that have the longest exclusion period, and we are complying with them. If somebody out there who is no longer a member of the government is in the dark, that is their problem. What I know is that if someone in that category knocks on the door of any of my ministers they will not be getting a meeting.

Political Donations

Mr LANGBROEK: My second question without notice is also to the Premier. Will the Premier guarantee that no more donations to her Labor Party from Ken Talbot or from anyone else charged with corruption have been received this calendar year?

Ms BLIGH: Once again, we see the Leader of the Opposition seeking that I should make guarantees for the Labor Party but he is not even able to phone his party and ask for the list of donations. He will not even pick up the phone and spend the 30c and ask for the list of people who went to the secret Springborg \$20,000-a-head dinner.

Ms Spence: Lawrence won't even give him the list.

Ms BLIGH: The member for Southern Downs will not give him the list or tell him who was there. Bruce McIver, the president of the party, will not give him the list.

Mr Schwarten: I reckon you do know. He has told him but he won't tell us.

Ms Spence: I reckon Lawrence has got the list.

Mr Langbroek: I've got it in my wallet.

Ms BLIGH: Oh, he has it in his wallet! I take the interjection. I call on him to table the wallet, Mr Speaker. One cannot find a better example of weakness or a leader being led by his party than the member for Surfers Paradise. Every dinner that I have been at has been fully disclosed outside of any requirement from the AEC. Will the member opposite do the same? No. Does he have the backbone to call the LNP office and say, 'Guys, give me the list. Please, just hand it over'? They could probably email it to him. They could probably fax it to him. They could probably text it to him.

Mr Schwarten: Why doesn't he just give it to him across the corridor? What can't he do that?

Ms BLIGH: I think there is a very long way between the two offices. I think the space between the office of the member for Southern Downs and that of the member for Surfers Paradise is the longest distance. I lead the Labor Party on these issues. Queensland is leading the country on these issues. We are reforming, and every single one of our reforms has been resisted by those opposite. Not one single—

Mr Springborg: You can't even follow your own laws.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Ms BLIGH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I think it is now well established that I lead the Labor Party on these issues. The member for Surfers Paradise is led by the president, led by the National Party. He is a captive of the Queensland National Party.

Climate Change, Coal Industry

Ms CROFT: My question is to the Premier. Earlier this morning the government outlined its position in relation to many climate issues and their impact on Queensland. Can the Premier outline the government's position in relation to any future coal fired power generation?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for her question and for her ongoing interest in measures to tackle climate change. As I said this morning, climate change is the great challenge of our time. The decisions that we make now will reverberate right through the rest of this century and beyond. That is why we need to take early action and Queensland, as one of the highest emitters or the highest emitter in the country, has an even greater obligation to be part of early action.

The Commonwealth has committed to a Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme and a renewable energy target. We have seen significant investments from my government—some \$300 million allocated to match \$600 million from the coal industry—that will invest in carbon capture and storage technology. That is because we are determined to give coal every opportunity to be a low-emission fuel of the future.

Advances are happening. Members will have seen reports in yesterday's *Courier-Mail* of UQ researcher Dr John Zhu and his team, who have successfully tested technology that delivers twice the power from coal while minimising greenhouse gas emissions. This is a very exciting breakthrough that could provide a billion dollar windfall and may revolutionise the way that the world uses coal. So, with the Commonwealth targets and with changes in developing low-emission technologies, Queensland has both a need and an opportunity to realign its approach to coal fired generation.

As a result of today's policy announcement, in Queensland no new coal fired power station will be approved unless, firstly, it uses world best practice low-emission technology in order to achieve the lowest possible emission levels and, secondly, it is carbon capture and storage ready and will retrofit that technology within five years of carbon capture and storage being proven on a commercial scale. Simply speaking, we need to position Queensland for the reality of a carbon constrained future. We should not be approving any new electricity generators that do not use the best possible cutting-edge, best practice low-emission technology, whether it is coal fired or gas fired or in fact any other form of generation.

Queensland is drawing a line in the sand. Any new coal fired power station will have to meet world best practice low-emission technology and commit to retrofit carbon capture and storage within five years of it being commercially available. This is a practical, common-sense, important response to climate change.

I would commend the climate change document I tabled in the House this morning to members. It provides many opportunities for people in their electorates to understand better how they can reduce their own carbon footprint and to offset their own emissions, particularly in the area of vehicles. I hope to see it taken up by many people.

(Time expired)

Lobbyists

Mr SPRINGBORG: My question without notice is to the Premier. Will the Premier advise if any staff members in her office have been paid success fees as a lobbyist during the terms of the Beattie-Bligh government and who they are?

Mr Fraser: Lucky you don't operate on one!

Ms BLIGH: Yes, we know that the member for Southern Downs has never received a success fee! Let me be absolutely clear on the issue of success fees. Firstly, I have indicated that I find the practice of lobbyists being paid success fees obscene and that my government will move to ban the practice. That will make Queensland the first state in Australia to do this and will put us where we belong—right on the cutting edge of reforms in relation to integrity and accountability. Secondly, in relation to the quite absurd question from the member for Southern Downs, staff of my office are paid according to the public sector award. They are allocated a wage level and they are paid at that level. So the question is, frankly, absurd.

Mr Springborg: Have any of them been paid success fees?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition!

Ms BLIGH: I think the better question here is whether or not the member for Mudgeeraba and the member for Indooroopilly have ever received a success fee. If you want to talk about lobbyists, they sit amongst you. They are the members of your team. Do you remember—

Mr EMERSON: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I have never been a lobbyist. I find it offensive and I ask the Premier to withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable the Premier, I am in no position to judge whether that statement is true or not but the member finds it offensive.

Ms BLIGH: Mr Speaker, I withdraw, but I would draw to the attention of the House that when the member for Indooroopilly worked for a consultancy firm called, believe it or not, Crook consultancy—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! It is better for the House if you withdraw unreservedly.

Ms BLIGH: Yes, I withdraw, but I do draw to the attention of the House that the member for Indooroopilly—

Opposition members interjected.

Ms BLIGH: I have withdrawn. I withdraw the comment that he found offensive. What I can tell the House is that the member for Indooroopilly rang my chief of staff and rang the minister for infrastructure when he was parliamentary secretary on behalf of his client Multiplex, and they report to me that it sure felt like they were being lobbied. He presents that what he was doing was public relations; it is a funny old kind of public relations when you only speak to one person—one person from whom you are seeking an outcome. I believe it is a dishonest description by the member for Indooroopilly.

Queensland will lead the way when it comes to the application of success—

Mr EMERSON: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point or order. I find those comments offensive and I ask the Premier to withdraw.

Mr Watt interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Everton! I ask the Premier to withdraw the comments that the member finds offensive.

Ms BLIGH: I withdraw the comments, Mr Speaker. It would appear that the member wants us to believe that he had public relations with the government, not lobbying relations.

Mr Springborg: Have they received success fees?

Ms BLIGH: Queensland will continue to lead the way when it comes to accountability and transparency. What we know is that we will be resisted by those opposite every step of way.

Mr Springborg: Have they received success fees as lobbyists? Have they?

Ms BLIGH: They come in here and ask about success fees but they are yet to say they will support a ban on them. They lack credibility.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I have spoken to you a number of times now. I now warn you under standing order 253(2).

Bligh Labor Government

Ms JOHNSTONE: My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier explain what action the government has taken to move Queensland forward this week?

Ms BLIGH: This week our government got on with the job of boosting services, of building vital infrastructure and of modernising Queensland. We are driven by our determination to take Queensland forward in every sphere of activity. This week we have announced our model to legalise surrogacy here in Queensland—taking Queensland forward. We have announced a consultation process on our integrity green paper to give Queenslanders a voice—taking Queensland forward. We signed a \$1.4 billion deal with the Commonwealth on top of our government's \$500 million investment to build 3,418 new public housing dwellings—again—

Government members: Taking Queensland forward.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms BLIGH: We tackled congestion—

Mr Stevens interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Mermaid Beach!

Ms BLIGH: We tackled congestion in the south-east with the rollout of two vehicle response units. We provided \$11 million in the Smart State innovation fund. We have introduced legislation to reform Queensland's compensation system for victims of crime. And today we have introduced a new climate change policy. Every one of them is taking Queensland where? Taking us forward. What do we get from those opposite? What we have seen this week from those opposite is a week of petty, low-rent muckraking—not a single idea.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Stop the clock. I will wait for the House to come to order.

Ms BLIGH: Not a single new idea. The first private member's bill from the member for Surfers Paradise was one that he rephotocopied from the deputy leader. Let us look at what we have seen. When asked about four-year terms in April, what did he say? The member for Surfers Paradise said, 'It is something I'll be putting my mind to but I haven't got around to it yet.' What have we seen? Nothing. Then in May he said, 'It's up to the Premier to come up with ideas,' and he was right because what has he given us?

Government members: Nothing!

Ms BLIGH: In July he said, 'I've got lots of ideas. We're working on policies and we'll roll them out in the coming weeks.' Again?

Government members: Nothing!

Opposition members interjected.

Ms BLIGH: He said it best himself. What did the member for Surfers Paradise say on 27 July at a press conference? He said, 'I've got'—

Government members: Nothing!

Ms BLIGH: And he has demonstrated it again—another week of nothing. That is what we have had from those opposite—action from the government and another week of nothing from the opposition.

Queensland Rugby Union

Mr DEMPSEY: My question is to the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport. Given the minister has now directed that Queensland Rugby recover the \$200,000 it was told to give UQ Rugby and with Queensland Rugby now saying it was only following government direction, can the minister confirm that it was the former minister for sport and now Leader of the House who signed off on the corrupt deal?

Mr REEVES: I thank the honourable member for the question. The matter referred to by the honourable member, as he knows, is under CMC investigation. I am not going to give a running commentary on that investigation, and I will make an appropriate statement after that investigation is complete.

Mr Stevens interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Mermaid Beach, that is your second warning. I now warn you that if this happens again I will take action under standing order 253(2).

Accountability in Government

Ms NELSON-CARR: My question is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health. Can the Deputy Premier inform the House if he is adhering to the transparency and integrity rules of government fundraising events and if his example is being followed by other members?

Mr LUCAS: The Premier has set a very, very high standard in leadership and in providing transparency in relation to these matters. Again, we saw an example this morning of the Leader of the Opposition throwing his old Derek Zoolander 'Blue Steel' looks at the Premier, asking questions about Labor Party fundraising but time and time again saying it is not a matter for him. We know that there is one standard for the opposition and one standard for everyone else.

Next week the highlight of the Canberra social calendar is the National Party Federal Council. Mr Speaker, here are the details if you are interested in it. For \$5,000 a head you can go to the business observers program. That is the one that this Premier said we will not be doing anymore, but they refuse to do that.

Tabled paper: Document by the Nationals 2009 federal council titled 'Our Team' [\[750\]](#).

Tabled paper: Document by the Nationals titled 'Program Highlights' [\[751\]](#).

If you have a look at the program, Mr Speaker, it is renowned for its excellent networking opportunities and access provided for business. As well as a generous social program—well, that will be a bottle—the National Federal Council also provides a range of attractive sponsorship opportunities to showcase your business. Who is going from business? Well, we would not know. Queensland Labor provides its business observers lists; the Leader of the Opposition still will not. One thing is for sure though: it is \$5,000 a head. It is clearly not as much as the \$20,000-a-head pre-election dinner hosted by the then Leader of the Opposition. Will you be going, Leader of the Opposition?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Through the chair.

Mr LUCAS: Will the Leader of the Opposition be going? No, he will not be going because, frankly, he is not a leader so he will not be going to the leaders lunch. The putative leader will be going. But it is all there; it will be a great old lunch. The Leader of the Opposition will be a very light entree, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition will be the main course and the member for Callide will be the cold dessert, because revenge is a dish best served cold. Best of all will be the dessert wine, because it will have a real fruity crowd there—the members for Beaudesert and Burnett.

I was doing a bit of reading of the papers this morning, and in the *Australian* Barnaby Joyce says that it is about time we split the Liberal National Party. I do not know what is going to happen with the \$5,000. I say to business observers there: if you are going to lunch, be very, very careful because they have form when it comes to splitting bills. The last time they tried to split a bill the member for Mermaid Waters and the member for Condamine ended up in a punch-up. Be very, very careful. They cannot split a party, they cannot split a bill, but most of all there is one rule that applies to them and one rule that applies to everybody else.

Mr McArdle: Not one word about health in this state. Not one word.

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

Mr McArdle: Not one word.

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

A government member: That wasn't the question.

Ms Bligh: Ask him a question.

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

Ms Bligh: Haven't got the guts for it.

Mr Johnson: The Speaker is standing up.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gregory and the Premier will cease interjecting.

Mr Johnson: I was trying to help you, Mr Speaker.

Queensland Rugby Union

Mr NICHOLLS: My question is directed to the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport. Given that the minister has publicly confirmed that the CMC is investigating the dodgy UQ Rugby deal, can the minister advise if it was the former minister for sport or Di Farmer, the then acting executive director for sport and recreation and now member for Bulimba, who signed off on the dodgy deal?

Ms SPENCE: Mr Speaker, can I ask for a ruling on this question? I did not ask for it on the previous question because I think the question was entitled to be asked. The word 'corrupt' was used in the previous question. The word 'dodgy' was used in this question. Standing orders state that questions shall not contain imputations or inferences. I suggest that both of those questions have done that, and I would ask your ruling on the matter.

Mr SPEAKER: Let me seek advice on it. I listened carefully to the previous question. I am less inclined with this one. I will ask the honourable member to reword the question.

Mr NICHOLLS: Given that the minister has publicly confirmed that the CMC is investigating this questionable UQ Rugby deal, can the minister advise if it was the former minister for sport or Di Farmer, the then acting executive director for sport and recreation and now member for Bulimba, who signed off on the deal?

Mr REEVES: I thank the honourable member for the question. As I have said, this matter is before the CMC. This matter was referred to the CMC by the director-general of the Department of Communities on 5 May. Whilst it is inappropriate for me to comment on a matter that is being investigated, I can advise the House that the QRU has been requested to reinstate the \$200,000 for the original grant purpose.

I should make the House aware of some comments that were received when we were lobbied about the grant for the QRU.

It is my view that given the nature of this facility redevelopment, and the amount of services which can be offered for so many different sports, including the areas of training and rehabilitation, and that your Government is seeking developed propositions and a clear costing basis for any commitment, that this proposal is very worthy of consideration.

The letter goes on—

I understand that QRU is seeking in the vicinity of \$25m for this project which has been well planned and properly costed and seeks to create several hundred jobs.

It goes on—

I would appreciate your views and consideration of support—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr REEVES: They don't want to hear it, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Resume your seat. I will wait for the House to come to order.

Mr REEVES: It continues—

I would appreciate your views and consideration of support which your Govt may be able to give to this visionary and worthwhile proposal, particularly in the current environment of job security.

Who was the author of this glowing endorsement? None other than the previous and future Leader of the Opposition, the member for Southern Downs himself. I table the letter from the member for Southern Downs.

Tabled paper: Copy of letter, dated 9 December 2008, from Mr Springborg MP to the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Sport relating to redevelopment of Ballymore [\[752\]](#).

Jobs

Mr CHOI: My question is directed to the Treasurer and Minister for Employment and Economic Development. Can the Treasurer advise the House of government initiatives that encourage investment and protect jobs in the state of Queensland?

Mr FRASER: I thank the member for Capalaba for his question. Earlier today I outlined a new grant under our industry incentives program for the Laminex company at Gympie. I can also advise the House that today we are also announcing a grant to another company—a South-East Queensland company this time—HE Tech, which is based at Coorparoo. This is a leading company in electronics design which is undertaking new research and developing new products for remote-controlled technology that will have particular application in the home and in other businesses. Currently those materials are generally imported, and this will enable production within Australia and therefore the opportunity to export to markets.

While we are getting on with the job of supporting business, supporting industry, supporting jobs and supporting export markets, the LNP is getting on with the job of spin and obfuscation. What we have seen during this week is a new high in the twisting and turning of the Leader of the Opposition in his denial to disclose who went to the cash for access dinners and, more to the point, a denial that cash for access dinners should cease. What we saw on Tuesday was him claiming that neither he nor his deputy kept a record. The deputy does not have to keep a record.

Ms Bligh: He was there!

Mr FRASER: He was there. Surely he kept a memory. It was his golden time in life. It was the 'I'm about to become Premier' dinner. After all, it is not every day you have a \$20,000-a-plate T-bone.

Mr Lucas: Or is it?

Mr FRASER: Or perhaps the whole problem is that it is every day that you have a \$20,000 T-bone. What has happened since then is that yesterday the shadow Treasurer admitted that he was there, but so far he has not said who was at the dinner. Perhaps he could help out the Leader of the Opposition, because we know at the moment that the shadow Treasurer is quite desperate to help out the Leader of the Opposition at every point in time. What did we see on Tuesday? The Leader of the Opposition said—

... at no stage have I or the opposition refused to provide details of those who donated to a fundraising dinner prior to the state election ...

He is doing a pretty good impersonation of someone who is refusing to provide it. What happened on Tuesday? The LNP slipped out that a \$331,000 donation from Altum had been received. Who or what is Altum? Altum has directors who are Graham Heilbron and Bruce McIver. Then the LNP director, Michael O'Dwyer, was asked if that disclosure included who was at the dinner, and he said, 'I honestly don't know.' So far what we have seen is that the Leader of the Opposition will not tell, the deputy will not say, the shadow Treasurer will not say and the LNP director does not know. They continue to deny, to not disclose and to deceive. When it gets to Tuesday there will be no list disclosed. On this front the Leader of the Opposition needs to disclose the full list on Tuesday of who was at the \$20,000-a-head dinner.

(Time expired)

Lobbyists

Mr GIBSON: My question is to the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning. I note that all of the private sector Coordinator-General declared significant projects over the past financial year have involved the use of in-house lobbyists or external lobbyists listed on the register of lobbyists. Can the minister explain why nothing happens in his department without the use of lobbyists?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank the honourable member for his question. This issue has been discussed on a number of occasions in this House over the past couple of sitting weeks. These issues around integrity and access to government have clearly been the subject of the day. There has been a practice that a number of private companies have chosen to use to be part of their interaction with government. It is not my role and it is certainly not the Coordinator-General's role to determine what decisions the private sector might make about what arrangements they have, what consultations they have and the consultants they might have in any number of fields. In relation to public relations—

Ms Bligh: Like Crook Consulting.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Like Crook Consulting. I take the interjection from the Premier. We have no input in relation to the other professional services they might use.

If the honourable gentleman has an allegation or a specific matter that he wants to raise in relation to these issues he should refer those matters to the Crime and Misconduct Commission or bring them up in this House. If there is something that the honourable gentleman thinks needs to be brought to the attention of the House and brought to the attention of the people of Queensland then he should bring it up in here.

Mr Gibson: I just did. Every private sector

Mr SPEAKER: Order! You have asked your question. I call the honourable minister.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I think the honourable member has made his point in raising this issue. He has highlighted the fact that a range of activities have been undertaken by a range of private sector proponents.

The government is not making those choices. The government is dealing appropriately and properly with—particularly the Coordinator-General—assessments of these projects. The independent assessment process that has been undertaken under the auspices of the Coordinator-General has been done for many years past. Dating back to 1938 coordinators-general have played an important role in the development of this state. The Coordinator-General has played an important role in the development of this state. Private sector proponents on a range of activities have played an important role in promoting the development of this state. Those processes are not in question here.

Western Corridor Recycled Water Project

Mrs MILLER: My question is to the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade. Could the minister please outline to the House the latest achievements for the Western Corridor Recycled Water Project?

Mr ROBERTSON: I am pleased to announce today that Brisbane has been chosen as the location of the new National Centre of Excellence in Water Recycling. The Bligh government's Western Corridor Recycled Water Project will receive federal funding of some \$20 million over five years to develop and commercialise water recycling technology. Hosting the centre in Brisbane is a great coup for Queensland and is recognition of our world-leading work in response to the worst drought on record. To be able to use this knowledge and adapt it for national and international application is a wonderful result for Queensland and a great opportunity to put Australia on the map as a global leader in water technologies.

On top of this success comes the knowledge that the Bligh government has virtually drought proofed Queensland's electricity network. The National Electricity Market Management Company, NEMMCO, produces drought scenario investigation reports. Its June 2009 report found that Queensland's generation capacity would not be impacted if we were to return to the drought like conditions of 2006-07.

Why did NEMMCO find this? Because the Bligh government made the hard decisions and built an \$8 billion water grid. These water management strategies have drought proofed Queensland's electricity network. This is the sixth consecutive NEMMCO report since November 2007 forecasting that Queensland's generation capacity availability would be materially unaffected by low rainfall conditions. Six times in a row this government has been found to have planned for the future by drought proofing our electricity supply.

On a related matter, as a result of statements I made to this House earlier this week about the conflict of interest by Senator Barnaby Joyce in terms of his interests with Cubbie Station, I note the level of objection that he has taken to this. He has invited me to make claims outside the House so that he can build a new swimming pool. I do not think Senator Joyce should start digging yet. I table for the information of the House the donor to political parties annual return for 2004-05 from Cubbie Station listing 'National Party Barnaby Joyce campaign, \$5,000'.

Tabled paper: Copy of document titled 'Donor to Political Parties Annual Return 2004-05' [\[753\]](#).

I add to that the transcript of the official committee *Hansard* for the Senate of 2 August 2006 where Barnaby Joyce says in relation to being antagonised by his good friend Senator Heffernan—

This is a framing set-up. I will make a declaration of interest. I received a political donation from Cubbie Station during the election campaign.

An opposition member: What is wrong with that? He declared it.

Mr ROBERTSON: He denied it. Barnaby Joyce denied that he had received a donation from Cubbie Station. He has invited me to make the claims outside so that he can start digging a swimming pool. The only thing that Barnaby Joyce has dug is his own hole. I table the transcript.

Tabled paper: Extract from Commonwealth Official Committee Hansard for the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Reference Committee, dated 2 August 2006, pages 21-23 [754].

Political Fundraisers

Mr HORAN: My question without notice is to the honourable Premier. As the Premier is the incoming president of the federal Labor Party will she be insisting that the federal Labor Party under her presidency ban corporate dinners and cash-for-access business observer programs, which she claims she is now philosophically opposed to, or will the Premier simply be a figurehead puppet for the Prime Minister?

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will wait for the House to come to order. Those on my right. I call the honourable Premier.

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. Again we see the Liberal National Party calling on me to make reforms beyond the state boundaries for something it refuses to do itself. What we have seen this morning is nothing short of extraordinary. I am gobsmacked that the member for Toowoomba South would have the gall to stand here and ask the question. Let us be absolutely clear. Queensland will lead the country under my reforms to ban exclusive corporate fundraisers, to ban success fees, to disclose as much information as possible.

What is the Liberal National Party doing? It is having one of these events this weekend. Is the member for Toowoomba South going to be there? Are they selling you for \$5,000 on the weekend?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Premier, direct your comments through the chair.

Ms BLIGH: No, I do not think you would be worth it. I understand that point. Let me be clear about what is happening at a federal level in the Labor Party because I am happy to have a chance to talk about this. The federal Labor Party came into government with a commitment to reform in this area. It has put a public discussion paper out that actively canvasses every one of these issues.

Mr Nicholls interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Clayfield.

Ms BLIGH: Even more extraordinary, the federal Labor Party introduced into the federal parliament legislation that will reduce the disclosure limits and ban foreign donations. What have the Liberal and National parties done in the Senate? They have blocked it in the Senate. We have been treated to the extraordinary—

Mr Horan: You have one system here and another system down there.

Ms BLIGH: But I tell you what we will be doing, we will be making absolutely certain that there will not be one system on this side of politics and another over there. There will be a level playing field. You will be dragged kicking and screaming to reform. We will move legislation in this House that will ban these activities because you do not have the backbone to do it yourself.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable Premier, direct your comments through chair.

Ms BLIGH: The Liberal National Party's hypocrisy on this issue knows no bounds. What it should be doing is getting its federal colleagues to vote for the legislation that is in the parliament. I am supporting the federal Labor Party in its efforts to reform these matters nationally and I am taking the lead here in Queensland. Once again, Queensland Labor is leading and Queensland as a state is leading. We reform and you resist. What a shambles the Liberal National Party is on this issue.

Solar and Energy Efficiency Program in Queensland State Schools

Mrs ATTWOOD: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. Could the minister provide an update of the rollout of the Bligh government's Solar and Energy Efficiency Program in schools?

Mr WILSON: I am delighted to respond to the honourable member's question. Through the Solar and Energy Efficiency Program in Queensland schools, we are making use of the state's abundant sunshine and working to produce energy efficiency lighting and also reduce the dependence of schools on fossil fuels. We have had a successful trial in 15 schools across the state of our \$60 million Solar and Energy Efficiency Program, and it is progressing well. The program has been rolled out in four schools

in the Mount Ommaney electorate since May this year—Jamboree Heights State School, Jindalee State School, Middle Park State School and Corinda State School. They have all been fitted with solar panels and with some energy efficiency lighting. This program is another way in which the Bligh government is meeting its commitments of creating jobs for Queenslanders and also making this a greener state.

The vital target of the Bligh government Toward Q2 plan is to cut Queensland's carbon emissions by almost one-third over the next 12 years. This is an investment in energy and solar efficiency, it is good for the environment and it is also good for the economy in creating green jobs. Already more than 131 schools have had solar panels and energy efficiency lighting installed, and in the current financial year, through an investment of \$43 million of the total of \$60 million, 590 schools will have solar panels and energy efficiency lighting installed. In total, there are about 400 jobs being created in the installation of this \$60 million program, and these are green jobs in the solar, electrical and information technology sectors. We have also planned for a reduction of energy consumption in state schools of at least 30 per cent, and this initiative will also achieve a saving of about 20,000 tonnes of CO₂ each year after its full implementation.

This is a very innovative approach to the renewable energy challenges that we face in Queensland, but it is also being built into opportunities to train students in each school in interactive online units that encourage students to understand better how solar energy makes a big difference, how energy efficiency makes a very big difference in the carbon footprint of our schools and to educate the broader community in the importance of renewable energy and energy efficiency for the future wellbeing of the climate in Queensland, Australia and the world.

Establishment of Royal Commission, Allegations of Corruption

Mr SEENEY: My question without notice is to the Premier. Last week the Premier rejected the establishment of a royal commission into allegations of corruption in her government. This week many further questions have emerged in this parliament about donations from people charged with corruption, a disregard for the ministerial code of conduct, claims by a former parliamentary secretary that he could lean on his Labor mates and more issues of cronyism and corruption in the allocation of public funds and government decision making. As the CMC has advised the opposition that, unlike the Fitzgerald inquiry, it cannot look into these types of ethical issues, the question now is: will the Premier today establish a royal commission to clean up the corruption in her government?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. On this issue I have yet to see one allegation from the opposition that does not fall within the jurisdiction of the CMC. I note some—

Mr Seeneey: The CMC's already advised us. We went down there and saw them.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Callide, you have asked your question.

Ms BLIGH: That must have been exciting for them! Let us go to the—

Mr Seeneey: Do you want to have a joint meeting? Come with us!

Ms BLIGH: Let us go to the list that was just rattled off by the member for Callide. What have we established here in this parliament this week about the code of conduct for ministers? It has been complied with. So should we have a royal commission into the fact that the ministerial code of conduct is being complied with? That does not seem to make much sense. Again, we have not one allegation of any matter that falls outside of the jurisdiction of the CMC. I note that some commentators in the last week or so have quite erroneously made assertions that the CMC can only investigate matters that amount to criminal conduct.

Mr Seeneey: Official misconduct; official misconduct!

Ms BLIGH: That is true in relation to members of parliament, but it is not true in relation to members of the public sector. The allegation that was inferred, for example, here this morning by the member for Gympie was that the Coordinator-General had somehow acted improperly. The Coordinator-General's behaviour is subject to the jurisdiction of the CMC.

Mr GIBSON: I rise to a point of order. I appreciate that the Premier may not have been paying attention, but that is not correct.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Come to your point of order.

Mr GIBSON: I ask her to withdraw. It is clearly incorrect and I take offence to it.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The matter has to be personally offensive. I could not see that that fitted into that category.

Ms BLIGH: There were questions about a sports grant involving Queensland Rugby Union, a grant that was actively supported by the member for Southern Downs. That matter is within the jurisdiction of the CMC and is being investigated by it. Who referred it to it? The government did—the director-general of the department acting appropriately under the law.

Mr Dempsey: Tactical lying.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Just resume your seat—

Ms BLIGH: Mr Speaker, I take the interjection—

Mr SPEAKER: Well, before you do—

Ms BLIGH:—as a description of the member for Callide.

Mr SPEAKER:—can I deal with the matter, Premier? The word is unparliamentary. You will withdraw that, straight up.

Mr DEMPSEY: Mr Speaker, the comments were used on two occasions by the Premier herself yesterday. However, today I unequivocally withdraw those comments if the Premier finds them offensive in any way.

Mr SPEAKER: No, I am the one ruling on it, and I will tell you why I am ruling differently on the two occasions: one is, I inferred, from a report—I think it was a parliamentary committee report with that title. Normally I will not accept that word in the parliament, and that is how I am ruling today. The interjection I heard was ‘tactical lying’. To my way of thinking, that did not refer to the committee report. I took that as the interjection, straight up. Therefore, it is unparliamentary. Therefore, I am asking you to withdraw it.

Mr DEMPSEY: Yes, Mr Speaker. I unequivocally withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you very much for your help. I call the Premier.

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member. Thank you, Mr Speaker. What we saw in the last sitting of the parliament was the members of the Liberal National Party and a number of Independents vote against the CMC. There was an opportunity for them to support the independence and powers of an independent Crime and Misconduct Commission, and they voted against it. They have form on this matter. What we see from them today is a continual attempt to undermine the independent watchdog, the Crime and Misconduct Commission, just as they did the last time they were in government. There are, on my count, five members of the frontbench who worked when they were in government last time to spend public money undermining the CMC, and here they are doing it again. There has not been one piece of evidence or one allegation brought to the parliament this week that would justify a royal commission and the expenditure of public funds on it.

(Time expired)

Traveston Dam

Mrs KEECH: My question is to the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning. With regard to Traveston Dam, the extremely generous acquisition policy for property has recently been a matter of media comment. Will the minister advise the House if he has had any indication whether the members opposite support the government policy related to delivering this important project for water supply in South-East Queensland?

Mr Gibson: I can't believe you're asking that question!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member—

An honourable member: You made a fool of yourself in the paper this morning.

Mr Gibson: She just made a fool of herself in the House!

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

Mrs KEECH: I rise to a point of order. I find the comments by the member personally offensive and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr GIBSON: I am happy to withdraw. I am surprised the member does not know my position on the Traveston Crossing Dam. I withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: A withdrawal was sufficient.

Mr Lucas: You don't buy land before they make approval?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Deputy Premier, I have asked for order three times. You have left me with no other avenue other than to warn you under standing order 253(2).

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I would like to thank the member for Albert for her question. The House might be aware that the former Premier, Peter Beattie, enjoyed the media spotlight. That may be something that people may have noticed in his time in that role as Premier. It is my belief that he would be absolutely thrilled to know that a Traveston Dam press release, sent out more than three years ago, is still making front-page news.

As announced by the former Premier in July 2006—and I table for the benefit of all members of the House that press release—the Traveston land purchasing policy, which has been subject to some media comment in recent days, was set up to ensure that landowners were paid fair market value for their land, including provision for reasonable costs incurred as a result of selling their property to Queensland Water Infrastructure.

Tabled paper: Ministerial media statement by office of Premier, dated 5 July 2006, titled 'Beattie Government to build dam at Traveston' [755].

Many people may wonder why those opposite have been so quiet about this issue considering the front-page coverage it has received—and we know how often the opposition's strategy is led by the front page of one of the journals of record.

But to me, it is obvious. For instance, I am happy to advise the House that the member for Gympie has repeatedly written to me seeking further compensation for the Mary Valley residents. Indeed, on 3 August I received a letter from the member for Gympie seeking support for real estate agents in the Mary Valley. The honourable member felt that the agents deserved further compensation despite the fact that Queensland Water Infrastructure has exclusively engaged local real estate agents since October 2006 to handle property management in the area as per the guarantees of the then Premier.

Mr Gibson: You might not support Queensland but I will every time.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Just resume your seat. Order! The honourable member for Gympie, I have warned you and warned you today. That is your last warning—253(2).

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I point out a second letter from the member for Gympie, which I happened to reply to on Tuesday this week, again seeking additional compensation for a local Mary Valley business.

It seems that the National Party—the Nationals, in classic agrarian socialist style—would seek greater compensation than even the generous state government system has already provided. In fact, the honourable gentleman has written to me and to my predecessor regarding land issues on no fewer than 10 separate occasions over the past 18 months. There are also five occasions where he sought reassurance that the state government's lease-back policy would remain unaltered or would be extended to allow additional compensation.

But in response to his extraordinary comments in today's media about the state government's purchase of land for stage 2 of the project, let me state that this is obvious. It is standard practice to buy land prior to approval of a project. Just as land is regularly bought for road and rail corridors, land purchasing for stage 2 is simply good long-term planning. These people have made an absolutely extraordinary set of statements in the paper today.

(Time expired)

Suncoast Junior Motorcycle Club, Suncoast Model Flyers

Mr WELLINGTON: My question is to the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning. Yesterday I attended a meeting with government representatives to assist in putting the case to extend the lease for the Suncoast Junior Motorcycle Club and the Suncoast Model Flyers over land at the Coolum Industrial Estate on the Sunshine Coast. At the meeting one reason provided by department officers to not extend the motocross club lease was concern they had about noise coming from the club grounds possibly reaching a new residential estate being developed in the area. I ask: will the minister support the Sunshine Coast Regional Council placing a notation on the land being developed in the area so that all potential new landowners will be aware of their proximity to the motocross club site?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I want to thank the honourable member for Nicklin for his question. Indeed, I am very aware of the meeting he had yesterday with representatives of the Department of Infrastructure and Planning and representatives from my office with Councillor Vivien Griffin from the Sunshine Coast Regional Council in relation to the future of the Suncoast Model Flyers and also the junior motorcycle club, which the member has raised in his question.

These clubs currently occupy an undeveloped area of land at Quanda Road Coolum, which forms part of the proposed Coolum Industrial Estate. Since their initial occupation by way of an informal tenancy provided about the state government, the clubs have been aware that that land was held for industrial development. I appreciate that the member for Nicklin understands that.

Since the inception of stage 1 of the development in 2004, the Department of Infrastructure and Planning's Property Services Group has been working closely with club officials concerning the project and the short- and long-term needs of both clubs. In 2008, the state government offered the clubs a formal five-year lease of the land, meaning that they will not have to vacate until 2013—a measure of surety that they would not otherwise have had until that formal lease was provided. Development of the Coolum Industrial Estate is being undertaken in stages. Stage 1 consists of the development of 24.5 hectares and includes the transfer of 35 hectares of land to the Department of Environment and Resource Management for inclusion in the Noosa National Park, which is indeed a very good outcome.

The Coolum Industrial Estate project aims to ensure that developed industrial land is readily available to meet the economic recovery issues as they occur and make sure that job opportunities happen on the Sunshine Coast. This industrial estate is particularly vital in that there is very limited availability of land suitable for industrial development on the Sunshine Coast.

The government has also provided support for recreational opportunities for the community. I understand that the Property Services Group has been investigating alternative sites that may be suitable for the relocation of the junior motorcycle club and indeed the model flyers, including having discussions with Queensland Water Infrastructure about the possibility of alternative land being made available within the Traveston Dam land buffer. We have also funded 50 per cent of the costs of the Sunshine Coast Regional Council's Noisy and Hard-to-Locate Sports Study, which has been investigating possible sites within the council's boundaries.

I appreciate that the member for Nicklin has expressed his desire to see the junior motorcycle club stay on site. I understand the concerns that the council has raised about the nearby development of residential property. In response to those matters, I have no objection to the Sunshine Coast Regional Council taking action if it sees fit to promote harmony between the motorcycle club and nearby residents.

(Time expired)

Responsible Gambling

Mrs SULLIVAN: My question is to the Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading. Can the minister inform the House of what the Bligh government is doing to promote responsible gambling?

Mr LAWLOR: It goes without saying that one problem gambler in Queensland is one problem gambler too many. The Bligh government is meeting its commitment to gambling law reform and harm minimisation in Queensland. Gaming licences are a privilege and not a right in Queensland and the community is our priority when issuing licences.

I am proud to say that, under a Labor government, Queensland has some of the toughest gaming conditions and will do anything that is necessary to penalise breaches. In fact, in the past 12 months our gaming officers have issued 16,328, or \$2.8 million in fines. We have also placed a cap on electronic gaming machines, with 24,000 for clubs and 20,000 for hotels.

This draws a stark comparison to those opposite who have a record on gambling regulation in Queensland which is abysmal. While we have some of the toughest conditions for getting a gaming licence, in the bad old days of the National Party government you were only one brown paper bag away from a roulette wheel or a poker machine. We do not know what the LNP policy is on responsible gambling. However, who can forget the member for Beaudesert's 'Ausvegas' responsible gambling policy. That is right: under the strong leadership of the member for Surfers Paradise the member for Beaudesert told anyone who would listen about the LNP's solution to problem gambling. It is simple: you take all the poker machines in Queensland and dump them in a Las Vegas style town near Roma.

I do not know what he has against the people of Roma. Then you give the Packer family a call so that they can come along and build the infrastructure and the airport that would be needed to make it a success. This he said 'will alleviate the scourge of problem gambling'.

The Leader of the Opposition has no control over his party and we continue to see this on a daily basis. When he stands up and takes control of his party they might take him seriously, including opposition members.

(Time expired)

Mr SPEAKER: The time for questions has expired.

PROPERTY LAW AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 23 April (see p. 175), on motion of Mr Dick—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 am): The LNP will be supporting this bill. Previously, a bill had been introduced into the parliament which sought to transfer de facto property law matters to the Family Court but it was not in line with the federal government references at that time. As previously moved in this House, this bill follows a reference of power by the states in 1990 to enable the Family Court to determine children's issues for de facto couples. I previously stated in this House that if it is accepted that the Family Court is to be the body to determine issues of children arising from the breakdown of relationship for de facto couples then it seems sensible that property matters be also heard in the same court. We may all have our own views

on definitions of de facto relationships or what the Family Court will hear in the way of matters; however, that is something that has been passed by the Commonwealth parliament and now this legislation enables it to be properly enacted.

This bill makes a practical move to streamline property law matters arising from relationship breakdown in line with what has already come before with regard to relationship breakdown involving children. In effect, this bill will ensure that any matter related to a relationship breakdown that occurs post 1 March 2009 will have to be heard under the Family Law Act. The bill will allow for de facto couples whose relationships break down prior to 1 March to have the choice to opt in to the federal scheme.

The proposed advantages of the amendments include the provision of a predominantly nationally consistent financial settlement regime to minimise jurisdictional disputes and uncertainties that sometimes impeach settlements of these matters under state and territory law. The family law courts have experience in relationship matters and have procedures and dispute resolution mechanisms more suited to handling family litigation. The relevant family law courts will hear together both financial and child related matters arising between separated de facto couples. The relevant family law courts may also make orders relating to superannuation splitting, orders relating to the maintenance of a party, orders about the bankruptcy of a party and orders binding third parties in related proceedings. I guess the one positive thing that will flow from these amendments on to the Queensland courts is that they will alleviate some of the burden on our ever-struggling court system.

In the context of current debate in our community there may indeed be some concern with regard to the application of these particular laws at a national level. At a time when people are debating issues of same-sex relationships and rights of same-sex couples when it comes to the issue of children, access to marriage and having their relationship officially recognised, I think it is important to actually outline for the parliament that nothing in this legislation and nothing in the enabling legislation at the Commonwealth level actually indicates anything to do with same-sex marriage. I just want to make sure that people do not get confused by that, because that is an issue that pops up when we start talking about issues of distribution of property in the case of same-sex couples.

Certainly my own particular view is this: I do not believe in same-sex marriage. I am sure there would be many people on the other side of the parliament who would have the same view. However, when it comes to certain financial matters, I think we do need to understand that there are relationships and that there needs to be an equitable and just process for those people who are leaving those relationships, whether they be of a heterosexual nature or same-sex nature, to have property distributed fairly and to address those particular matters, which can be extremely difficult in the emotional cauldron which often results from relationship breakdown.

There is a further element of fairness in this legislation because it actually allows, as I pointed out a moment ago, those who have been through a relationship breakdown, particularly a relationship breakdown involving children, to have all of their matters dealt with concurrently in the same jurisdiction—a specialist jurisdiction that has specialist people who are able to deal with those particular issues. Of course I am talking about our family law courts. If people are dealing with the custody of children, they should be able to at the same time deal with the distribution of any property and the particular orders that may go with that.

I think it is also fair to say that, whilst our courts in Queensland, whether it be the District Court or the Supreme Court, have dealt with matters in recent times with regard to the distribution of property in de facto relationship breakdowns, both heterosexual and same-sex, certainly the process is more costly and it is not a specialist jurisdiction. Therefore, it does make sense to give people that opportunity in the federal jurisdiction.

My view is that we should continue to maintain a special recognition of marriage if it ever comes under threat. It is something which is very special and very important between a man and a woman. Whilst I understand that more and more people in this day and age are choosing to have a diversity of relationships, as is their right in a free society, in no way should we seek to devalue the very special institution of marriage. I understand that there are people who are part of a longstanding de facto relationship and that it is a very loving environment for the raising of their children. However, people who do take that very special step of getting married believe it is an important thing. It is an extraspecial commitment which is actually recognised contractually in law. A lot of people who are married ask me, 'What is special about being married in this day and age?' Often it is far more difficult to be married because there is no special recognition. Why would we take that particular step when if we choose not to be married we can have exactly the same opportunities that might have existed for married couples only? Whilst I do understand that argument and I think there is some degree of veracity in that argument, we need to understand the changing nature of relationships and the way people commit to them. We should always maintain in our own minds and generally in our own words a special recognition of the importance of marriage and the extraspecial commitment and the extraspecial contractual arrangement and obligations that go with that.

I also understand that it does not matter how compatible people may think they are, relationships do break down. An increasing number of relationships are breaking down. That is unfortunate. We do know that people can change their mind or unknown factors and circumstances can come to the fore after people make a particular commitment in a relationship. Therefore, if there is a relationship breakdown, whether it be a married or de facto couple, there needs to be cost-effective, compassionate, specialist, professional processes for them to go through as they seek to rebuild their life, get their life in order and negotiate this extraordinary emotional and heartbreaking maze that often follows the breakdown of a relationship. I think in many ways this legislation will go some way towards providing that opportunity to a range of Queenslanders who, until the passage of this legislation and its assent, have not been able to gain access to that. With those few words, I again indicate that the LNP will be supporting the legislation before the parliament.

Mr WATT (Everton—ALP) (11.39 am): I rise to speak in support of this bill. The bill amends the Property Law Act 1974 and the Duties Act 2001 to streamline the legal process for de facto couples who separate. We are debating this bill following the decision by the Commonwealth government to accept the referral of power in this area from Queensland.

Up until 1 March 2009, de facto couples who separated in Queensland had to access two different jurisdictions to have disputes resolved. Disputes about the division of property were dealt with in Queensland courts under the Property Law Act and disputes about custody of and access to children were dealt with in family law courts under the Family Law Act. I am sure that members can see the inconvenience and inefficiency of this duplication of legal processes where on the breakdown of a de facto relationship a couple would be faced with having to go to two different courts in two different jurisdictions to sort out who would have ongoing access and custody of the children of the relationship and to go to another court entirely to deal with property issues. This of course comes at an emotional time when people are dealing with the emotional fallout of a relationship breakdown.

As early as 1993, the Queensland Law Reform Commission expressed the view that the federal family law courts are the most suitable forum to hear and determine financial disputes which arise on the breakdown of a de facto relationship. The Standing Committee of Attorneys-General, which is the body containing all attorneys-general around the country, has considered the referral of state powers for the division of property on the breakdown of a de facto relationship to the Commonwealth since the early 1990s. However, there was one obstacle—and that was the Howard federal government.

Year after year, despite repeated requests from state attorneys-general, the Howard government failed to agree on a suitable referral of jurisdiction over disputes involving de facto couples from the states. Fortunately, the Rudd Labor government has taken a different approach. In November 2008, the federal parliament passed legislation that facilitates states referring to the Commonwealth the power to deal with financial matters arising from de facto relationship breakdowns. That legislation took effect on 1 March this year.

One key difference in the Rudd government's approach was that its legislation ensured that states could refer powers to deal with same-sex relationships as well as heterosexual de facto relationships. The Howard government refused to extend its legislation to same-sex relationships, meaning that on a relationship breakdown same-sex couples would need to go to a federal court to determine custody and access to children of the relationship and to a state court to determine how their property would be shared. I consider that an unfair and onerous burden to impose on these couples, especially considering it would be occurring at a time when both parties would be dealing with the emotional fallout of a relationship breakdown.

I understand that there are some members of the community—and certainly they were represented in the Howard government—who have strong objections to the notion of same-sex relationships, but I would have thought in this day and age we need to accept the reality of those relationships existing and ensure that those people are not put through duplicate processes—having to go to different courts to try to resolve some of the lingering differences from their relationship. I am pleased to see that the Rudd government has taken a different approach and made it a lot easier for these couples.

The Labor Party has long been committed to assisting de facto couples. In 1999, following the failure of the Commonwealth's acceptance of a suitable referral from the states about de facto property settlements, the Labor government enacted amendments to the Property Law Act that provided for de facto couple property rights, including rights following a relationship breakdown. In 2002, the state Labor government passed the Discrimination Law Amendment Act, which reformed Queensland legislation to give people in de facto relationships the same rights as married people in significant areas.

As is the case with same-sex relationships, I recognise that in some quarters the concept of de facto relationships remains controversial. But we must face reality—the proportion of Australians in de facto relationships is increasing all the time. The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports that in 2006 de facto relationships made up 15 per cent of the total number of people in a registered marriage or in a de facto relationship. This was up from 12 per cent in 2001 and 10 per cent in 1996. So there has been a five per cent jump over 10 years.

I have had some research done to check the figures in my own electorate of Everton. The 2006 census showed that about 13 per cent of couples—people either in a registered marriage or in a de facto relationship—were in a de facto relationship. Again, despite the fact that some people have concerns about the notion of de facto relationships, I think we do need to accept the reality that these relationships are growing. They do not mean a lack of love between the parties. Some people choose to be married; others have very long and successful relationships and do not choose to go through a marriage procedure, and that number is increasing all the time.

So I was concerned to hear in one of the earlier debates that we have had this week on the Adoption Bill the number of comments made by opposition members that were quite derogatory of de facto relationships. That bill of course considered the ability of de facto couples to adopt children. Opposition member after opposition member got on their feet to express real concerns about de facto relationships such as the stability of them. In the time I have had to look at the *Hansard* I note that the member for Beaudesert made those kinds of comments. The member for Mudgeeraba questioned the stability of de facto relationships. Probably the most surprising of all was the member for Cleveland, who dug up what he called statistics to demonstrate that child abuse was more prevalent in de facto relationships.

I think that these are incredible slurs on, as I say, the increasing proportion of the population who choose to have a de facto relationship. I am sure that every member of this parliament has friends and family members who have been in long-term de facto relationships. Again, they have been extremely successful, loving relationships—loving to their children and loving to each other. To throw those kinds of slurs at the increasing number of people adopting this kind of relationship I think is shameful. I must say that it reflects the fact that the opposition members are really out of touch with modern society. They are stuck in the past. They are stuck in the 1950s. They are not dealing with the contemporary times that we are living in.

What concerned me most about that debate was the number of first-term members of the opposition who were making those comments. One would expect that some of the younger and newer members of the opposition would have a more enlightened attitude towards family structures and the contemporary life of Australians. But, again, as far as I could see—and I may be wrong in this—every new member of the opposition, elected only five months ago, was amongst the crew who were throwing slurs at people in de facto relationships, questioning their stability and questioning their fitness to have children. It really does worry me. We have come to expect those kinds of attitudes from some of the older and longer term members of the National Party, but to see those kinds of attitudes deeply ingrained in new members of the parliament—

Mr Shine: It's a worry.

Mr WATT: I take the interjection from the member for Toowoomba North—it is a real worry for the future of this parliament and for the future of this state. It does make one wonder what sort of attitude these people would take should they ever have the opportunity to take government. What sorts of laws will they introduce? This is not just about their attitude to de facto couples; it brings into question their entire attitude towards society if they bring a 1950s approach to life in Australia today.

Mr Springborg: What about the attitude I brought to this bill?

Mr WATT: I take the interjection from the member for Southern Downs.

Mr Shine: Amazing—a true Liberal!

Mr WATT: I heard what the member for Southern Downs said earlier. I think there are a few questionable comments about de facto relationships in what you had to say as well.

Mr Springborg: I said that marriage—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Order! The member for Southern Downs has had his turn. I ask that all comments be directed through the chair, member for Everton. Member for Toowoomba North, you will have your turn next.

Mr WATT: Again, whether we are talking about the member for Southern Downs or talking about some of the new members of parliament, this deeply conservative, out of touch, intolerant view of family structures is deeply ingrained throughout most members of the opposition.

Mr Springborg: You hate marriage.

Mr WATT: I take the interjection from the member for Southern Downs. He accuses me of hating marriage. He obviously has not had a look at the ring on my finger. I have personally chosen to become married to my wife.

Ms Farmer: And a lovely lady she is.

Mr WATT: Yes, and a lovely lady she is. That did come after a period of time where we had a de facto relationship. We chose to make a commitment to each other that was lifelong. We chose to make a commitment in front of our closest friends and family but, unlike the member for Southern Downs, I respect the fact that not everyone does want to make that choice. It does not diminish the love that they

feel for each other and it does not diminish the love that they feel for their children. Bringing it back to the bill, it does not diminish their right to have a streamlined and accessible process to deal with their relationship breakdown. It should not deny them the ability to have these legal disputes resolved quickly, cheaply and efficiently.

The key effects of the Commonwealth taking up the referral in this bill are that from 1 March this year the Family Law Act now provides that the operation of all Queensland legislation relating to financial matters arising out of the breakdown of de facto relationships will be excluded and federal family law jurisdiction will apply. That means that when any de facto relationship breaks down—whether it be a same sex or a heterosexual relationship—that couple will have to go through the Family Court to deal with any property settlement issues rather than having to go to a state court, as they have had to do up until now. I have said it a couple of times already but it means they can have the one legal proceeding in the one court to deal with issues relating to the children of the couple and the property of the couple. That is a much better, more efficient and timely way to deal with these kinds of disputes.

There are obvious advantages in this approach which have been made available by the progressive attitude of the Bligh Labor government and the Rudd Labor government. As I said, the ability to have issues relating to children and property dealt with in the same forum will reduce costs and the stress felt by families in these difficult circumstances. The federal family law jurisdiction is more suited to handling family litigation and is well resourced to support separating couples and to seek resolution of conflict through mediation.

In addition, a de facto spouse will for the first time be able to seek spousal maintenance if he or she is unable to support him or herself adequately by reason of having the care of a child of the relationship, by reason of age or physical or mental incapacity for employment or for any other adequate reason. Where the other spouse is able to provide support, this right to seek spousal maintenance will place de facto spouses on an equal footing with married spouses.

Until this legislation is passed, married couples in Queensland who have separated have been able to go to the Family Court and obtain that concept of spousal maintenance, but de facto couples in the same situation have not been able to. For example, in the situation where the man in a de facto relationship is a very wealthy individual—maybe he is a partner in a law firm or a banker—and his de facto partner has stayed at home to look after their children, even though they may have been together for many, many years, under the current law the woman in that relationship would not have the ability to seek what is called spousal maintenance or ongoing payments to ensure her financial security. That is clearly a discriminatory state of the law that applies to de facto couples, and this legislation will remedy that discrimination. It is to be commended.

Another good example of the advantages of this legislation relates to superannuation. After this legislation is passed, de facto couples will be able to access superannuation splitting provisions in the Family Law Act. For many Queenslanders, superannuation is the most valuable financial resource they possess. Given the significant proportion of de facto property which is often contained in superannuation, it is important that this resource be taken into account and divided where appropriate.

I will use that example I just gave about a wealthy de facto male and his female partner who has stayed at home to look after their children. The current state of the law means that the female in that relationship cannot access the superannuation fund of the de facto male partner. We all understand that in married couples superannuation is one of the assets that is effectively rolled together to work out the entire family asset base and that is then distributed on the basis of the contributions of each party to that marriage. In that situation, a woman who has stayed at home for a number of years to look after the children—and who has therefore delivered a significant contribution to the family structure—has the ability to gain some of the superannuation that her husband has accrued over his period in the workforce. Unfortunately, the current state of the law does not make that available to de facto couples, so a female in a de facto relationship would not be able to access that superannuation fund. This bill that we are debating now and will presumably pass soon will remedy that defect. Again, it is a discriminatory factor which I am very glad to see the back of.

Overall, the ability of separating de facto couples in Queensland to access the family law jurisdiction will enhance access to justice through a system of laws that better recognise the contributions and future needs of de facto spouses. The family law jurisdiction will provide greater certainty of outcomes, reduced costs and complexity and greater opportunities for mediated resolutions.

In conclusion, I am very proud to speak in this debate. It is an important step in recognising the rights of de facto couples. It is an important step in recognising the reality of family structures that occurs in Australia today. It is unfortunate that in other debates a number of members of the opposition have indicated their unwillingness to accept that social reality. They remain stuck in the past. They want to see family structures just as they were 50 years ago. They do not accept that things change, and they do not accept that a growing proportion of the community are in de facto relationships and are just as loving towards each other and are just as loving towards their children as those in a married relationship. Sometimes, unfortunately, de facto relationships break down and those couples deserve the same rights to resolve their disputes as married couples. Again, I support the bill.

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (11.55 am): I rise to support the Property Law and Another Act Amendment Bill. The honourable member for Everton, in his very splendid presentation, has covered the field and I agree with the arguments and sentiments he has presented, as would all members on this side of the House. Therefore, I do not want to take the time of the House to reiterate in any great detail those points that were so splendidly made by the honourable member for Everton other than to say that, with respect to his comments concerning the newly elected LNP members, I share his concerns that he has expressed. It occurs to me that what has happened in the endorsement of those members who were candidates is that the former National Party members in those branches certainly had the numbers. We do not see in the presentations to date from the newly elected members representing the LNP any of those Liberal principles and Liberal sentiments that used to come from members of the Liberal Party that I knew over the years, particularly in my younger days when I knew, for example, Angus Innes, a former Leader of the Liberal Party in this place. That is a matter for regret.

Mr Watt: Very sad.

Mr SHINE: It is very sad. I think it is a matter that the LNP will come to be very sad about too because the electorate has in fact moved on, even if the LNP has not. I share those sentiments that the honourable member for Everton made when he said that the LNP members are a bit like John Howard: they have not moved out of the 1950s. They are happy with those sorts of memories but the rest of the world has moved on. The other point I make is that the bill has some degree of familiarity to me. I think it may have been introduced prior to the election—

Mr Springborg: You introduced it. You did, Kerry. I can remember it, even if you can't.

Mr SHINE: I thank the honourable member for Southern Downs. My memory at my age is not the best. If I could continue to rely on him, I would appreciate the opportunity to do so.

Mr Springborg: You probably gave the Attorney a leg-up and wrote the speech for him. It wasn't a bad speech.

Mr SHINE: I thought the second reading speech by the minister was one of the best speeches I have heard in this place. It did have a ring of familiarity about it, I must say.

The tremendous advantage in this legislation—whereby the financial matters in dispute between de facto parties are being transferred from the Supreme Court in Queensland to the Family Court—means that the degree of litigation that the parties have to enter into will be lessened. In other words, rather than having to fight the issues in the Supreme Court with respect to property matters and then fight other issues in the Family Court or the Federal Magistrates Court, all of those disputes can now be dealt with in one action at one time in one court with one set of fees. That is a great advantage and something that the legal profession recommended over a number of years going back to the early nineties via the Queensland Law Reform Commission and the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General.

I recall I think it was in 2003 that this parliament passed legislation enabling the transfer of that jurisdiction from Queensland to the federal parliament. Members here present would remember that. The member for Caloundra nods in agreement. Why did it not happen? Why are we now six years later dealing with this issue? The reason is that the recalcitrant Howard government refused to acknowledge the reality of what is happening in day-to-day life, as was so well explained to the House by the member for Everton. It is high time that we are dealing with these matters, and I am very pleased that we are.

One point, however, which I raise as a matter of some caution and which I would ask the Attorney to keep an eye on and liaise with the federal Attorney relates to the delay in which actions are heard, as I understand it, in the Family Court. The Attorney would be far more knowledgeable than I because of his recent experience as a counsel in practice, I think extensively in family law. He would know how long it takes to get on in that court. If it is the case that it is taking an inordinate amount of time to do so, then that is something of regret. I would hate to see us unintentionally, when we are trying to lessen cost, commit Queenslanders to a longer period of delay to the access of justice by transferring this jurisdiction from Queensland to the Family Court.

I remember as a practitioner the fairly simple procedure in bringing a partition action, which I think was the way in which we did it under the partition act. It was in my day, anyway. It was basically an application to the court as opposed to an action or trial. It could get on within a couple of weeks. Most of it was done by way of affidavit or evidence heard orally in chambers. It was fairly quick and therefore cheap. I would hate to see that sort of advantage lost unintentionally.

I note appropriate amendments are being made to the Stamp Duties Act to ensure, as I understand it, that with respect to a split-up of family property in a Family Court matter, or in a dissolution of marriage, or in a property settlement no stamp duty is paid on the transfer of property from one spouse to another, or one partner to another. That happy situation will apply in relation to the division of property between de factos as well. There are appropriate restrictions. You cannot form a de facto relationship overnight to avoid stamp duty transfer or stamp duty incidence. You have to be in a relationship for two years and you have to bring the action within two years, and there are other sensible restrictions that are set out therein.

Finally, whilst I deplore the LNP's failure to move with the times, I do sympathise with it to some degree in the sense that the law and society have moved a great deal in my own lifetime in relation to these matters. When I started law, the law applicable in relation to matrimonial matters was the old matrimonial causes act, where fault was the only ground for dissolution of marriage.

Mr Dick: Tony Abbott wants that back.

Mr SHINE: He does want it back. I can tell you as a litigant in that area myself, I do see some merit in what Tony Abbott has said at times. I am not allowed to be subjective in this place and I can rise above that and take an objective view of these matters. I think Tony Abbott is wrong. In relation to the issue of de facto marriages and same-sex couples, the law has changed enormously. That type of conduct was itself illegal, let alone us facilitating the transfer of property. They are examples of how far we have come in the space of a generation or two. I commend the Attorney and the government for bringing this legislation on early in this term so that appropriate relief can be given to people who are affected by this legislation.

Mr MOORHEAD (Waterford—ALP) (12.05 pm): I rise to support the Property Law and Another Act Amendment Bill 2009. Given that I have followed on from the contributions of the member for Everton and the member for Toowoomba North, my contribution today will be short. The legislation before the House will complete the circle on family law for de facto couples in Queensland. This reform has been underway for many years but it has been frustrated by some narrow-mindedness, denying the reality of our modern society. In 2006, 15 per cent of couples were in de facto relationships—a 50 per cent increase over the last decade.

Until March this year, de facto couples could resolve disputes about children in the federal Family Court but had to resolve disputes over property in Queensland courts under the Property Law Act. The Queensland government attempted to remedy this circumstance in 2003, with the referral of powers to the Family Court under the Commonwealth Powers (De Facto Relationships) Act 2003. However, this referral sat dormant for five years because the former Howard government refused to accept any referral that dealt with same-sex couples.

The political opportunism and cynicism of this position by the Howard government can be seen when the same government took a promise to the 2007 election to remove discrimination against same-sex couples in federal law. One might ask why there was such a significant turnaround. The answer is quite simple: because Malcolm Turnbull was under pressure in the seat of Wentworth—a seat with a higher proportion of same-sex couples than any other seat in the country. After years of using this issue to divide our community, the Howard government suddenly jumps on the bandwagon of ending discrimination against same-sex couples. It is okay if it is used to get Malcolm Turnbull elected, but when it comes to Queensland de facto couples being able to resolve property disputes in a conciliatory and inexpensive way, it just does not happen. It is great to see that the Rudd government has come with an objective and open mind to this issue and has delivered on a long overdue reform.

The act will preserve jurisdiction for orders previously made, proceedings that are underway, or where a binding agreement is already in force. Couples whose relationship broke down prior to 1 March 2009 will be able to opt to use either the Family Law Act or the Property Law Act. This bill brings de facto couples in line with the regime for resolution of property disputes with married couples in the Family Court—a jurisdiction much more suited to the resolution of family disputes. This is part of an ongoing program by the state government to reduce the barriers for justice for Queenslanders. It follows on from initiatives such as the establishment of the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal to reduce costs and time frames for Queenslanders to access justice in the resolution of their disputes. The Family Court will provide an extensive conciliation and mediation regime that is welcomed by litigants.

For the first time under this legislation, de facto couples will also be able to access spousal maintenance and superannuation splitting—provisions previously limited to matters dealt with under the family law court. I commend the bill to the House. I congratulate the Attorney-General and the former Attorney-General on bringing this bill for the parliament's consideration.

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—LNP) (12.09 pm): I rise, as have other members in the House today, to support the bill before the House. If I am not mistaken, I recall a number of years ago there was an earlier attempt to do something similar to this under the cross-vesting legislation that was struck down by the High Court. I recall it was maybe 10 or 15 years ago that the court ruled it was unconstitutional, but now we find that the one court—and in my opinion the appropriate court—will deal with all matters of property division and children's issues.

Without a doubt, the Family Court is the appropriate jurisdiction. They have the expertise when it comes to the bench. They have their own appeal structure. They have a large body of case law and precedent. They have access to experts in relation to family disputes—that is, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists. They have court appointed experts who assist the court. It is simply logical that there be one jurisdictional base to deal with all matters associated with the break-up of a family, as sad as that situation is.

It is important to recognise that many couples are able to achieve a result themselves in relation to the division of property and the contact and residential issues concerning their children. However, it is pleasing to finally see this step come about. Although it will relieve the backlog in the state courts, there is some concern as to how it will impact upon the Family Court, which is going through its own internal rearrangement. The Federal Magistrates Court is being amalgamated with the Federal Court. How that works out is anybody's guess at this point in time.

I can certainly recall back in 1975 when the act came into effect and Lionel Murphy had passage of the bill through the federal parliament. As the former Attorney-General said, it was seen as an act that would facilitate the ease of getting matters relating to the breakdown of a marital relationship through the Federal Court system.

Unfortunately, what happens with all courts is that over time the rules of courts start to be developed. We get committees looking at the various rules and making amendments. What started out to be simple procedure in Mr Murphy's eyes turned out to be a fairly large nightmare when we consider the number of rules, the length of the rules and the complexity of the rules in the Family Court.

One of the misnomers in many people's minds is that the Family Court is staffed by judges and federal magistrates, registrars, deputy registrars and the like who seem to take delight in making decisions between two parties. That is in fact not the case. The Family Court and all those who work in it are committed to ensuring that anybody who comes before them—a couple with a dispute, for example—is given every opportunity to resolve the matters themselves.

I can certainly recall when I appeared before the court that if on the morning of a trial or halfway through a trial we informed the judge or the magistrate that we were keen to negotiate then the judge would immediately stop the trial and allow as much time as possible—two or three days if need be—to negotiate. Sometimes it is the fact of being in a courtroom that galvanises the minds of the parties, and indeed the practitioners and barristers, that a resolution is really going to be in the interests of all concerned.

In litigation there are three types of costs. Yes, we know that people pay money. There is no question about that. If people are going to go to the Supreme Court, the Family Court or the District Court, they will pay legal fees for barristers et cetera. There are two other costs. There is the emotional cost. In the Family Court that is one of the most underrated costs. People do not comprehend that they can spend two years or longer in the Family Court trying to resolve a complex matter regarding property or children. The impact upon all concerned, and in particular the children, of that dispute going on for two years is enormous.

There is a third cost—that is, the time element. When people have young children who are, say, seven or eight and they are involved in a dispute for two years, they miss out on so much of what they should be enjoying in seeing their children grow up and develop into young adults. It is a cost that I do not think most people quite comprehend.

Certainly my advice to clients was to always be aware of the dollar cost but never forget the emotional cost and the time they may lose with their family. One could indicate to a mother, a father or one of the parties that they could dispose of a house or a chair, but one could never tell a parent to dispose of a child. I found that those were the most emotionally draining situations, particularly when they involved very complicated and very serious allegations. I found that the judges and the expertise contained within the Family Court were all geared towards a resolution with regard to matters that looked after the interests of children. That is the most important thing, as far as I am concerned.

As has been said by other speakers, the bill now brings within the confines of the Family Law Act de facto couples in relation to property division. All children fall under the Family Court jurisdiction. They have always been within the confines of that court. It is of course ridiculous to have two matters running at the same time—one in the Family Court and one in a state based court. The costs alone would increase significantly. More importantly, the drain on the family is even greater.

The federal act outlines what a de facto relationship is. That has been the subject of many cases, not just in this state jurisdiction but right across the jurisdictions of this country. At the end of the day, the de facto relationship comes down to the individual facts. We can certainly have guideposts and guidelines, but there is no hard and fast rule as to what constitutes a de facto relationship.

It is time that this took place. I congratulate the Attorney-General and the former Attorney-General in relation to this matter. It is an important bill and it places, in my opinion, the issues concerning the property division of all couples and children in front of the appropriate court and jurisdiction.

Mr CHOI (Capalaba—ALP) (12.16 pm): I rise this afternoon to support the Property Law and Another Act Amendment Bill 2009. This bill seeks to amend the Property Law Act 1974 to clarify the relationship and operation of part 19 of the Property Law Act with the Family Law Act 1975 following the Commonwealth parliament's acceptance of the referral of power from the Queensland parliament for financial matters arising from the breakdown of de facto relationships.

Figures published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics reveal that in the decade to 2006 some 48 per cent of marriages in Australia ended in divorce. People divorce for many reasons. Breakdown leading to separation in any long-term relationship is a sad and serious matter. While we have no figures to indicate the level of breakdown in de facto relationships, a reasonable assumption would be that the figures would be very similar. However, as the law stands today de facto couples are faced with the challenge of significant inconsistency when their relationship breaks down and they separate. Currently in Queensland, matters dealing with the children of a de facto relationship are dealt with by the Commonwealth because they are covered by the Family Law Act. However, property settlements between the separating de facto parties are dealt with under Queensland laws.

In addition, under current Queensland law the partners in a de facto relationship are not regarded as spouses. Therefore, de facto couples are unable to access certain services and are not eligible for various support services currently available to married couples. To clarify the status of de facto partners, section 32DA of the Acts Interpretation Act 1954 defines de facto partners as either one of two persons—and the gender is irrelevant here—who are living together as a couple on a genuine domestic basis but who are not married to each other or related by family.

In the five years covered by the 2001 to 2006 census there was a rise of 25 per cent in the number of people aged 15 years or older who nominated that they were in de facto relationships, indicating a rise of some 241,000 people. In other words, by 2006 de facto couples made up 15 per cent of all people living together as 'socially married'. In 2001 the number was 12 per cent and in 1996 it was only 10 per cent.

We could expect these figures to have risen again since the 2006 census. However, these figures indicate that more and more people are entering into a de facto relationship and highlight the very large number of people who are currently disadvantaged because of the inconsistency in law relating to the breakdown of de facto relationships. This situation will be addressed today by the bill before the House—the aim of which is to finalise the process of the referral of power by the Queensland government to the Commonwealth extending to de facto couples having access to the same financial settlement provisions in the Family Law Act that are currently only available to married couples.

Although children of de facto relationships are now covered by the Family Law Act in the same way that children of married couples are covered, there is considerable stress and anguish involved in settlements following a de facto separation as a result of long delays caused by such settlements being subject to both state and Commonwealth law. This bill aims to alleviate the stress and upset for all parties involved, especially the children. This bill will streamline the process so that one jurisdiction will deal with all aspects of separation resulting from the breakdown of a de facto relationship—that is, the Commonwealth. The federal system is better suited to deal with such important family matters and is better resourced than the state system.

In addition, the outcome of this bill will be nationally consistent with other states and territories that have referred similar powers to the Commonwealth. A nationally uniform system will replace the various systems that have evolved at state and territory levels over the years to address issues arising out of the breakdown of de facto relationships. Just as important, relevant family law courts will be able to hear both financial and child related matters arising from de facto relationships together. They will be able to hear both issues together, saving time, money and anguish to all parties—in fact, including the court. As a result of this bill, de facto partners will also be more fairly treated because the family law court under relatively new Commonwealth legislation will be empowered to make orders it considers proper for the maintenance of one of the partners and, for the first time, de facto couples will be allowed to treat their superannuation as property and therefore have it included in property settlements—a privilege only available to married couples since 2002. More timely settlements of property matters will be possible because cross-jurisdictional disputes will become obsolete.

This bill will replace a slow, cumbersome system of law with a well-resourced and efficient federal system to ease the financial and, more importantly, emotional burden on the participants in the breakdown of a de facto relationship. Whether a person agrees with de facto relationships or same-sex relationships, everyone should agree that we should not put up barriers to add any more burden and anguish to couples when they face a breakdown in their relationship. I take this opportunity to congratulate the previous Attorney-General and the current Attorney-General on seeing the safe passage of this bill through the House. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (12.22 pm): I also want to congratulate both the present Attorney and the previous Attorney for their support in bringing this amendment bill before the House. The amending bill is only a small piece of legislation but it has far-reaching effects on a large part of our society. We have heard from a number of speakers that up to 15 per cent of the relationships in today's society are between de facto couples. This bill is designed to give some certainty in family law matters. It is probably ironic that we are dealing with de facto property when we have recently heard so many mealy-mouthed comments about de facto couples. It may come as a surprise to people who, during the recent debate on the Adoption Bill, maintained that de facto couples were somewhat less than married couples that the rate of marriage breakdown within 10 years of marriage in Australia is roughly 45 per cent, and there are many stable de facto relationships which last much longer than that.

For those couple who choose not to marry but establish a family relationship, they have suffered discrimination for many years as the societal and religious attitude at the time of Federation only reflected marriage as a relationship and no other—and that was despite the moral attitude of many of the leading males of the day who kept a family and a female friend on the side. Any offspring or property from that relationship belonged to the man. Some of the moral rectitude expressed last sittings and this week during debate on the Adoption Bill reflects the ambivalent attitude of conservative politics towards different types of relationships, even same-sex relationships. I am surprised that they have not jumped up and raised terrible spectres in the wording of proposed subsection (b) of proposed new section 255A.

It may surprise every person who waffles on about same-sex relationships that the Family Court presently makes decisions about children on separation, and there are quite a number that come before the court—that is, both children who have been conceived in a lesbian relationship through IVF and males who have separated and in actual fact have commenced living in a same-sex relationship and still have close relationships with their children. Most of the findings about both financial needs and parenting issues by the Family Court express no difficulties with children being raised by same-sex couples.

For anyone with a slight knowledge of history, or if they search, they will discover that church or state marriage only became the norm in about the 14th century. Prior to that, people established relationships by a variety of methods, including jumping the broom—where a man held a broom across the doorway and the woman indicated her consent to become part of the household by jumping over the broom. There are a variety of stories about jumping the broom. The need for the establishment of a recognised relationship in society was required to ascertain the hierarchical ownership of the great estates during the 14th century that were owned by the landed gentry and the church and to stop them being passed either to the church or church property to children, ostensibly of an established relationship but fathered by the clergy who sometimes kept up a relationship with a number of women, including the wives of some of the recognised military and political leaders of the day.

Every person in this House has their own personal and religious beliefs, and I believe that I have strong personal and religious beliefs which are deeper than some. I have a message for those persons who come into this House and espouse suggestions that we need to taper all legislation to biblical or religious beliefs. We are a multicultural and multifaith society in Queensland and Australia and sometimes we need to look at the big picture which should reflect the needs and ultimate impact on every Queenslander—not only some of the lobby groups of which they appear to be prisoners. Sadly, our society and our 19th century leaders reflected the mentality of the times and only marriage was negotiated in the Australian Constitution. This act is the last in a series which seeks to place all couples in a relationship of whatever kind in Queensland and Australia on the same footing.

The law in Queensland until 1999 had required de facto couples to rely on old English law and common law in financial matters when a relationship had broken down. Queensland for many years even needed an act called the Maintenance Act 1965 to give the courts power to grant financial support to children even in a marriage, but that right for children of a marriage was moved to the Family Court in 1975. Even the then groundbreaking Family Law Act 1975, which was actually resisted by the far Right because it would contribute to the breakdown of marriage, gave no rights to de facto couples or the children. So that all children receive consistent treatment before the law, the rights of all children of any relationship were ceded to the Commonwealth in the 1990s. I note that the member for Southern Downs said 1990; I was practising at that time and I thought it was slightly later than that, but it was certainly ceded some 15 to 20 years ago.

When that occurred, discrimination against de facto couples became very obvious because, as we have heard, individual parties had to bring an application in the Family Court for residence and contact for children and a property application in the Queensland courts—not a very good arrangement on a financial basis or even to get a consistent result when financial matters were needed to be resolved for the benefit of children. I practised extensively in matrimonial property and child matters on behalf of married couples, de facto couples and even same-sex couples. It sometimes became a bit of a nightmare to get into the correct jurisdiction if you were in a slightly different relationship, whether de facto or same sex. I would like to hear cogent objective evidence as distinct from subjective loopy comments, such as those made in this House over recent weeks, as to why all people in Queensland should not be equal before the law. This bill endeavours to do that.

The original Queensland Property Law Act was amended by act No. 89 of 1999 when specific part 19 was introduced to reflect as far as possible the wording and attitudes of the Family Court on the property of de facto couples. In 2003 we passed the Commonwealth Powers (De Facto Relationships) Bill, which ceded financial matters to the Commonwealth. But the Commonwealth did not pass supplementary legislation giving the powers ceded to the Family Court. We considered the 2003 act again in 2008, because the Rudd Labor government adopted a responsible attitude and finalised the referral and granting of powers to the Family Law Act. The Commonwealth passed the Family Law Amendment (De Facto Financial Matters and Other Measures) Bill, which came into effect on 1 March 2009. Sadly, the intransigence of the Howard government caused a difficulty for some separating de facto couples by leaving those whose relationships broke down between December 1999 and March

2009 having two jurisdictions between which to choose for relief. Hopefully, we will see all parties choose the Family Court. The other amendment in this bill amends the Duties Act, which will further give the same rights to de facto couples in that any property transfer will attract the benefit of section 90 of the Family Law Act, which relieves the payment of stamp duty on property that is transferred between separated couples.

It was pleasing to listen to the contribution of the member for Everton. I must say that if the people of Queensland listened to some of the comments that have been made in this House over the past two to three weeks and a little bit earlier in relation to attitudes to different people in society, Queenslanders should be terrified of what would happen if some of those people ever moved into government. I endorse the remarks of the member for Everton and I support this very important piece of legislation.

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (12.31 pm), in reply: At the outset I would like to thank all honourable members for their contributions to this debate and their support for the Property Law and Another Act Amendment Bill. I would like to particularly acknowledge the contributions made by government members to the debate and I would like to acknowledge the contributions specifically by the members for Keppel and the members for Toowoomba North. Both of those gentlemen brought significant legal experience to the House when they became members of this parliament. I think the parliament is well served by those who have significant life experience and significant professional experience when they enter the House.

I want to acknowledge, of course, that if any of the words that I say in my speech in reply echo some of the comments made by members in their contributions, including those of the member for Toowoomba North, that is, of course, purely coincidental. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution by the member for Keppel in respect of the historical overview that he provided concerning the history of families, in a sense, and in particular how the distribution of property has been dealt with over the centuries. I think it behoves us all to recognise that as society changes so, too, must the laws and mechanisms for resolving disputes within families. The nature of families has changed over time. All members of this House would have experience with different family units. That is something that should be uppermost in our minds when we pass laws that affect Queenslanders in all different forms of family units. I also note the opposition's support for the bill and I would like to acknowledge that.

Since 1993, when the Queensland Law Reform Commission reported that the Commonwealth family law courts were the most appropriate forum in which to determine de facto couple property disputes, there have been repeated calls for this important reform to occur. Following ongoing discussion of this issue at the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General during the 1990s and early 2000s, Labor state governments in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania passed referral legislation in 2003 that provided for the referral of the power to determine the financial affairs of de facto couples following a relationship breakdown to the Commonwealth parliament.

However, it was not until the election of the Rudd Labor government that the Commonwealth government finally agreed to an acceptance of the respective states' referrals of power on terms that were suitable to those referring states, including Queensland. Amendments to the Family Law Act that provide for the acceptance of the referral of power from the respective states in relation to both same-sex as well as opposite-sex de facto couples have been fast-tracked by the Rudd Labor government, with the amendments commencing on 1 March 2009. De facto couples now have access to the federal family law jurisdiction and its many benefits for the determination of their property disputes, including the ability of their property dispute to be heard in conjunction with their child related dispute. There will be significant savings in both time and money for de facto couples by having access to the Family Law Act for the resolution of their property matters and those courts exercising jurisdiction under the Family Law Act.

There was some discussion during the debate about the operation of the federal family law courts, principally the Federal Magistrates Court and also the family law court. I note in particular that the member for Toowoomba North raised issues in respect of delay and making sure that that be monitored and pursued. The member for Caloundra also made some comments in that regard. In that respect, I should acknowledge that the Commonwealth government, particularly the Commonwealth Attorney-General, the Hon. Robert McClelland, has taken steps to reform those courts. As honourable members would be aware, a review was conducted by Mr Des Semple and recommended to the Commonwealth government that the Federal Magistrates Court and the Family Court of Australia and the Federal Court of Australia be merged, that is, the Federal Magistrates Court be merged with the Family Court in respect of family law matters and all other general federal law matters being merged with the Federal Court. They are significant initiatives and they are designed to deliver efficiency in the administration of justice.

Just as we are seeking to reform the justice system in Queensland and bring greater efficiency and greater accessibility to the justice system through the Moynihan reforms that will be implemented through stage 1 introduced to the parliament this year, so, too, is the federal government under Robert McClelland's leadership as the Commonwealth Attorney-General seeking to reform those courts. The Federal Magistrates Court in particular is well known for its efficient disposition of justice. But there is

also a balance to be struck between delay and making sure that matters are dealt with properly, including complicated issues involving children and property matters. That is why some of those matters take longer than normal, but there is a reform process proceeding.

This bill amends the Property Law Act 1974 to clarify the relationship between that act and the provisions of the Family Law Act and how the Property Law Act provisions will operate when the amendments to the Family Law Act commence. The amendments will provide a method of resolution of any jurisdictional issue that may arise between proceedings about the same matter brought in both the state and Commonwealth courts. Of course, those amendments to the Family Law Act have commenced.

The bill will also amend the Duties Act 2001 to clarify the current exemptions on certain dutiable transactions arising from the breakdown of de facto relationships, which will now fall under the duty exemptions of the Family Law Act. That is an important initiative that I wish to reaffirm.

This is an important bill that ensures that people who are going through a difficult emotional break-up are presented with the most appropriate forum, acknowledged by many members who spoke in the debate, and the most effective resolution to disputes over the financial and property matters that result from a relationship breakdown. Relationships of all types can find support in this bill, recognising that breakdowns do not discriminate between relationship types and the support needs to be universal.

While I am on my feet, I would like to take this opportunity to clarify the record of the hearing of Estimates Committee E. It has come to my attention since the hearing that two figures recorded in *Hansard* stipulating the changes to the monetary jurisdiction for civil disputes heard in the new Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal and the District Court were incorrect. The correct figures were provided in my opening statement. However, the record of my further comments on these figures during the hearing is inconsistent. So to clarify the record, the new monetary jurisdiction for the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal will be \$25,000 for minor civil disputes and the new monetary jurisdiction for the District Court will be \$750,000.

I have also become aware of an error in the table attached to the response to a question on notice on workplace health and safety breaches within the government sector. The table lists a total of three prohibition notices and 10 unsafe equipment notices. These figures should be reversed. I understand that was a transcription error.

In conclusion, I again thank all honourable members for their contributions during the debate on this legislation. I would like to thank the officers from my department who have worked on this bill, notably Ms Susan Masotti and also Mark Biddulph from my office. I strongly commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 9, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (12.39 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a third time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (12.39 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.

CORONERS AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 23 April (see p. 174), on motion of Mr Dick—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.39 pm): This bill amends three acts: the Coroners Act 2003, the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 2003 and the Cremations Act 2003. The amendments to the Coroners Act come after a review of the act, which has been in operation since 2003. The Coroners Act replaced the previous act that had been in operation since 1958. The explanatory notes claim that the intended amendment in no way shifts the fundamental policy of the original legislation.

One of the major amendments to the Coroners Act being proposed has come about as a result of the Davies inquiry into Queensland hospitals, which was also backed by the State Coroner who raised concerns about the language and interpretation of the term 'relating to a death not reasonably expected to be the outcome of a health procedure'. The new amendment proposes a more detailed 'health care related death'. The bill makes a number of other amendments to the Coroners Act which I will now speak to in some detail.

The bill redefines what is a death in care to remove any doubt that such deaths would go unreported because, as the bill states, there may be a misapprehension that a hospital has reported or will report the death. The next part of this amendment seeks to introduce a new type of reportable death and that is a death that 'happened in the course of, or as a result of, a police operation'. Furthermore, this government continues to deny the police in Queensland a helicopter, which I think is a real concern. A police helicopter would be crucial in reducing the number of pursuit related incidents.

Officers have no support if they call off a pursuit. They are damned if they do and damned if they do not. Since December of 2006, seven people have died in police chases in Queensland. Many have been criminals being pursued by police or passengers of stolen vehicles. Our brave police are operating under high pressure and are presented with split-second scenarios in which policy and procedure run through their heads when deciding how to pursue a vehicle. As I mentioned previously, the bill also changes the definition of 'death as a result of a health procedure'. But before I get into that, I want to go back to the issue of police pursuits and the need for a police helicopter.

If our police, as I indicated, pursue somebody and that person dies in custody or somebody else dies as a consequence of that pursuit, then of course there is going to be an investigation, and the officers involved and the service as a whole are often subjected to adverse media and community commentary. If they do not pursue that particular person or persons involved, then they are going to be subjected to adverse commentary in the media and by others because they have let somebody who has committed a criminal offence basically go free. Everyone needs to understand this. As a consequence of these particular changes, more deaths are going to become reportable and that is fair enough. However, it is going to draw those sorts of deaths more into the spotlight and place them under more scrutiny and make them the subject of more criticism. I say to the government that if it wants to actually do something about addressing the potentiality of those deaths, which nobody wants to see happen, then our police need to be resourced so they can perform their roles and obligations of protecting the community and apprehending those people who seek to do wrong in our community.

In referring to the Davies report, it is stated that the reference to 'reasonably expected' is unclear. It was never made clear as to whose expectation and to what standard. Despite coroners guidelines, the report found that there were still varying degrees of medical qualifications and independence. Over the past year in this House my colleagues in the LNP have proposed amendments to the Coroners Act based on Davies inquiry recommendations and both were rejected by the government. It was not that long ago that the member for Surfers Paradise, the Leader of the Opposition, introduced a suggested amendment into parliament which would enact certain recommendations of the Davies commission of inquiry.

The bill also amends what is a death in custody to include any death of a person in custody under any state or Commonwealth act. The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody was established in October 1987 in response to a growing public concern that deaths in custody of Aboriginal people were too common and public explanations were too evasive to discount the possibility that foul play was a factor in many of them. Further, the scope of the inquiry was expanded to inquire into the deaths in Australia between 1 January 1980 and 31 May 1989 of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people while in police custody, prison or any other place of detention. Between 1 January 1980 and 31 May 1989, 99 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people died in custody—in prison, or in police or juvenile detention institutions.

This bill makes amendments to ensure that definitions of death in care cover all aspects of circumstances where children are in out-of-home care. It was revealed during the estimates process that a record 79 children who were known to the department of child safety died. Whilst we have a Child Death Case Review Committee that examines these deaths, having the independent assessment and examination of the State Coroner into deaths of children in care is a vital tool of accountability that provides a truly independent assessment of what tragic circumstances led to the death of the child who was in care. Sadly, in the past we have seen that many of the reports of the so-called independent commission for children, which also heads up the Child Death Case Review Committee, have been vetted and watered down by interfering ministerial staff. So we are thankful for the role of the coroner in assessing and providing objective review of child deaths in care.

With regard to the Child Death Case Review Committee, since 1 August 2004 the department of child safety has been required to review its involvement with a child if the child dies and the department was aware of the alleged harm or risk of harm to the child or took action in relation to the child up to three years before the child's death. The department must give a copy of the report to the Child Death Case Review Committee within six months of becoming aware of the child's death. The committee is responsible for reviewing the departmental review; making relevant recommendations to the department, including whether disciplinary action should be taken against departmental officers; and monitoring implementation of the recommendations.

The Child Death Case Review Committee produces an annual report that includes details of the number of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and young people known to the child protection system who died during the reporting period. Twelve such deaths were reported in 2004-05, 14 were reported in 2005-06 and 16 were reported in 2006-07, making a total of 42 deaths. That means that in just three years the number of Indigenous children who have died who were known to the department is exactly half the number of Indigenous deaths in custody over 10 years that brought about the royal commission. More children have died who were known to the department of child safety since 2006 than those in police pursuits. The bill also will allow people who are dissatisfied with the decision of a coroner as to whether a death is reportable to have the matter revisited.

The bill also clarifies certain powers that the coroner can exercise when conducting an inquest. The bill also clarifies who may attend an autopsy and breaks it down into three distinct regimes—coroner, police and anyone the coroner considers for vocational and clinical education or training. The bill makes amendments to the act in line with the Ombudsman's Coronial Recommendations Project. These amendments relate to the publishing of preinquest information. The bill proposes major amendments that will allow the coroner who held an inquest or the State Coroner to reopen an inquest or hold a new inquest on their own initiative. They must be satisfied there is new evidence that would cast doubt on a previous finding.

The amendments to the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 2003 are consequential amendments to allow for the amending of the death register where the cause of death is different from that of the coroner's finding. The amendments to the Cremations Act 2003 are to update references to other pieces of legislation.

So, by and large, the LNP is very supportive of the legislation which has been introduced into parliament by way of amendment. We are, of course, concerned that this government in its previous manifestation chose to reject significant legislative proposals in this parliament which could have enhanced the role of the coroner insofar as reportable deaths to make sure that we did not have a repeat of what we saw with regard to the Bundaberg Hospital disaster a number of years ago.

It is also unfortunate that we have a government that is so churlish in that it is always calling for bipartisanship from this side of the parliament—which is actually offered in spades if we look at the number of pieces of legislation that are passed through this parliament without opposition by the opposition, the alternative government; some eight out of 10 pieces of legislation—yet we put forward legislative amendments on many occasions which are rejected by the government. So the government does not practise the bipartisanship which it actually proffers that the opposition should. Then the government will often reject the opposition's proposition and bring it back in many cases absolutely unchanged and claim it to be its own. We see that on a regular basis. Only recently we saw the government embarrassed when it had to suspend the sessional orders of parliament to allow something to be reintroduced into the parliament that it had voted down. It put its own monicker on it and brought it back into the place.

With regard to what this bill seeks to do arising from the recommendations of the Davies commission of inquiry, those poor people should never have been put through the alleged medical misadventure—the hardship and the pain that they were put through—and then to be doubly interfered with and doubly neglected by a government of the day that sought, first of all, to deny the problem and then establish a commission of inquiry which then brought down certain recommendations.

The government has been somewhat tardy. It is unfortunate that it has taken this government so long to bring these particular amendments before the parliament. But they are necessary amendments because there have been circumstances, in the particular case that I mentioned and others, in

Queensland where deaths that should have been investigated by the coroner were not investigated and were not reported because of the procedures that were put in place that did not bring them to the attention of the suitable authorities. Therefore, a chain of medical malpractice, misadventure and resultant death and injury and mayhem happened for those particular people. Therefore, to have a process which ensures a greater degree of scrutiny and a greater legislative obligation to investigate and report should hopefully lead to a whole range of people having better outcomes not only in our health system but also in custody and in care throughout Queensland in the future.

Therefore, we will support the legislative changes. There may need to be more made at some future time. I am not sure if this actually goes as far as Commissioner Davies alluded to in his particular recommendations. But, as with any piece of legislation in this parliament that becomes an act, we should all keep a close watching brief on it because it does need to be amended and enhanced from time to time to benefit those people in the community who rely upon this scrutiny and transparency to ensure their protection.

Ms BATES (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (12.54 pm): I rise today to make a contribution to the Coroners and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2009. The main objective of the bill is to amend the Coroners Act 2003 to improve operational efficiency in the coronial regime. The bill also makes a coronial related amendment to the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 2003 and consequential amendments to the Cremations Act 2003.

When the act came into force in 2003, it established a new coronial regime focused on finding the truth of what occurred in order to prevent deaths from similar causes happening in the future. This represented a marked departure from the repealed Coroners Act 1958, which gave the coronial process an undue focus on criminal liability. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General has conducted an operational review of the act to identify any necessary amendments to enhance administrative efficiency and to clarify the scope and operation of the act.

The amendments to this act are in part a direct response to the Davies inquiry. They change what has been deemed a reportable death through health care. These amendments will also introduce a new classification for a reportable death to the coroner involving 'death in the course or as a result of a police operation'. A death in care is also redefined and a death in custody is broadened to include all persons held under any state or Commonwealth act. The types of deaths that are reportable for deaths in care are to be expanded to include the following: places where accommodation is provided to persons with a disability; a person who is detained in a mental health service; a person who is in the custody or guardianship of the chief executive (child safety) under the Child Protection Act 1999; persons placed in care on a care agreement; and a child under a long-term guardianship order.

The bill also seeks to extend a reportable death to the coroner to include health care related deaths. This bill states—

- (1) A person's death is a health care related death if, after the commencement, the person dies at any time after receiving health care that
 - (a) either—
 - (i) caused or is likely to have caused the death; or
 - (ii) contributed to or is likely to have contributed to the death; and
 - (b) immediately before receiving the health care, an independent person would not have reasonably expected that the health care would cause or contribute to the person's death.
- (2) A person's death is also a health care related death if, after the commencement, the person dies at any time after health care was sought for the person and the health care, or a particular type of health care, failed to be provided to the person and—
 - (a) the failure either—
 - (i) caused or is likely to have caused the death, or
 - (ii) contributed or is likely to have contributed to the death; and
 - (b) when the health care was sought, an independent person would not have reasonably expected that there would be a failure to provide health care, or the particular type of health care, that would cause or contribute to the person's death.

This legislation is sweeping and does not contain a statute of limitations as to what period of time post hospitalisation the death is considered to be a reportable death. Does this include 24 hours post surgery or is it 12 months after the initial treatment was sought? A person who was known to me is a classic example of what should be reported as a health care related death and begs the question as to how long after the treatment was given it remains a death that requires notification.

This person was hospitalised for ongoing chest pain that required coronary artery bypass grafts. The patient was deemed fit for surgery and prior to surgery had no heart failure. It was also noted that this patient had mild renal impairment and as such would require close monitoring during the procedure. The patient had an adverse outcome during the procedure when an arterial line dislodged and was not noticed by staff for a period of 20 minutes intra-operatively, which led to massive haemorrhage resulting in heart failure and renal failure.

These were not present pre-operatively but were present postoperatively. The patient subsequently took eight months to die and during this time her quality of life was severely impacted. The cause of death on the death certificate was heart failure, which, again, was not present prior to the procedure, which led to the early death of this patient, who would otherwise have recovered normally given that the surgery itself was textbook. This example begs the question of whether this health care related death, which was due to care given or not given during the procedure which led to an untimely death, would be reported even if it were eight months after the initial procedure.

Additional amendments redefine who can view an autopsy. Further amendments outline how an application for an inquest can be held and how such an application must be made and opens the way for a coroner to reopen an inquest to re-examine a finding or hold a new inquest. The proposed amendments are primarily for the purpose of clarification, are procedural or technical in nature and do not involve a shift in the fundamental policy underpinning the legislation.

In particular, the bill includes amendments to clarify the scope and operation of the categories of reportable deaths, including amendments to address one of the coronial issues raised in the report of the Queensland Public Hospitals Commission of Inquiry—the Davies report—which was tabled 30 November 2005. This relates to the operation of the provision requiring the reporting of deaths that are the 'not reasonably expected to be the outcome of a health procedure'.

The philosophy underpinning the legislation and coronial legislation in other Australian jurisdictions is that certain deaths must be reported to and investigated by the coroner and that as part of this process the coroner must take control of the body.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.30 pm.

Debate, on motion of Ms Bates, adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Stock Regulation, Report

Hon. TS MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland) (2.30 pm), by leave: I lay upon the table of the House a report pursuant to section 56A(4) of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992 in relation to the Stock Regulation 1988.

Tabled paper: Report pursuant to Statutory Instruments Act s 56A(4)—exemption of the Stock Regulation 1988 from expiry [\[756\]](#).

CORONERS AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed, on motion of Mr Dick—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Ms BATES (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (2.31 pm): The legislation strikes a careful balance between the public interest in the effective conduct of the coronial investigation and the rights and interests of families. The Liberal National Party supports this bill but, as previously outlined, the changes to what constitutes a health care related death have no time frame or statute of limitations which must indeed be clarified and included in this bill by the minister.

Clear time frames are necessary, particularly for those families who have lost loved ones as a result of care given or not given in a health care related death. In many instances, whilst a coroner's case is onerous on families, for those families such as mine—where health care or lack thereof resulted in my mother's untimely death—it would have been welcomed. It will ensure that the civil process of malpractice is unnecessary because this act will now cover instances such as this, where a statute of limitations is outlined. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHOI (Capalaba—ALP) (2.32 pm): I rise today to speak in support of the Coroners and Other Acts Amendment Bill. The government recognises the serious matters outlined in the 2005 *Queensland public hospitals commission of inquiry: report*—known as the Davies report—and in the recent operational review by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. The Davies report covered, amongst other things, the status quo of the requirement to report an unexpected death occurring in a hospital or other health or care related facility. It highlighted the possibility that the unclear nature of the language in the provision could lead to an underreporting of deaths, but it did not recommend an amendment to the current provision to report any death that is 'not reasonably expected to be the outcome of a health procedure'.

The government believes that the removal of the ambiguous language in the current legislation will offer people in medical, health and care related fields the confidence to enjoy a working environment covered by legislation more attuned to their particular circumstances. This bill makes the legislation

more specific and ensures that no unexpected death will go unreported—whether the deceased is a child in an out-of-home placement or an adult in detention or in an area related to health care. None of us would like to think that the unexpected death of a family member or friend might slip through the cracks and that the cause of death might not be investigated because no legislation exists requiring or enabling the coroner to initiate such a process or procedure. The government has given this very careful consideration and resolved to remove this uncertainty in the current act.

One of the examples covered in this bill is the issue of organ donor registration, and I would like to spend a bit of time making a few brief statements on this. Most of us have heard the call to register as an organ donor or tissue donor. Many of us have friends or relatives in need of such a donation. With advances in medicine and science, we are living longer, and today organ donation and tissue donation offer solutions to previously life-threatening conditions.

I am a registered organ donor myself and I have this noted on my driver's licence. I think it is important that, in the case of death, we offer any of our own organs that are useful to save other people's lives or simply improve their standard of living. While researching this subject, I was reminded of the need to check my current details on the Australian Organ Donor Register, which is the only national register for organ and tissue donation. Even though I have told my family of my decision to make my organs or tissue available for donation and have ticked the box on my driver's licence renewal, I still need to make sure my consent is registered so should donation become possible my wishes will be recognised by my next of kin.

It is essential that tissues or organs are harvested as soon as possible after death is declared to avoid the possibility that the quality may be compromised. Where the registered donor's death requires a coronial autopsy, early harvesting of tissue or organs is equally important. However, under the present act, information regarding donor suitability can only be released with the consent of the coroner. Valuable time may be lost in the coronial process and this may further compromise a suitable tissue match.

I am pleased to inform the House that this bill will speed up the process so that the opportunity for tissue retrieval is not lost through unnecessary delay. This bill will further allow harvesting of organs or tissue within the requisite 24-hour time frame, which is no doubt a more positive outcome for the recipient. This bill will also enable the State Coroner to allow properly authorised tissue banks access to the information required for donor assessment, while complementing current practice and privacy considerations. However, this bill does not extend the current scope of access to the information—that is, tissue banks will not be able to retain a copy of the information document.

The recent review by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General has identified the need for amendment in several other significant areas. This bill will provide a clearer understanding of procedures and more flexibility for professionals involved in each case of unexpected death. We believe these provisions will assist families to cope better with unexpected deaths that become the subject of an autopsy request. At present, lengthy delays can be expected and experienced before a body is released to the family after autopsy—perhaps because the investigating coroner may not be available because of other urgent duties. Under the act, an autopsy is mandatory for stillborn deaths as well. This bill seeks to provide sensitivity and compassion in the coronial process.

In the absence of the investigating coroner, this bill will allow the signature of another coroner to release a body after the autopsy has been completed. This will offer access to the body for grieving family members so they can make necessary arrangements as soon as possible. In the case of a stillborn child, once the body has been identified there will be no need to continue any investigation into the possible cause of death and the infant's body can be released immediately to grieving family members.

The government has drafted this amendment after recognising the value of recommendations in the organisational review by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. We have made careful and well-founded decisions to protect the interests of those who can no longer speak for themselves and to alleviate the distress of their families wherever possible. This bill explores the issue of unexpected deaths and important matters that may arise in relation to the process of investigating such deaths. This bill instills confidence in the minds of every Queenslanders who has had to deal with this distressing and unexpected event. I thank the minister for introducing this compassionate and sensitive piece of legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

Dr DOUGLAS (Gaven—LNP) (2.39 pm): With this bill it is appropriate to begin with the end in mind. The coroner is often attempting to clarify those answers to questions that need a factual response. For many, there can be no conclusion until it is clear what happened, how it happened, who may be responsible, whether anything should go forward from it and what lessons can be learned. Interestingly, this bill does not change the fundamental philosophy or policies underpinning the 2003 Coroners Act, where it focused on the coronial regime of finding the truth of what happened in order to prevent deaths from similar causes happening in the future. This is quoted from the Attorney-General's second reading speech.

It is an adage in politics that one should never ask a question that you do not already know the answer to. Well, the coroner is coming from exactly the opposite direction. Oscar Wilde has said that the truth is rarely pure and never simple. Consistent with the philosophy of beginning with the end in mind, the correct point to start is the Davies inquiry, which identified ambiguities in its language which would contribute to under-reporting of health care related deaths. It is appropriate that there is a comprehensive definition of health related death. In short—and they are listed in the bill—they are death in care—‘health related deaths’—death in custody; death in the course of or as a result of police operations, new category.

The minister has appropriately highlighted that the majority of deaths caught by the new definitions could currently be reportable under some existing category and, further, the purpose of the changes is to ensure that deaths that are properly within the policy intent of the categories are classified and treated as such. That is, they will be subject to the specific investigation or inquest requirements that apply to those deaths.

Before going into close detail of those Davies inquiry recommendations that are the core of the changes that should have been incorporated in full in this bill, I wish to discuss what occurred after the revision of the Coroners Act 2003. It is the objective of the bill to amend the Coroners Act 2003 to improve operational efficiency in the coronial regimes. Whilst I started with the Davies inquiry recommendation—remember my approach of beginning with the end in mind—I would have to move back to the Ombudsman’s report which was released in December 2006 by Ombudsman David Bevan. The report is comprehensive, and it, too, needs to be considered as a guiding piece of well-researched reporting that should lead to an improved bill. Again, in line with what occurred with the Davies inquiry, not much of the Ombudsman’s report was included in the revision amendments that have become this bill that was launched some six months after the original review in 2003.

In short, Bevan’s report stated that the investigation had revealed systemic problems that reduced the effectiveness of the coronial system in Queensland, including that the current procedures for notifying that an inquest is to be held do not ensure that a public sector agency which deals with matters to be considered at the inquest is notified at the inquest or, if notified, has sufficient time to adequately participate and provide relevant information to a coroner; and that no person or entity has the responsibility of monitoring whether public sector agencies properly consider and, in appropriate cases, implement coronial recommendations.

This inquiry had arisen out of nine fatal electrocutions between 1995 and 1999. Each incident was subject to a coronial inquiry in which coronial recommendations were made to ensure similar incidents did not occur. This is the critical point. This was the alarm trigger. Mr Bevan said that nothing had been done by public sector agencies to assess or implement recommendations made by the coroner designed to prevent death occurring in similar situations. There was a 40 per cent non-implementation role of agencies surveyed. Some had not even sought nor received a copy of the recommendation of the coroner.

For those honourable members who do not understand what this is saying, I will give you an idea. He is saying departments were saying, ‘What I don’t know won’t hurt me.’ This is the dangerous concept of ‘ignorance is bliss’. This is how tragedies unfold and repeat themselves. Mr Bevan went on to say that on most occasions coroners and the families of the deceased were provided with no information on what was being done by the agencies to prevent a recurrence of the circumstances that lead to the tragedies.

Mr Bevan thought further about the lack of monitoring and suggested that his office take up the monitoring role. As if he has not got enough to do! He made suggestions for amendments to the Coroners and Other Acts Amendment Bill. In particular, he suggested that the Coroners Act 2003 be amended to require public sector agencies to provide details in their annual reports of coronial recommendations directed to them and their responses to those recommendations. He thought he would see changes. He did not receive those changes.

Yet, in summarising, the Attorney-General has said in his second reading speech that these amendments will achieve greater clarity, certainty and efficiency in the administration of the act and reinforces the reforms of 2003. Minister, this is a legal approach to a combined medical and legal issue. The two major inquiries have made somewhat simple requests that have not been implemented in percentage terms beyond my estimate of 30 per cent. This is inefficient and it does not reinforce reform.

I have examined the recommendation from the Davies inquiry—on pages 15 and 16—and have read the report. I am satisfied that those changes made in this amendment bill satisfactorily addressed some of his critical recommendations. I highlight the critical amendment to the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 2003. The wording satisfies me that it in part reflects the aim of the commissioner in highlighting that, where there is a discrepancy between an entry by a medical officer and that of the coroner, the entry reflects that difference in information entered on the register. For those honourable members who may not understand the minutiae of the detail, in the Davies inquiry clearly there were entries in the births, deaths and marriages register that were clearly false, misleading and far too nonspecific to be worthy of giving any substantive quantitative information to either the hospital, researchers, the government and, in particular, families and the coroner.

It is absolutely critical that where possible the pursuit of truth with regard to a diagnosis and a percentage quantum of accuracy with regard to that diagnosis should be obtained. There should be corroborating evidence supporting the primary diagnosis. Secondary and further diagnoses should be added only when they link to the primary diagnosis and may have led or contributed to the primary cause of death. If there is no link but they are significant, especially with surgical and/or medical procedures, that too should be added. It is absolutely critical that the time frame leading to these events should be included. The names of critical medical contributors should be included if possible. This information is not currently recorded—that of the critical medical contributors—but the information should be loaded in such a manner that it can be loaded into the ICD 10 coding system that enables access for epidemiological study later on.

These changes in this very simple amendment may give us this kind of critical information that may assist another repeat of the Davies inquiry. I would like to highlight at this stage that, had Premier Goss implemented those changes that came out of the much earlier Townsville inquiry, the problem would have been completely avoided. Following this and the Davies recommendation 7.50, largely regarding death due to medical procedure, I believe the amendments satisfactorily ensure both the spirit and intent of that recommended by Davies.

What disappoints me is that the minister found no place for the other major Davies inquiry recommendations—those of (c) to (g). I wish to cover each in detail and I will do so later. I do not believe the minister and his advisers clearly thought through their approach to a satisfactory resolution on the issue that stemmed from the systemic failure in medical care in Bundaberg. I, too, like many, have a personal interest in seeing a satisfactory resolution for those families in Bundaberg severely affected by medical malpractice in the Bundaberg Hospital. Ideally, I wish to never see that problem ever occur again in any hospital or medical centre throughout the country.

My uncle, Dr Desmond O'Rourke, was medical superintendent in Bundaberg in the 1960s for 10 years, and together with many local people attracted local medical specialists to assist those in the greater Burnett region. His brother, Dr Michael O'Rourke, spent many months after the calamity at Bundaberg was uncovered attempting to work through solutions for the individuals, particularly those patients and families affected. I spent three months of my medical training in a practice in the Burnett with Drs Geoff Illet, Les Stark, David White and Ian Masters, who would be known to many here. They were great mentors, and even today I have great medical friends in the Burnett, for we all share feelings of great anger but a greater need to do something better for these very needy people who were largely left on their own.

The Coroners Act amendment must reflect the changes that can deliver something of tangible benefit, in particular to our great state, that leads us all to be shown that their suffering was not in vain. They clearly are looking to see nothing less than the full delivery of all the Davies inquiry recommendations. To do less is not only an insult but also provocative and I believe dangerous.

The Davies inquiry made clear recommendations regarding suggested changes, which I spoke about before, in recommendations (c) and (d). They have not yet been implemented. The issue was to have a dedicated medical officer appointed to the State Coroner's office to assist in determining happenings within a stipulated period of an elective health procedure and requiring it to be further investigated and assisting in the conduct of that investigation. This is another critical piece of the jigsaw that needs to be put in place.

All these amendments will not work without having such an expert whose key role is reviewing potentially serious issues raised when one is looking after 4.1 million Queenslanders. Having a wonderful centre like the John Tonge Centre without the critical expertise would be wrong. Equally, a non-medically qualified coroner in this modern age needs the close assistance and advice of an appropriately qualified medical practitioner. It has to be someone with wide skills and professional expertise in a variety of medical areas. For a government that champions Queensland as the Smart State, this must be considered mandatory.

I am unable to discuss the clauses in detail, but clearly it would be appropriate to discuss them in relation to particular issues. I refer to the placement and recruitment of this person recommended by Davies. There are multiple clauses that will require this person's advice. I do not want to go through those in detail, but there are many of them.

The minister needs to announce that, in conjunction with this bill, he is following up on this critical recommendation of the Davies inquiry. In tandem with recommendation (c) from the Davies report is a parallel recommendation, recommendation (d). It recommends the appointment of a panel of specialised persons trained in various medical health service disciplines and it being given such powers as are considered necessary to enable coroners to consult with and receive assistance from such persons for the purpose of determining whether deaths happening within a stipulated period of an elective health procedure should be investigated and for the purposes of conducting that investigation. This type of panel is essential in being able to not only deliver medical answers where they may be difficult to find but also raise the appropriate questions that need to be asked.

The assumption is that the coroner may always know the questions that need to be asked, know what tests need to be done or even redone, who needs to be asked for advice and in certain cases and when the problem is so serious refer to a variety of agencies and boards. This may occasionally arise because of the complex nature of what may have occurred and because it may not be immediately apparent to others not medically qualified. This is the sense behind the recommendations. I believe that the Attorney-General should include them because it makes sense.

The final Davies recommendations, (e), (f) and (g), are specific and administratively based. If the minister's final words in his second reading speech were correct then these recommendations would also be included. They are: auditing compliance with the obligations undertaken at all public hospitals; Queensland Health having a policy to ensure that investigations in relation to each death and the report of that investigation be provided to the coroner and the family of the deceased; and continuing training to all doctors to ensure that they remain aware of their obligations to report.

I have heard the former Attorney-General state today that the LNP needs to get with the times. Here we have a bill produced using superb detailed research supporting changes and we have amendments to the Coroners Act six years after the original act and, wait for it, we get a few recommendations included but we do not get the critical reporting requirements—they get left off—and also the essential demands for the public agencies not gazetted included.

Minister, we all have a problem here. The new Coroners Act is workable but as an improvement it remains both untested and apparently wanting. I remain unconvinced that the tragedies of Bundaberg and the loss of life of nine men from electrocution and the lessons learnt from it have not been bureaucratically massaged. There are no threatening changes in the bill.

Mr Bevan's words about systemic failure should ring alarm bells. They do for me. The bill is supported, but sadly it lacks much of the good work that was done in preparation for it. It is probably fitting that the bill ends with the changes relating to cremation. That is the final step for many in life. Often what goes with it is lots of the answers to questions that were not immediately apparent at the time when a person lost their life. I have to say I think that is why I began with the end in mind.

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (2.54 pm): I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak in relation to the amendment to the Coroners Act. It has been said that the major changes to the law in relation to a coroner's responsibility took place in December 2003. The whole emphasis in the act itself was changed from a focus on establishing criminal liability to a focus on preventing deaths from similar causes in the future. That has been regarded not only here but throughout many countries as a sensible way of approaching these difficult matters. The change in emphasis in my experience has certainly allowed for a greater degree of investigation and more information to be forthcoming.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General—and I congratulate all those who have done the work in this regard, including the State Coroner and his office—has carried out a review of the act as is required after three or four years. As a result of that we see presented today the amending bill. As I indicated before, the major change occurred in 2003. What we essentially see here today are changes that are procedural or technical in nature and do not therefore involve a fundamental shift in the thrust of the legislation of 2003.

Of major significance here is the change to the 'not reasonably expected to be the outcome of a health procedure' category. As has been pointed out by previous speakers, this has come about as a result of the inquiry conducted by former Justice Davies and his very extensive report into the health area and particularly reporting on deaths as a result of medical procedures. He felt, as I understand it, that the previous regime led to underreporting of deaths either intentionally or accidentally. That is in nobody's interest whatsoever. Whilst there was a great deal of tragedy associated with what happened at Bundaberg, some good has come out of it. This is one of the good things that we are dealing with today.

In particular, the changes relate to the assurance that an independent person with appropriate qualifications is to determine whether the death was expected or not. It is extremely important that a properly qualified person undertake that very important role. The identifying factors that should be taken into account in determining that death should be expected are set out as well. They are a clinically accepted range of risks associated with health care. There is clarification of whether the death was reasonably expected. That relates to the health of the person at the beginning of the provision of the health care—perhaps when they arrived at the hospital—rather than some days or weeks after treatment had begun.

There is an extension within the provisions to the definition to capture failure to provide care—not just the act of provision of care but the failure to provide it when it should have been provided. The bill also clarifies and extends the definition to ensure it covers deaths resulting from care or treatment by a wide range of health service professionals, not just medical doctors. That was a major area addressed by former Justice Davies in his report; however, there are other amendments that are being dealt with here, some of which I will deal with, the first being death in care in relation to children. It is now to be made clear that this covers not just children who die in, for example, an institution but any child who is

legally under the custody or guardianship of the chief executive of the Department of Communities. I take it to mean that that would apply to a child in foster care with a family of foster carers engaged by the department.

With respect to death in custody, it is now being made clear that it applies to people held in custody pursuant to any law of the state or indeed of the Commonwealth—not just people detained by police or corrective services personnel but by any person detained pursuant to the law of the state or Commonwealth. An example of that might be transit officers who now operate pursuant to the relevant transport act. As I understand it, they have the power to detain people in certain instances and I think they would be covered by this provision. The Attorney might be kind enough to address that issue to clarify it.

There are new categories of reportable deaths being deaths which occur in the course of or as a result of police operations. In a way, most deaths where the police are involved are already reported—most of them being, of course, deaths in custody. However, this would be extended to make sure that it covers all deaths where there are police operations relevantly involved, and, I take it, for example, that that would apply to deaths resulting from a car chase and things of that nature.

Some of the other amendments will enable a review of the coroner's decision to be made and facilitate access to investigation documents for genuine researchers. There is also the implementation of what is called an 'aid to coroner' provision, agreed to by SCAG, to facilitate coroners providing assistance across state borders. All of that makes absolute common sense and they are timely amendments arrived at after a thorough review of the legislation by the department, with the assistance of the report I referred to from Justice Davies.

I take the opportunity to place on record my appreciation of the fine work that has been done over the years by Michael Barnes, the State Coroner. In my time as Attorney he impressed me as a very dedicated, competent professional. He worked very closely with the department, and his work was always of a high and commendable standard. One of the problems he had was that he had only one assistant coroner to service the whole state—I think that assistant was in Brisbane—and the difficulties arising because of the workload associated with North Queensland and Southport were almost unmanageable. I was pleased, therefore, that in my time as Attorney we were able to appoint new coroners to North Queensland in the form of Kevin Priestly to Cairns and John Hutton to Southport—the two areas that were bursting at the seams so far as the workload was concerned.

Kevin Priestly was eminently suitable in the sense that he had a particular interest in this line of work. He worked in the area of safety law, particularly as it relates to aviation, maritime, the workplace, tourism and more recently mining. He was a legal risk management consultant and had been at the private bar for 20 years before working as a solicitor for the last two years prior to his appointment. Importantly, he was born and bred in Cairns which is a very relevant factor to people in North Queensland, and they appreciated his appointment for a number of reasons, including that, but chiefly because he was extremely highly regarded.

Likewise, Mr John Hutton was a very experienced barrister. The needs for the Gold Coast to have a coroner were so self-evident in the sense that it required the State Coroner to always travel to the Gold Coast or for witnesses or family members to come up to Brisbane. Many representations were made by Peter Lawlor, the member for Southport and now Minister for Tourism. As a result, Mr Hutton was appointed. He had been a Crown Prosecutor for four years, worked in the crown law office for another four years and spent 19 years at the private bar. One of the notable chapters in his career was his work with the Aboriginal deaths in custody inquiry in Rockhampton, and of course that experience would have given him a deep awareness of the tragic effect that the loss of a loved one can bring to a family and friends. Those coroners were needed and are people who are doing a splendid job. I congratulate them on their service to the people of Queensland.

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (3.06 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Coroners and Other Acts Amendment Bill. The main objective of the bill is to amend the Coroners Act 2003 to make changes to the coronial regime. The bill makes a coronial related amendment to the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 2003 and consequential amendments to the Cremations Act 2003. The explanatory notes accompanying the bill indicate that the proposed amendments are primarily for the purpose of clarification or are procedural or technical in nature and do not involve a shift in the fundamental policy underpinning the legislation.

In particular, the bill includes amendments to clarify the scope and operation of the categories of reportable deaths, including amendments to address one of the coronial issues raised in the report of the Queensland Public Hospitals Commission of Inquiry—the Davies inquiry—which was tabled on 30 November 2005. This amendment relates to the provision requiring the reporting of deaths that are not reasonably expected to be the outcome of a health procedure.

While the explanatory notes state that the Davies inquiry did not make a recommendation for an amendment relating to this specific provision, it did identify ambiguities in its language which could contribute to underreporting of health care related deaths. In addition, the State Coroner has raised

issues regarding the language and interpretation of this provision. The bill contains amendments to address these concerns by requiring the reporting of health care related deaths, replacing the current provisions that provide for the reporting of deaths that were not reasonably expected to be the outcome of a health procedure. The amendments insert a definition of a health care related death.

Other amendments include amendment of the definition of 'death in care' in relation to children in care to ensure it applies to all out-of-home placements; amendment of the 'death in custody' definition to cover deaths in detention under all state and Commonwealth legislation; establishment of a new category of reportable death—that is, the death happened in the course of or as a result of police operations, which must be reported to the State Coroner or the deputy State Coroner; implementation of a model 'aid to coroner' provision agreed to by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General to facilitate cross-jurisdictional assistance; provision for review of decisions as to whether a death is reportable and clarification of the coroner's powers in the preliminary investigation to determine whether a death is a reportable death; amendments to clarify and improve investigation and pre-inquest conference processes and to facilitate the reopening of investigations and inquests; and, finally, amendments to facilitate access to investigation documents by genuine researchers.

As indicated by the shadow Attorney-General, the member for Southern Downs, these amendments are supported by the LNP. Indeed, I particularly welcome the move by the government to implement matters that were raised in the report by Commissioner Davies. In my contribution this afternoon I would like to focus on that particular issue.

The record of this government regarding the implementation of specific recommendations contained in the Davies report has been average, to say the least. In this regard the LNP opposition has even tried to assist the government. In July 2007 the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Surfers Paradise, who was then the shadow health minister, introduced into the Queensland parliament the Coroners and Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment Bill 2007. The provisions of that bill are not unrelated to the provisions of the bill before the House insofar as they deal specifically with the reporting of deaths.

The objectives of that bill were to amend the Coroners Act 2003 and the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 2003 to implement the recommendations made in the Queensland Public Hospitals Commission of Inquiry report—the Davies report. The Davies inquiry was completed in November 2005. Specifically, the bill proposed to implement the recommendations contained in chapter 7 of the report, which proposed to amend the act to provide for a death occurring within 30 days of an elective health procedure to be a reportable death to the coroner. The proposed amendments would also have inserted a definition of 'elective health procedure' as a health procedure that can be delayed for a period of 24 hours without death being a likely outcome.

The amendments in the bill put forward by the member for Surfers Paradise would have also inserted provisions into the act to provide, in the event of a death happening within 30 days of an elective health procedure, that the health practitioner in charge of the procedure would be obliged to provide to the coroner his or her opinion as to the cause of death and that all deaths otherwise occurring in public hospitals would be certified by the health practitioners responsible for the care of the deceased persons. The bill proposed to faithfully implement the recommendations contained in the Queensland Public Hospitals Commission of Inquiry report. Regrettably, the government voted against the bill for base political purposes and the bill failed.

Important recommendations made by Commissioner Davies were actively prevented from being implemented by the government. Indeed, we saw at that time a quite extraordinary contribution from the then Attorney-General, the member for Toowoomba North. In respect of the amendments proposed by the member for Surfers Paradise, which were taken directly from the recommendations of the Davies inquiry, the then Attorney-General stated—

The government considers that a Davies style automatic reporting requirement, whereby every death within 30 days of an elective health procedure has to be reported to a coroner, will be costly and problematic. This is because any prescribed time frame is arbitrary.

I think it was appalling during that debate that the then Attorney-General described Commissioner Davies's recommendations on these matters to be arbitrary and too costly. At that time I was alarmed that the government could be so casual about dismissing the recommendations of the report of the Queensland Public Hospitals Commission of Inquiry, which was a watershed inquiry in Queensland. I thought it was disrespectful to tell Commissioner Davies that the government believed his recommendations to be too costly and arbitrary to implement. At the time, the only conclusion that you could draw was that the government had learned nothing from the health crisis.

In respect of reforms concerning the reporting of deaths, the amendments in this bill indicate that the government opposed the private members's bill introduced by the member for Surfers Paradise for base political purposes. It is plausible to suggest that the amendments contained in this bill, establishing that a health care related death includes the death of a person at any time after health care was sought

or a particular type of health care was not provided, encompass the recommendation made by Commissioner Davies. So we now know that the government does not really believe—thankfully—that the recommendations of Commissioner Davies were arbitrary and too costly, but at the time it was just playing politics.

As I have pointed out previously in this place, even where the government has moved sluggishly to implement a range of matters recommended by the Davies report it has failed to implement them faithfully. In March 2007 this parliament passed the Whistleblowers (Disclosure to Member of Parliament) Amendment Bill. The recommendations contained in that bill had originally been proposed following a review by the Public Service Commissioner and they were supported by Commissioner Davies. The recommendations included central oversight of public interest disclosures, an increased class of persons who may make a public interest disclosure and an expansion of bodies to which a complaint may be made. Those recommendations were subsequently supported by the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee and the Queensland Ombudsman. Despite widespread consensus on those recommendations, they were absent from the government's Whistleblowers (Disclosure to Member of Parliament) Amendment Bill.

What is even more damning is that the LNP opposition had tried previously to give effect in their entirety to the relevant recommendations of the Queensland Public Hospitals Commission of Inquiry by introducing the Whistleblowers Protection Amendment Bill 2006. But the government voted it down—again for political reasons. So this government has some form in terms of putting politics ahead of delivering the best possible outcome for Queenslanders.

It is extraordinary that, after all its rhetoric in relation to its efforts to reform the health system, the government has not completed the implementation of the recommendations of the Davies report, almost four years later. That the government is not making the changes required is clearly and unequivocally demonstrated by the fact that it has not implemented the recommendations of the Public Hospitals Commission of Inquiry, despite the fact that in December 2005 the then Premier, Peter Beattie, welcomed it in glowing terms and with open arms.

The Davies inquiry arose out of complaints relating to the very serious problems that plagued Bundaberg Base Hospital. The exposure of those problems by a brave whistleblower and the LNP opposition led to the uncovering of a much wider culture of secrecy and mediocrity in the Queensland health system presided over by the government. This bill is a small step in the right direction. The recommendations of the Davies inquiry should be a road map for the government, but it seems content to take only small steps from time to time to achieve the real reform that is needed to address these very serious matters.

Mr DEMPSEY (Bundaberg—LNP) (3.16 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Coroners and Other Acts Amendment Bill. The intent of this bill is to clarify when the coroner must investigate the cause of death and, in line with the objectives of the Coroners Act 2003, focus on preventing further deaths from happening in similar circumstances. I intend to support this bill, but I have some reservations about the time it has taken this government to implement the recommended changes and concerns that the amendments do not go far enough.

It is disappointing that the Attorney-General has not taken this opportunity to implement the recommendations made by the Queensland Ombudsman, David Bevan, in the Coronial Recommendations Project report, which was released back in 2006. I believe that the failure of the current procedures regarding the involvement of public sector agencies in inquests and the fact that there is no follow-up in appropriate cases to implement coronial recommendations is simply unacceptable and that the people of Queensland expect a more accountable system.

As I stated previously, the main objective of the Coroners Act 2003 is to identify the cause of a death to attempt to prevent more such deaths from occurring. In 2006 the Ombudsman discovered that, following an inquest into a death by electrocution, little or nothing had been done by public sector agencies to implement recommendations made by coroners with a view to preventing similar deaths occurring. The coroner found that there was little involvement of public sector agencies during inquests and that there is no responsibility for anyone to see if recommendations were followed. Without the requirement for more involvement by government agencies, I fear that the main objective of the Coroners Act 2003 will not be achieved.

The Bundaberg Hospital crisis in 2005 and the subsequent inquiry have left their marks on the Bundaberg community. Nearly four years have passed since the start of the Davies commission of inquiry, yet the Bundaberg Base Hospital is still infamous for the events of that time. For many members of the Bundaberg community, and particularly the hardworking staff of the hospital, there is a real urge to move on. Many Bundaberg individuals want to see the community regain faith in their magnificent Bundaberg Base Hospital and its reputation rebuilt. However, in order to rebuild, the Bundaberg community has had to accept real changes to the way in which the hospital operates.

As members will be aware, the 558 pages of the Davies report are not entirely about Bundaberg. The problems identified in the Davies report were not unique to Bundaberg. Rather, Bundaberg was the catalyst—the straw that broke the health system's back. However, the community of Bundaberg is embracing changes to make the system better. I applaud this step to make the coronial system better and more accountable.

The report of the Queensland Public Hospitals Commission of Inquiry, or the Davies report as it is better known, states that out of the 13 Bundaberg Hospital crisis patients in which an unacceptable level of care contributed to their adverse outcome only two were initially reported to the coroner. This is because in the past it was up to the doctor to identify correctly which deaths should be reported and the coroner notified. As the Davies report identified—

This gives rise to the risk of concealment of medical error or neglect or, more seriously, as occurred in the case of Dr Shipman in the United Kingdom, crime or other wrongdoing by that doctor. As the Queensland State Coroner has pointed out, the person best placed to make the assessment as to whether or not a death was a reasonably expected outcome from a health procedure, is the person who knows the most about the patient's condition leading up to death. However, he or she is also usually the person whose performance will be scrutinised if a Coroner investigates the death. He or she, therefore, might not be seen as sufficiently impartial to make an independent judgment of these issues.

The report continues that there have been other occasions in Australia where doctors may not have reported all cases of reportable deaths. The Victorian parliament Law Reform Committee cites a study in which 27 per cent of death certificates inaccurately presented the cause of death and found that 20 per cent of doctors were willing to alter the death certificate if it meant that the coroner would not get involved in the case. This is not a one-off finding. A study in the United Kingdom also found similar results.

Commissions of inquiry in the United Kingdom were forced to consider these practices following the murder investigation of Dr Harold Shipman, a family GP, a mass murderer, who remained undetected for over 20 years despite killing 215 of his patients. During the Shipman inquiry Dame Janet Smith proposed an investigation by the Coroner's Service as English procedures were dependent upon the integrity and judgement of a single medical practitioner. She stated that the laws failed to protect the community and that all deaths should be reported to the coroner who would be responsible for certifying deaths.

While the model would be far from practicable in Queensland considering the extensive workloads faced by our coronial system, Dame Janet Smith identified the problem with determining reportable deaths and expected deaths and the ease with which mistakes or, indeed, murder can be hidden. Inserting a comprehensive definition of a health care related death into the Coronial Act 2003 is a step in the right direction to close this gap. If Queensland is to truly have an open and accountable health system, then we need to address these concerns. We need to ensure that doctors cannot cover up mishaps that result in the unexpected death of a patient. We need to make it impossible for a medical practitioner to change the cause of death just to avoid the paperwork involved in dealing with the coroner.

Another area that needs more accountability is the death of children who are known to Child Safety Services. The final report for the department of child safety revealed that 65 children known to Child Safety Services died between 1 July 2008 and 26 March 2009. While the report identified that 16 deaths were accidental, 25 related to diseases or morbid conditions and four were due to SIDS. I am particularly concerned that seven children committed suicide. One was killed in a fatal assault and 12 deaths were yet to be or were unable to be determined. The report assures us that—

The department is developing a stronger methodology for conducting reviews of child deaths through accident, illness or neglect of children known to the department. The new Systems and Practice Reviews will support the department's ongoing commitment to cultural change through a process which is respectful of all involved, including staff, carers and the children. Replacing the previous Child Death Case Reviews, the new process will consolidate good practice and encourage continuous improvement in our service delivery to vulnerable children.

These changes sound very good in theory, but I note the department states that any rise in child deaths cannot be linked to any single cause. Once again, I want to remind the House about the main objective of the Coroners Act 2003 to investigate deaths to reduce the chance of other people dying from the same cause. Considering that children in the care of the department are five times more likely to die than other Queensland children, I think it is imperative that all possible steps are taken to reduce potential Child Safety related deaths.

I note this bill will expand the definition of reportable deaths to include all children placed in out-of-home placements under the Child Protection Act 1999. Widening the net to include more situations ensures that all reportable deaths and deaths of children who may fall into grey areas will be investigated by the coroner. The change will ensure that these deaths are properly categorised and investigated and that recommendations for change will be made. This amendment also seeks to clarify that the death of a child under the custody or guardianship of the Department of Communities will be classified as a death in care even if the child has left a placement or is self-placed.

I believe this widening of the definition of deaths in care will result in more deaths of children being properly recorded and investigated. While it will be tempting for this state government to blame the wider definition for an increase in deaths amongst children in care, I believe that when it comes to these tragic results the department must follow the lead of the Coroners Act 2003 and use the coroner's finding to prevent, where possible, further deaths among children in care.

This year we have seen the Minister for Child Safety blame the increasing population of Queensland and the growing number of children known to the department of child safety as an explanation for the rising number of deaths of children known to his department. As this bill fails to ensure that public sector agencies must take into account recommendations from the coroner, Child Safety Services will not be made to review practices and no real steps to reduce the obscene number of deaths amongst children in care will occur.

I support the intention of the bill. However, I must again state my disappointment that these amendments fail to address the recommendations made by the Queensland Ombudsman in 2006 to ensure a real change and improvement to the coronial process in Queensland. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (3.28 pm): In rising to speak to the Coroners and Other Acts Amendment Bill, I have listened with great bemusement to some of the members who stand up and parrot words. I think—and I am sure I will be corrected if I am wrong—I am the only person who stands up in this House who has acted as a coroner. We had difficulties under the old 1958 act, which I had hoped had been attended to by the 2003 act. We hear comments such as those from the member for Hinchinbrook about introducing this bill for some base political reason. In case it escaped his very small notice, some of the legislation that is presented in this House forms no part of the legislative program of the government of the day and as such those items are introduced into this House as the need arises.

The amendments in this bill do not change the fundamental policy of the 2003 bill. They include clarifications of categories, particularly the health care related deaths category. There is a new definition of 'death in care' in relation to children in care to ensure it applies to out-of-home placements and a new definition of 'death in custody'. I am glad some of these members have never had to deal with deaths under the old 1958 act. I think the only provision for anyone who died as a result of an operation procedure under that act was if the person died within one year and one day of having received a general anaesthetic. The 2003 act addressed the majority of the difficulties that arose with that old act. Most of the time deaths were looked into on the basis of criminality. The new regime that was introduced in 2003 was a genuine attempt to try to find out what caused deaths and to prevent deaths from similar causes happening in the future. I believe that the clarification is warranted. I thank the Attorney for introducing this bill to ensure that the people of Queensland are protected by a regime, which is an essential coronial regime, and that due findings are made.

The one part of this bill which was really of interest to me was the amendment to the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act, requiring the updating of the register. Up until quite recently, the coroner issued a certificate which gave a possible cause of death and sometimes that would not be amended for two to three years. In terms of what is provided now, it is incumbent on the coroner to make a finding which will change and to give at an early date the actual cause of death.

In closing my contribution, Madam Deputy Speaker O'Neill, I acknowledge the presence of your mother in the gallery. Mrs Mills has been in ill health and this is her first opportunity to come into the House. I would like to welcome her to the House.

I table a non-conforming petition in relation to dental health services. I commend the bill to the House.

Tabled paper: Non-conforming petition regarding dental health services in Central Queensland [\[757\]](#).

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (3.32 pm): Madam Deputy Speaker O'Neill, I too would like to welcome Mrs Mills, your mum, to the House this afternoon. It is a great pleasure to have her with us. My mother has never been to this parliament, although she would of course like to be here, but she is also suffering from ill health. I know, member for Kallangur, how very special this afternoon must be to you personally as well as to your mum.

I will now talk about the Coroners and Other Acts Amendment Bill. I note that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General has conducted an operational review of the Coroners and Other Acts Amendment Bill. I would like to personally thank the officers for their hard work in relation to this review process.

I would also like to talk briefly about the amendments. They include an amendment to the definition of 'death in care' in relation to children in care to ensure it applies to all out-of-home placements; amendments to the 'death in custody' definition to cover deaths in detention under all state and Commonwealth legislation—that is also subject to some specified exemptions; the establishment of a new category of reportable death, which is 'the death happened in the course of or as a result of police operations'; and also implementation of a model 'aid to coroner' provision, which was agreed to by the SCAG to facilitate cross-jurisdictional assistance. I note that there are also other amendments.

I would like to talk particularly about new section 10AA *'Health care related death defined'*. I would like to place on record that I believe that these are the Beryl Crosby amendments. I can remember, when I was Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health, the extraordinary views of the patients of the Bundaberg Hospital who went through an extremely traumatic experience back then. These amendments were the types of issues they were talking about. Beryl Crosby, I believe this afternoon, should be honoured in this parliament for the work that she did in relation to supporting the views of the Bundaberg patients. She is really an incredible person in the sense that it was not just the public support that she gave to those patients but the incredible private support that she showed to all of the families and all of the care and all of the love that she gave those particular patients and their families as well. I can certainly recall Beryl ringing me at home at some God given early hour of the morning when she was actually getting very upset at the level of concern of the other patients—of course she was one of the patients at the Bundaberg Hospital—and the sheer depth of the emotion that occurred during that particular time.

So I would like to personally place on record my honour to the members of the Bundaberg patient support group, particularly to Beryl Crosby and her family. She actually felt very guilty about giving over so much of her life for so many years to looking after the patients. I think in some ways she probably felt very bad about not spending enough time with her own family. She was also a new grandmother during that time. I can remember her grandson being born. Yet she was still on the phones day in, day out assisting the patients involved in the Bundaberg Hospital situation. I believe that new section 10AA should be christened the Beryl Crosby and Bundaberg patients support group amendments, and I hope this parliament joins with me in saying that we honour them in their time of need. We have never, ever forgotten them and nor will we forget them.

Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (3.36 pm): In the spirit of harmony, Madam Deputy Speaker O'Neill, I also acknowledge your mother in the gallery and wish her all the best. I note that my friend the member for Everton is in the chamber, so there is a strong chance, Madam Deputy Speaker, for you to show your strong protection for me from the member for Everton.

Mr WATT: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I find it staggering to be accused of being a threat. I take pride in being accused of being a threat. Being five foot eight or nine at best, I find it amazing that this man needs protection from me, but there you go.

Mr BLEIJIE: I thought the point of order might have been the friendly part. Anyway, I withdraw.

I rise to speak in general support of the Coroners and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2009, which has been introduced by the government. The bill will amend the Coroners Act 2003, the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 2003 and the Cremations Act 2003. The Coroners Act 2003 repealed the Coroners Act 1958. Since the Coroners Act was enacted in 2003, an Office of the State Coroner has been established, and we have seen a new coronial administration established to focus on discovering the cause of and the truth behind certain deaths in an effort to prevent similar deaths happening again. The scope of the previous act related mainly to deaths arising as a result of criminal liability. The new act expanded the scope beyond only criminal liability.

The bill before parliament clarifies the scope and operation of the Coroners Act and seeks to improve the operational efficiency of the coronial regime. The bill seeks to include amendments to address one of the coronial issues raised in the report of the Queensland Public Hospitals Commission of Inquiry, referred to as the Davies report. The Davies commission of inquiry arose as a result of complaints relating to one particular doctor at Bundaberg Base Hospital in 2004 and 2005, after the enactment of the Coroners Act. These complaints not only related to a doctor's judgement, competence and care but also the failure of Bundaberg Base Hospital administrators and officers of Queensland Health to address those complaints and concerns.

Part of the inquiry was to consider whether there was sufficient evidence to justify amendments to the Coroners Act 2003 in relation to appropriate reporting of deaths caused by or as a result of a health procedure. In the Davies report, the commissioner stated—

... thirteen people died in Bundaberg after an unacceptable level of care ... Extraordinarily, only two of these deaths were reported to the Coroner under the *Coroner's Act* 2003, which required reporting in any case in which death was not a reasonably expected outcome of a health procedure. It seems likely that none of these deaths were reasonably expected outcomes of the relevant procedure.

In the Davies report, the commissioner made several recommendations to deal with those health care related deaths that were not expressly required to be reported to the coroner as a result of the ambiguity or, rather, limited scope of the existing section 8(3)(d) of the act—that is, deaths that are 'not reasonably expected to be the outcome of a health procedure'. Whilst the amendment set out in this bill was not specifically recommended by the Davies report, the amendment does deal with the issue arising from the existing provision requiring the reporting of deaths that are 'not reasonably expected to be the outcome of a health procedure'. The bill will now require the reporting of all health care related deaths. The definition of a 'health care related death' as set out in the bill is quite extensive. The definition of 'health care' itself is quite broad to mean—

- (a) any health procedure; or
- (b) any care, treatment, advice, service or goods provided for or purportedly for the benefit of human health.

The definition of 'health care related death' covers those deaths that occur at any time after receiving health care that (a) either caused or contributed to or was likely to have caused or contributed to the death, and (b) immediately prior to receiving the health care an independent person—that is, a person who was qualified in the relevant area of health care and who has regard to all relevant matters—would not have reasonably expected that such health care would cause or contribute to the person's death.

I make note to the House that these recommendations by the commission of inquiry were made back in 2005 and many of those recommendations have not been incorporated into the amendments proposed by this bill. This government has a track record of not acting in a timely manner and bringing about reform on important issues such as these as well as doing the bare minimum so that the government can at least appear to be making changes.

The bill will extend the category of reportable deaths to those deaths that 'happened in the course of or as a result of police operations'. The Queensland Coroners Court has carried out a series of seven inquests in relation to police pursuit deaths that occurred between 5 June 2005 and 5 December 2006. The most recent inquest relates to the unfortunate death of Caitlin Hanrick, a 13-year-old grade 8 student who on 4 December 2006 was struck by a Holden Commodore as it sped through red lights at a crossing while being pursued by two police vehicles. Sadly, this young girl died the following day as a result of the injuries resulting from being hit by a stolen car involved in a police pursuit.

While this death is a tragedy and nothing can take away from the loss experienced by Caitlin's family, her family have been provided with some answers as a result of the coronial inquest. But one must ask how many other deaths have occurred in the course of or as a result of police operations that have not been reported to the coroner and how many other families did not and still do not have any answers. The amendment to include deaths that 'happened in the course of or as a result of police operations' as reportable deaths is welcome but long overdue.

The amendments set out in the bill now expand the definition of 'death in care' in relation to children to include all out-of-home placements. I refer to the *Child Death Case Review Committee Annual Report 2007-08: reviews of child deaths known to the Queensland child protection system*. During the period 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008, 457 children and young people died in Queensland and, of these 457 children and young people, 63 were known to the department of child safety. Of these 63 deaths, four were in out-of-home care. Sadly, 16 of these 63 young deaths were caused by non-accidental trauma—nine as a result of a fatal assault and seven as a result of suspected suicide. Other causes of death were: disease and morbid conditions, SIDS or other undetermined cause, transport related, drowning, accidental or fire. The cause of death of 10 children during this time is still unknown, pending determination by the coroner.

The number of deaths of children known to the department of child safety has regrettably increased from the previous year, when there were 57 deaths of children and young people during the period 1 July 2006 and 30 June 2007. Of those 57 deaths, 11 were caused by non-accidental trauma—seven being fatal assault and four being suspected suicide.

The loss of such young lives is a sad and terrible reality that our community must stand against. As a community, we need to focus on the area of child safety and welfare. This government needs to look to reform its prevention programs in relation to child safety and welfare. While most of these deaths would have been reportable deaths and would most likely have been required to be reported to the coroner under some category of reportable deaths, the amendments set out in this bill will ensure that the death of any child who is in a placement out of home will be a death that must be reported to the coroner.

The amendment will extend the reportable child deaths from only those deaths of children who are placed in care under section 82 of the Child Protection Act 1999 to be those out-of-home placements where the child is: in the custody or guardianship of the chief executive of the department of child safety; or placed in care under an assessment care agreement; or the subject of a child protection order granting a member of the child's family, other than a parent of the child, custody of that child; or the subject of a child protection order granting long-term guardianship of the child to either a member of the child's family, other than a parent of the child, or a person who is not a member of the child's family but has been nominated by the chief executive.

Once again, I reiterate the importance of prevention in the area of child safety and welfare. The children of Queensland are depending on this government to stand up for their safety and their lives. I urge this government to take that seriously and seek to prevent any threat to our children's safety and welfare, to their lives. While the LNP will support the bill, the amendments proposed in the bill should have been brought before this parliament quite some time ago and they still do not deal with several issues and recommendations contained in the Davies report. I commend this bill to the House.

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (3.46 pm), in reply: I would like to begin my comments by thanking all members of the House who contributed to the debate this afternoon on this very important amendment to the Coroners Act. Madam Deputy Speaker O'Neill, I, too, at the outset would like to acknowledge the presence of your mother in

the gallery. What a proud day it must be for her to see her daughter presiding over the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, although perhaps only in a temporary capacity. Nevertheless, it is an exciting time for your family today.

When the Coroners Act came into force it replaced an act that had been in place for about 50 years. That was commented upon by the member for Keppel, who had been appointed as an acting coroner at one stage under the old 1958 act. The changes it brought to Queensland's coronial regime were significant. The 2003 act brought Queensland into line with modern concepts of coronership. It brought a new focus on death prevention and increased recognition of the needs of families and loved ones in the coronial process. Ultimately, the aim of the new regime is to help prevent avoidable deaths by finding the truth of what has happened and, where appropriate, making recommendations for systemic change.

Regularly we see evidence in the daily media headlines of the coronial regime and our new coronial system in Queensland at work. The coroner's recommendations can often be inconvenient or uncomfortable for government, but that is the strength of the reforms that we have put in place and that we are committed to maintaining. That is set out in the 2003 act and also in the amendments before the House today.

Practical experience with the act has shown that the reforms of 2003 are working well. However, as with all new legislation, there is always room for finetuning, and that is the purpose of this bill. As I said in my second reading speech, this bill does not change the fundamental philosophy underpinning the existing coronial regime. Its purpose is to clarify ambiguities in the act and to improve efficiency.

I will now address some of the matters raised by members in the course of this debate. The member for Southern Downs made a very serious allegation, in my view, that ministerial staff were interfering with documentation concerning child death case reviews. I am not aware of any such allegation being publicly made, other than what was said in the speech of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Southern Downs, but I would encourage him and any other member to refer any evidence they may have relevant to allegations of official misconduct to the CMC accordingly.

The member for Southern Downs also raised the issue of a police helicopter. These are issues best addressed by my cabinet colleague the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services, but what I can say is this: not only do the Nationals want to tell police where to put officers—something that politicians have no expertise in—they are also dictating to police what aircraft should be prioritised for current operational policing needs. The LNP made a commitment during the election campaign to provide two new helicopters but of course did not ask the Queensland Police Service if it met their needs or current requirements. The Police Commissioner has made it clear that his current intent is to expand the existing QPS fixed-wing capability. For a state as big, as wide and as large as Queensland, we need an Air Wing capability that is based on fixed wings. That is why Labor is delivering a new police plane for the Torres Strait.

The member for Southern Downs also raised some concern that the previous proposal by Commissioner Davies with respect to health care related deaths was not being adopted. I note that on 12 March 2008 the former Attorney-General outlined to the parliament the reason the government was not adopting the Davies report proposal for a new category of reportable deaths which would capture 'all deaths within 30 days of an elective health procedure'. In particular, this approach would have meant that a significant number of deaths that do not require coronial scrutiny would nevertheless have to be reported to the coroner. In the government's view this, amongst other things, would have caused unnecessary distress to the families of those deceased persons.

The proposed amendment to section 8(3)(d) is a precise and targeted approach to the capture of medical and other health care related deaths. It addresses the problems and gaps in the current section 8(3)(d) identified in the Davies report and other issues about interpretation and coverage of the current section raised by the State Coroner. The new health care related death category will provide clear guidance for healthcare professionals as to what deaths must be reported and target only the types of deaths that require coronial scrutiny. In particular, the amendments address the issue raised in the Davies report as to whose expectation is relevant in determining whether a death was reasonably expected and to what standard the outcome must have been unreasonable.

The Davies report also commented that any reforms need to be 'broad enough and robust enough to capture all cases of medical errors, neglect and misconduct leading to death by health service practitioners'. This has been addressed by introducing a new category of health care related deaths where 'health care' is broadly defined so that it captures a range of deaths that are not hospital or surgery related. The new definition also captures situations where there was a failure to provide health care. This closes a gap in the existing provision and ensures that reporting obligations cannot be avoided because when health care was sought no treatment or care was provided.

The member for Mudgeeraba asked whether there would be a time limit for the reporting of a death. What new section 10AA requires is a nexus between the relevant health care and the death. The reference to a death at any time is qualified by the rest of the definition. A death will only be caught if the healthcare provider either 'caused or is likely to have caused the death; or contributed to or is likely to

have contributed to the death' or if health care was sought and the health care or a particular form of health care failed to be provided, the failure either 'caused or is likely to have caused the death; or contributed or is likely to have contributed to the death'.

The member for Gaven questioned why a dedicated medical officer or expert advice panel were not provided to the Coroner's office in accordance with what Commissioner Davies recommended. I would note for the member's information that the coroner does have access to expert medical opinions and advice during investigations. This is most often on the advice of the Clinical Forensic Medical Unit in Queensland Health, the Australian Medical Association and the experience of the coronial officers themselves. Queensland Health's Clinical Forensic Medical Unit also provides a dedicated medical officer who liaises on a daily basis with the Office of the State Coroner regarding medical deaths coming to the coronial system's attention.

The member for Gaven also raised the issue of the Ombudsman report, calling for a mechanism to monitor progress of coronial recommendations. As this House is aware, the government has previously announced that it has introduced an administrative process for monitoring public sector responses to coronial recommendations. This report will be released soon.

In conclusion, I would again like to thank all honourable members for their contributions to this debate, particularly government members in the parliament. I would like to also thank the officers from the department who have worked assiduously on this bill—notably, Sharon Sergeant, Ainslie Kierkegaard and Leanne Robertson—and Mark Biddulph from my office. I commend this bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Clause 2—

Mr DICK (3.55 pm): I move the following amendment—

1 Amendment of clause 2 (Commencement)—

Page 6, line 7, after 'Act'—

insert—

' , other than section 50(5) to (9) and section 59 (to the extent it inserts a new part 6, division 4 heading and new sections 114 and 115),'

This amendment amends clause 2 of the bill, which provides for the commencement of the act. The effect of the amendment is that new sections 50(5) to 50(9) and section 59, to the extent it inserts a new part 6, division 4 heading, and new sections 114 and 115 will commence on assent.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 49, as read, agreed to.

Clause 50—

Mr DICK (3.56 pm): I move the following amendment—

2 Amendment of clause 50 (Amendment of s 71 (Functions and powers of State Coroner))—

(1) Page 37, line 28—

omit, insert—

'(6) Despite subsections (4) and (5), the State Coroner—

(a) may be appointed to act as, and perform the functions and exercise the powers of, the Deputy Chief Magistrate; and'

(2) Page 37, line 29, paragraph (a)—

renumber as paragraph (b).

(3) Page 38, line 4, paragraph (b)—

renumber as paragraph (c).

(4) Page 38, line 17, 'subsection (7)(b)'—

omit, insert—

'subsection (7)(c)'

(5) Page 38, line 23—

omit, insert—

'(10) However, if the State Coroner is acting as Deputy Chief Magistrate, the *Magistrates Act 1991*, section 41(1) applies to the extent it requires an acting Deputy Chief Magistrate to comply with every reasonable direction given to, or requirement made by, the Chief Magistrate.

- '(11) To remove any doubt, it is declared that the *Magistrates Act 1991*, section 14(b) applies to the State Coroner while acting as Deputy Chief Magistrate.
- '(12) The State Coroner may not perform the functions, or exercise the powers, of the State Coroner while the State Coroner acts as Deputy Chief Magistrate or, under the *Magistrates Act 1991*, section 14(b), as Chief Magistrate.
- '(13) In this section—'

The reason for this amendment is to avoid any argument that current sections 71(3) and 71(4), which will become sections 71(4) and 71(5) as a result of the renumbering, may operate to preclude the State Coroner from acting as the Deputy Chief Magistrate. This is not the intention of these sections. The amendment makes it clear that the State Coroner may be appointed to act as, and perform the functions and exercise the powers of, the Deputy Chief Magistrate.

It also makes it clear that section 14B of the Magistrates Act applies if the State Coroner acts as Deputy Chief Magistrate. Section 14B provides that the Deputy Chief Magistrate may act as the Chief Magistrate during a vacancy in the office or for any period when the Chief Magistrate is for any reason unable to perform the duties of the office.

The amendment also removes any doubt that if the State Coroner is acting in any of these offices he cannot concurrently carry out the functions or exercise the powers of the State Coroner. Under section 74 of the Coroners Act, if the State Coroner is unavailable for any reason to perform the functions of the State Coroner, the Deputy State Coroner may act as State Coroner.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 50, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 51 to 58, as read, agreed to.

Clause 59—

Mr DICK (3.58 pm): I move the following amendment—

3 Amendment of clause 59 (Insertion of new pt 6, div 4)—

Page 43, line 19, 'section.'—

omit, insert—

'section.

'144 Validation relating to State Coroner

'(1) This section applies to—

- (a) the purported appointment, at any time before the commencement of this section, of the State Coroner to act as Deputy Chief Magistrate; and
- (b) the purported acting, at any time before the commencement of this section, of the State Coroner as Chief Magistrate under the *Magistrates Act 1991*, section 14(b) while purportedly appointed as Deputy Chief Magistrate.

'(2) The purported appointment or purported acting is taken to have been valid and always to have been valid.

'(3) Every decision or order made, sentence imposed or anything done by the State Coroner—

- (a) while purportedly appointed as Deputy Chief Magistrate; or
- (b) while purportedly acting as Chief Magistrate under the *Magistrates Act 1991*, section 14(b) while purportedly appointed as Deputy Chief Magistrate;

is taken to have been valid, and always to have been valid, to the same extent as would be the case if the purported appointment or purported acting were valid.

'115 Validation relating to Deputy State Coroner

'(1) This section applies to the purported acting, at any time before the commencement of this section, of the Deputy State Coroner as State Coroner under section 74(6) because of a purported appointment or purported acting mentioned in section 114(1).

'(2) The purported acting as State Coroner is taken to have been valid and always to have been valid.

'(3) Every decision or order made or anything done by the Deputy State Coroner while purportedly acting as State Coroner is taken to have been valid, and always to have been valid, to the same extent as would be the case if the purported acting were valid.'

The purpose of this amendment is to remove any doubt as to the validity of anything done by the State Coroner while acting as Deputy Chief Magistrate or Chief Magistrate before the commencement of this provision. Similarly, it removes any doubt as to the validity of anything done by the Deputy State Coroner while acting as the State Coroner in circumstances where the State Coroner acted as Deputy Chief Magistrate or Chief Magistrate before the commencement of this provision. I table the explanatory notes relevant to the amendments that I have moved.

Tabled paper: Explanatory notes for Hon. CR Dick's amendments to the Coroners and Other Acts Amendment Bill [758].

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 59, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 60 to 64, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (3.59 pm): I move—

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

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (3.59 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.

MOTION

Order of Business

Hon. JC SPENCE (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (4.00 pm): I move—

That government business order of the day No. 3 be postponed.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. JC SPENCE (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (4.00 pm): I advise honourable members that the House can continue to meet past 6.30 pm this day. The House can break for dinner at 6.30 pm and resume its sitting at 7.30 pm. The order of business shall then be government business followed by a 30-minute adjournment debate.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Resumed from 19 August (see p. 1790).

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—LNP) (4.01 pm): It is a privilege to respond to the opening address of the 53rd Parliament by Her Excellency the Governor, Mrs Penny Wensley. It is disappointing that we are 5½ months late doing this. I extend my congratulations to the Speaker, the Hon. John Mickel, on his appointment to the chair of the 53rd Parliament. He holds an integral position in the House that is central to the conduct and business of parliament.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate all of the elected members of the House and welcome all who are in their first term in parliament. It is exciting to be part of the LNP team in its first term representing Queensland as the state opposition, under the firm leadership of the member for Surfers Paradise, John-Paul Langbroek.

I look forward to representing the Burdekin electorate for the third term. The commitment that I again give to my constituents is that I will continue to fight for the people of the north and continue listening to the needs of my constituents. After the redistribution the newly expanded electorate now includes Bowen, the gem of the Coral Coast. In such a diverse electorate there will always be competing interests and ideologies. But I can promise my constituents that I do treat each issue on its merits and look at how the issues affect those who live within the electorate.

I am sure I speak for all here when I say that it is a great honour to represent our electorates and work for our constituents. It is an honour that is worth any sacrifices we have to make in our personal and family lives. On that note, I certainly thank my wonderful family for their never-ending support and understanding. I particularly thank my wonderful husband, Ray, our sons, daughter and daughters-in-law for their encouragement and support over the past five years and for this the beginning of the 53rd Parliament. I also thank my parents, Harold and Val Fox, for their continued love and support.

I express particular thanks to my electorate staff, Julie Laurie and Julie Schultz, and my temporary staff, Dallas and Heather. I place on record my thanks and appreciation to my campaign manager and electorate chairman, Jim Gist, for his continued support and advice. The wonderful support from the scores of LNP members and personal supporters before and on election day is very humbling. I sincerely thank them all. It is always a team effort and the strength of that magnificent team is unflinching.

As I enter this third term as the member for Burdekin I would like to give members an insight into this electorate. The boundaries of the electorate now stretch from Bowen in the south, west to Collinsville and Mount Coolon, up to the twin towns of Home Hill and Ayr and further north to the southern suburbs of Townsville, including Lavarack Barracks.

The beautiful seaside town of Bowen played an integral part in the filming of the Baz Luhrmann film *Australia* and has now been dubbed 'Bowenwood'. Residents there are very proud of their town and its surrounding farmlands which provide a bounty of fruit and vegetables to the market as well as a strong fishing industry. It is truly one of the food bowls of Australia. The Bowen horticultural industry contributes approximately \$300 million annually to the economy.

The proud coalmining town of Collinsville continues to boost the state's economy through its two coalmines. Its product is taken to Abbot Point which is being expanded and is working towards being a major industrial processing and export hub. Of course this would benefit greatly from the construction of the Northern Missing Link. That 64 kilometres of rail is essential for the future development of the Bowen-Collinsville region.

We have seen the breakdown of the negotiations with QR and the Queensland government over the construction of the Northern Missing Link and we have sadly witnessed the many contractors who have been let down by this government over broken contracts and the expectations of this project. The announcements from the Premier are that this coal transport infrastructure rail line is on the market along with the coal-loading facilities at Abbot Point. With this government's indiscriminate sale of assets, it is to be hoped that they have the capacity and talent to develop Abbot Point into a world-class facility. The government has shown its lack of business acumen in announcing this sale of assets in such a time of global economic recession.

The Northern Missing Link and the Water for Bowen projects are two important government projects that have stalled. Water for Bowen is essential to guaranteeing a water supply, and not just to the farmers in the district. Industry and development in this area cannot occur without it. It is disappointing that the Abbot Point multicargo facility was not in the recent federal budget because it is an integral part of the future development of North Queensland.

With the increasing population of Bowen and other areas in the electorate, infrastructure and housing are two major issues that need to be addressed urgently. With increasing rents and jobs being lost, many families are turning to emergency housing only to find that there is none available. I put this House on notice that this is an issue that I will pursue vigorously during this term, not just for my area but for all regions that need more affordable housing. This situation is not just restricted to the Burdekin electorate.

The Burdekin is still primarily an agricultural and horticultural base. The central area of the electorate still relies on sugar cane as its main crop, but there are innovative crops such as beans, cotton and cassava being trialled. The push for an ethanol industry in the region is moving ahead with plans for a plant hopefully to be in production by 2011.

The government has promised to mandate for five per cent ethanol. I will certainly be looking to see this implemented in the very near future. The Labor government has voted down successive private members' bills, including my own, on the mandating of ethanol. It has become a very tired argument. The future of the sugar industry may be assured if this mandate was to be in place sooner rather than later.

The agricultural and horticultural sector in the Burdekin region plays an important role as a provider of jobs. With the impact of the global financial crisis impacting on many industries, these jobs will keep many employed in seasonal work. Not only do the residents of the Burdekin find employment but backpackers are attracted to this area for the chance to earn while on holiday. This not only helps them, but they in turn help the electorate through staying in the region and spending a portion of their earnings there. Many business minded residents have set up businesses catering to the backpackers and have reaped the benefits of tapping into this market.

With so many travellers having to pass through the region, I draw the attention of this House to the need for a second crossing of the mighty Burdekin River. The current bridge is an engineering icon. It was built in 1957 on floating foundations as there is no rock in the riverbed. The Burdekin bridge is a vital link between Southern and Northern Queensland, and without it coastal road and rail travellers would not make it any further north than Home Hill. However, with the increasing size of road transport the bridge is often closed to allow wide loads to cross, causing highway traffic to grind to a standstill.

I would take this opportunity to call on the new Minister for Main Roads and former Burdekin resident, Craig Wallace, to tell his home town if he plans a second river crossing and, if he does, where it would be placed. I am sure that he is just as much aware of the problems being faced by the ageing structure and the need for something to be done as I am. I look forward to hearing the minister's response.

Another area in my electorate that has huge potential is the Cromarty Wetlands project. I am excited by the prospect of this project near Kiru becoming a major environmental and educational attraction in the area. The wetlands have the potential to be a greater tourist attraction than Kakadu National Park.

The project is centred on a 1,700 hectare property between the Mount Elliott ranges and the Houghton River and creek system. I believe it is a world first in that it combines grazing while ensuring the pristine state of the environment. I commend Wetlands and Grasslands Foundation executive director and past member for Burdekin Mark Stoneman for his tremendous vigilance in setting up the foundation with world-class scientists to lead this project. This project is one that will involve education and scientific research; it is not just about tourism. The vast variety of flora and fauna found there is certainly worth protecting and can compete any day with the renowned Kakadu National Park.

In the northern end of the electorate there are zinc and copper refineries as well as a meat processing plant and many other industries in the Stuart industrial area just south of Townsville. This area is well suited to medium and lighter manufacturing and other similar industries that will be serviced by the port access road, and it is good to see that the port access road is progressing. This project will alleviate some of the heavy transport traffic that winds its way through suburban Townsville. A decision and funding towards connecting the associated rail link is a very high priority that I will be pursuing.

Lavarack Barracks is also being redeveloped to include new and refurbished training facilities and working accommodation for units from the 3rd Brigade, the Army's ready deployment force. With this increase, the demand for services has also increased. Infrastructure and services need to be in place so that this growth can be supported. There is still much more work to be done to ensure that there is access to the necessary road, rail and port facilities to be able to transport goods and services across the state. The same applies to the provision of services and facilities to established businesses to meet future demand. Government has the responsibility to build, maintain and efficiently run the schools, hospitals, emergency departments and police stations to a standard that every citizen has a right to expect.

My vision is to see that these services are delivered right across Queensland, but especially in northern and regional areas. The future needs of our constituents must be anticipated and met, and these needs include the supply of water and power. We have to deliver on these demands and ensure that they are not affected by drought or flood. In this day and age, having a certain electricity supply is as essential to residents and businesses as food and water. Planning to meet future demand and the replacement and upgrading of existing infrastructure should not be determined by political whim or need. The responsibility for ensuring that all residents share equally and that essential needs are met, regardless of geographical location, political affiliation or demographics, lies within the government. As such, I will be pushing for a baseload power station to be built in North Queensland which was a commitment from the LNP last election. A major blackout late last year showed the failings of the current system and highlighted the need for a baseload power station to supply the north. North Queensland will run out of power capacity by 2013-14.

For far too long the north has been dependent on the power stations in the central region. A reliable and more economical power supply is the chance to attract more industry to the north, creating more wealth for the state's economy. Green power in North Queensland could be a viable option, with solar and wind power, as well as hydro-electricity. Cogeneration, as is currently occurring at CSR's Pioneer sugar mill, also has future potential. All of these options are frequently discussed but have yet to be pursued. We in the north have missed out for far too long. All I am asking is that the north be treated equally when it comes time for infrastructure funding allocation. I ask for a fair go when it comes to our roads. The Bruce Highway is in dire need of upgrading and flood proofing. This year's floods highlighted this need, with many of the trucks carrying food and other essentials stranded on the side of the highway. They were left to wait for the floods to subside before they could deliver their precious cargo to those in need. The floods impacted greatly on the north.

I will also continue to push for more teacher aide hours and resources for our growing prep classes, as well as for the north to get its fair share of state funding. Elections often bring promises from both sides in an attempt to sway voters, and this past election was no different. This Labor government has promised to fix our health and hospital system—promises which are repeated each election but still there are serious issues in our hospitals, and they will continue despite the promises made. It is unfortunate that it takes an election to get the ball rolling on some of these projects when they should be undertaken when the need is first identified. The health system must be a priority for any government. The lack of funding in this area has come back to bite this government and the Queensland public has had enough. We are still suffering from a lack of beds for patients and lengthy delays for treatment due

to overstretched resources. Our doctors and nurses are doing their very best to address the needs of patients, but they need help—much more help than they have been getting in the past. With the growing population of the Townsville region, the Townsville Hospital must be expanded—and quickly. Perhaps the money being used to build a dam that is not wanted could be diverted into our hospitals, where it is sorely needed. It is every person's right to get adequate medical care, and at the moment that right is not being met.

It is also every citizen's right to feel safe in their home, to be able to walk down the street without being accosted and to know that there are enough police on the front line to allow them to enjoy those rights. Constituents in the Burdekin have put out a plea for help to regain those rights. Last year they marched through the streets demanding action be taken to combat an increase in street crime and violence. Almost 3,000 residents signed a petition seeking a stronger police presence, ensuring the enforcement of stronger laws and harsher punishment by the courts to deter offenders, and assistance to strengthen their capacity to prevent crime in the community. We read reports of crimes and violence weekly in our local newspapers. These people have suffered enough, and their concerns deserve to be addressed. As an LNP government, we have promised much tougher penalties that will be a genuine deterrent to offenders.

The residents of Bowen have had to contend with similar issues recently and, from the letters that have been written to their local newspapers, they have had enough of the sentences these offenders are receiving. Our society should not have to tolerate this sort of behaviour and it is wrong that offenders are not getting the disincentive needed from the softly, softly approach to crime from this government. Appropriate legislation must be put in place so that the courts can deliver suitable punishment for offences that involve destruction of property, theft and violence, and the LNP is committed to strengthening the justice system—punishment that reflects the intolerance of our society for that behaviour, punishment that lets the perpetrators know that if they commit the crime they will do the time. Only then might the residents of my electorate and no doubt the residents of other electorates that share this problem be assured that the government is doing its utmost to protect them. Only then can they feel safe in their homes again.

In my third term as the member for Burdekin I will continue to monitor the government's progress on promises made during the recent election campaign. In the short time since the election Queensland has seen a raft of broken promises from this government. We have heard the refrain of no new taxes yet have been delivered the fuel tax of 9.2c per litre which is having a huge impact on northern and regional Queenslanders. I share the community's concern at the proposed fire sale of assets to gross \$15 billion. Included in that is Queensland Rail's above and below rail coal business and the Abbot Point Coal Terminal. This puts a huge mantle of uncertainty across many workers who are employed in these areas, particularly the Burdekin electorate. Generations of families have worked for Queensland Rail and I know they are wondering where their futures lie.

Much of the recent legislation such as the moratorium on endangered regrowth vegetation and the potential Barrier Reef protection legislation puts huge imposts on the agricultural sector. Food and fibre security worldwide will be challenged in years to come and Australia, particularly North Queensland, is poised to be a leader in the provision of food and food technology. The fact that so much legislation is being placed on farmers to impact their economic survival is a very short-sighted policy and a politically motivated move by this current government. At the recent election the LNP received a state-wide 41.56 per cent of the primary vote—almost neck and neck with Labor's 42.29 per cent primary vote. This is the strongest conservative vote for 14 years and puts the LNP into a very strong position for the next election. I look forward to being part of the government that will deliver a better Queensland in the future.

The challenges facing future development and economic environmental survival are many. However, with the correct management, economic development and ecological sustainability can co-exist. With its abundant natural resources, Northern Queensland is poised for much more future development. There is a wonderful future for North Queensland, and I for one look forward to being part of it. I conclude with some words from Sir Winston Churchill: 'It's not enough that we do our best; sometimes we have to do what's required.'

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—LNP) (4.18 pm): I join with all members in this House in being very proud to be picked by the people of my electorate to act on their behalf for a period of three years. I can well recall that it was explained to me that once every three years the doors of this House are opened and between two to three million Queenslanders vote for 89 men and women, and then the doors close. It is in fact a very rare honour to be picked by the men and women of this state—not just in Caloundra but right across all electorates in this state—to represent and to act on behalf of the people of Queensland and to pass laws and to have arguments and to have battles.

But I think we should never lose sight of the fact that it is indeed an exceptional honour that is granted to very few people. When we walk outside of this chamber and read the noticeboard which lists the names of those men and women who have sat in this House, we see that there are not that many names compared to the number of people who have lived in Queensland over those years. I repeat: I share the honour and privilege of every member of this House and will do so for the rest of my life.

No member gets to this position simply through their own work and their own work ethic. There are always men and women, who are either members of the ALP or the LNP or who simply support you as an individual, who work continuously to try to gain you access to a seat in parliament because either they support the principles of your party or they support you for individual reasons. Principally I say thank you today to my family. My lovely wife, Judy, has always been there and has supported me. Spouses or partners of members of this House are perhaps the grounding force for most of us. At times we can get carried away with the role that we play. It is very important that we have somebody there who brings us back down to earth and who anchors us to where and who we are. In addition, I also want to say thank you to Joshua and Samantha and also to my wonderful campaign team, who worked so long and so hard for no pay in the knowledge that they were doing what they thought was the right thing during the time leading up to and during the election campaign.

I certainly will not name all the members of the campaign team, but I will single out Lisa Williams and Tracey Schultz, who work in my office in Caloundra and who have provided support for me over the past two to three years. We are often away from our offices for long periods and we rely upon the men and women in our offices to carry on the work that is important to the electorate, irrespective of whether the person who walks in the doorway supports the party we represent or otherwise. I know that both Lisa and Tracey are apolitical. They understand that it is very important to know that, when a member of the public walks through the front door, often you are the person of last resort. They have been everywhere else. They have done all that they can. They cannot get a resolution. Sometimes I think we forget how daunting it is for a member of the public to walk through the front door of the office of an MP, because an MP still has a great deal of aura around them by way of name and stature—and rightfully so, by the way.

We also tend to take on board the major issues—the road issues, the hospital issues, the transport issues—but when that person walks through the door their concern might well be a pothole outside their driveway. That is the most important thing to them. That is the most important thing in their lives. On occasions you get greater satisfaction out of dealing with what to you may be a small issue but to them is an enormous issue. They walk away with the idea that here is a local member who acts for the community and who is not merely focused on what they think are the bigger issues.

In 2008 there was a major change to the boundaries of the electorate of Caloundra. The area covered by the electorate went back across the Bruce Highway to incorporate areas such as Landsborough, Beerwah and Mooloolah, which had been represented by Joan Sheldon when she first became a member of this parliament. I had not been involved with those areas since I came into this place in 2004 and it certainly was a learning experience to learn about the issues that are important to the people in those areas, such as the rail crossings at Beerwah and Mooloolah, the pipeline and other matters that had not come to my attention because I had not been involved in them. As I said, it was a great learning experience to understand that the urban area that I had represented in Caloundra was markedly different from an area that, although located close by, is what I would call, to a certain extent, a rural or country area. It was a great learning experience and I thank the people of that area for putting their faith in me for the next three years.

There are issues in all electorates that we have to deal with. One of the concerns that I have on the Sunshine Coast is the enormous growth in population we are going to experience over the next 10, 15 to 20 years and the development that will take place across the Sunshine Coast. In my opinion, that will occur without proper infrastructure being put in place. I refer in particular to the investigation area which is below Caloundra Downs and which is now contained in the South East Queensland Regional Plan. This area is almost as large as the current Caloundra Downs development site. It has been earmarked for future development for at least many years to come.

The concern that I have about that area is that the Draft South East Queensland Regional Plan refers to the area as being highly sensitive and as being recognised nationally, locally and internationally as a major ecosystem or environmental area. At this stage some 3,000 hectares are to be developed at Caloundra Downs, or Caloundra South. Stage 1, Bellvista 2, is to begin in the foreseeable future. The population in that area is predicated to be around 50,000 people—albeit in 30 or 40 years time—and it will, I suspect, become the new CBA of Caloundra and the current CBA will be converted into more of a lifestyle area.

My concern is that the infrastructure simply does not exist on the Sunshine Coast. I notice that the infrastructure and planning minister is in the House today. I will be writing to him shortly regarding what plans are in place to ensure that the hospitals, the roads, the trains, the buses and the like will be catered for adequately in that new area and what plans are going to be put in place to ensure that the new investigation area is not subject to overpopulation or overdevelopment to ensure that the balance between community, environment and social aspects are maintained at all times.

Mr Hinchliffe interjected.

Mr McARDLE: I hear the minister's interjection in relation to the planning processes. I am also acutely aware that the best of intentions can go awry very quickly. When we are talking about a corridor that could extend from Noosa to Brisbane, it is most important—and the minister must agree with this,

I am sure—that the balance is struck between the two. Hence, it is necessary to ensure that an area of a size such as this is planned properly, effectively, efficiently, environmentally and with full consultation not just with the developer but also with the community as a whole.

I turn to issues relating to Bribie Island. For a long time the northern area of Bribie Island has been of some concern. This particular part of Bribie Island has been subject to massive erosion both on the seaside and on the Pumicestone Passage side. Certainly, in the past two years massive chunks of sand have been torn from the seaside such that what used to be an area 50 or 60 metres wide has now been reduced to some 20 or 30 metres wide. The concern is that at some point there will be a breakthrough in Bribie Island. As I understand it, there are potentially four spots where that could occur.

In relation to erosion on Bribie Island—and indeed elsewhere—the argument is always raised that it is nature taking its course. I can accept that argument up to a point. The concern I have is that as our society continues to take over more land and develop more land we are impacting upon nature and the environment. I do not think the argument that nature is taking its course and therefore we should do nothing about it holds water any longer. We live in areas and have developed areas that have had an impact on nature. We can no longer allow nature to take its course on its own. The obligation rests on governments and communities to make certain that occurs. The issues in relation to Pumicestone Passage are real and the issues in relation to the development below Caloundra Downs are real and need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

One of the major developments on the Sunshine Coast is the \$60 million industrial estate just off Pierce Avenue, which was developed by this government. When you drive down into the estate you see that it opens up into a wonderful vista. In fact, it is four-laned all the way through. It has underground power and underground sewerage. Marvellous trees have been planted. But not one thing has been built on it. \$60 million has been spent in developing this estate but not one person outside of Energex has bought a block of land. Incredibly, this government tried to capitalise on the market and, of course, it failed miserably. It has been sitting there for about 18 months and nothing has been sold. It is a prime example of the way this government conducts business. When we look at the wonderful Health portfolio we can see the truly magnificent effort this government has made to completely muck up the health system in this state in the past 12 years. Let us go back to other issues in relation to Caloundra. I will come back to the Health portfolio shortly.

The Caloundra Airport is a prime area that is required that may well be sold off by this government in the foreseeable future. This government sees the airport as just concrete. What it does not see is the human beings whose livelihoods depend on their work at the airport site. It does not see the airport in terms of mothers and fathers who have children and mortgages; it sees it only as a cash cow and a way of ensuring that it receives the dollars when it tries to flog off the airport site. It is a little bit like Cairns and Mackay airports. I wonder where that money might be now. I wonder if that has been stashed away, as the Treasurer said it would be, for the hospital in Cairns or Mackay, or has that gone to pay off the debt and the interest that has been accrued through the magnificent brainpower that the Premier has gathered around her? I am fairly certain that this government will ignore the wishes of the people who work on the airport site and it will see it as a cash cow to flog off according to its own whim and desire.

There are another two issues associated with the airport site and one is the Queensland Air Museum of which I have spoken in the past. The Air Museum consists of one of the best collections of military and non-military aircraft in this country plus memorabilia that stretches back to Sir Charles Kingsford Smith. It is a collection of historical importance and continues to grow. It has been gathered by volunteers over the past 25-odd years. They work on these aircraft—rebuilding them, putting them on display—so that people throughout the Sunshine Coast region and, indeed, Queensland can view the history of air travel that is so important in this state and the nation.

Next to the Air Museum is the air cadets site. The air cadets are young men and women between 13 and 18 years of age who attend that site on a regular basis—once per month I believe. They are taught things such as leadership, working in a team and the skills that are so important for young people to learn and to bring into this House or use in other areas of their lives.

I want to turn quickly to the Sunshine Coast University Hospital. I have to say: haven't we hit the old gold vein with the Sunshine Coast University Hospital! If ever there was a project to look at—if you could look at it, mind you; it does not exist anymore—to indicate the incompetence of the government, this has to be it. It is a \$1.5 billion hospital that has been on the drawing board for three or four years. I can certainly recall the former Premier, Peter Beattie, waxing lyrical about the hospital being built on the Sunshine Coast. The Sippy Downs site was selected and then it had to be changed. Of course, it was the wrong site and we had the new site at Kawana. Then suddenly we find in the budget this year that it does not exist anymore; it has been taken off the drawing board. It is gone.

By 2016, 660,000 people will live in the larger catchment area that that hospital will service. That simply has gone. It means that Nambour General Hospital, which is constantly under stress and threat by way of ED access block, with bed numbers being well and truly above 85 per cent and doctors and nurses being stressed on a daily basis, will continue to experience these issues for another three to four

years. The government's attitude is what? 'We will build a 100-bed private hospital and that is going to fix the problem.' I indicate this: I do not know of too many private hospitals that have an ED here in Queensland. There are a couple. The stress in the ED at Nambour Hospital is simply going to get a lot worse because of the delay in this hospital being built, and everybody here knows that. We know that our doctors and nurses are under incredible stress right across this state because of their workload and because the resources are not being provided to them. Things are going to get worse in Nambour Hospital and right along the coast because this hospital is going to be delayed.

We are not going to get the connections we need between the university, the public hospital and the private hospital and the research capacity that comes with that—the Monash University dollars and the UQ dollars coming to the new facility—for another four or five years, and that is a loss to the people of the Sunshine Coast. We are not going to get young doctors and nurses coming to the Sunshine Coast as their first preference because they will go to the facilities that offer them the best they can possibly get, and that is only natural. Potentially we are not going to get the young doctors and nurses coming to the Sunshine Coast because they will go elsewhere to find their training, to find their home and to have their families. All of this impacts upon the quality of the healthcare services given to the people of the Sunshine Coast because this government decided to scrap the \$1.5 billion hospital.

What did the government do? It put that money into the Queensland Children's Hospital. That is a hospital that has been dogged by incredible incompetence from day 1, and everybody in this House knows that. Under no circumstances was there a health service plan developed for that hospital before the announcement was made, the budget given and the site allocated. Under no circumstances was there a plan in place for what was then to be a \$700 million to \$750 million hospital that has now blown out to \$1.2 billion to \$1.5 billion. Such was the incompetence of this planning process that the site analysis undertaken that cabinet considered was nothing more than having a person walk around the site. There was no analysis undertaken in relation to engineering, traffic or geotechnical issues. There was no planning put forward as to what would be on the site.

In fact, the Mater Hospital complex has won an incredible arrangement to harness and control car parking on that site for something up to 60 years. This government has given away to the Mater the rights in relation to pathology on that site for something up to 60 years. The MOU that purportedly exists in relation to the bond between Queensland Health and the Mater Hospital complex has never been released. Has there ever been any sort of assessment undertaken as to the loss of revenue that Queensland will suffer by surrendering those 600 car spaces for 60-odd years? Did it ever go out to tender? Did it ever hit the public arena as to what process was undertaken by this government to ensure that Queensland is getting value for money? Was there ever a process to discover the cost to Queenslanders of surrendering to the Mater the right to deal with pathology for the Queensland Children's Hospital over the next 60 to 70 years? Was there ever a tender put in place? Was the issue ever raised with the public to ascertain from them what they thought about it?

I said to the health minister some time ago that if he is prepared to debate the Queensland Children's Hospital I will meet him and I will debate him. However, I want him to undertake to release the MOU and the initial site analysis—not the second one done some time after the analysis, but the initial site analysis—and I will debate him.

Ms SIMPSON (Maroochydore—LNP) (4.38 pm): In rising to speak to the address-in-reply, it is important to remember what is at the heart of our lives—those things which are truly important. It is always people. Life is precious and no individual is without value. In this parliament we do not always agree about which philosophy or program best serves our state, but I do believe that the majority of members come into this place with the aim of public service in their hearts. We should never let the busyness of life and competing ideas and views overshadow our common humanity and pursuit of service to others.

When people ask me what I enjoy about my role as an MP, I always reply that it is the grassroots politics of connecting and helping people. It may sound corny, but I still passionately believe that you do not deserve to serve at a higher level unless you are willing to serve a local constituency in this front-line advocacy role. These issues will not necessarily be found on the front page of newspapers or make the top 10 hot political topics, but they are the issues that matter to people.

I have been truly privileged to serve in this role for the seat of Maroochydore and in my shadow ministry roles across Queensland, but my encouragement and continued inspiration comes from the lives of others who demonstrate what servant leadership is really about. I want to talk about two such people. On Tuesday this week when I spoke about the road toll and the fact that on average more than one person a day is dying on Queensland roads, I had no idea that 24 hours later two dear friends would fall victim to this toll. However, in paying tribute to them today, I know that they will never be just a statistic as their extraordinary lives will have impact well past their brief time on earth.

Today, hearts on the Sunshine Coast are torn by the tragic loss of Kari and Allan Taylor when they died yesterday in a roadside accident on the Sunshine Motorway. I want to acknowledge and thank education minister Geoff Wilson for his tribute this morning in his ministerial statement and for his words of comfort, along with those of other members of this House.

Some people live long and do not achieve half as much as what this wonderful couple did. Kari and Allan Taylor were the best example I know of servant leadership. They loved God and they loved people, and they were just a lot of fun to be around. Allan could have been a stand-up comedian. But behind that jovial, fun-loving exterior was a gifted communicator—someone with an incredible insight into how to connect with children. As the Sunshine Coast's first primary school chaplain, he has touched hundreds of young lives. A qualified teacher, he was also a former principal at Suncoast Christian College in its infancy. He was well known throughout the coast but at Woombye and Palmwoods primary schools, where he was their 'chappy', he was belovedly called 'Mr T' and had a special place in their hearts. He also undertook RE in other schools. Children would line up to talk with him as he always had a great way of letting them know just how special they were—their individual worth and beauty.

His beautiful wife, Kari, was no less a powerhouse of passion and purpose. Together they were just extraordinary. A gifted dancer and conservatorium trained singer, Kari's talents shone brightly. However, like Allan, she poured her life into others—training young people, helping them reach their best. As a founder of Machaneh Dance School, she not only helped young dancers develop their dancing skills but she lived life with them, imparting so much more than just the skills of how to be a better dancer. Machaneh also took young people overseas including to Third World countries, showcasing the skills of these young dancers and helping them connect with other people.

Together Allan and Kari Taylor were truly one of the most extraordinary couples that you would meet. It has been said that the truly significant things to invest our lives in are those that last beyond a generation. This is a couple who truly invested their lives into those of others and their impact will go well beyond a generation.

The pain we feel is not for Allan and Kari, who are in a better place with a God they served and served so faithfully. Our pain is for those who are left behind and the hole in the lives of others. We feel for Ashleah and Kallan, their children, and the greater family—for Bob and Fran and all Kari's siblings.

There is a powerful legacy as well as a beacon to what is important in the lives of Allan and Kari Taylor. They embodied faith, hope and love but they knew that the greatest of these is love. We will greatly miss them but we will never forget them. To the school communities and the thousands who knew them, we speak words of comfort but we also speak the words of hope that they would have spoken in circumstances such as this. Vale Kari and Allan Taylor.

Ms CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (4.44 pm): Along with many of my colleagues here today, I am proud to stand on my feet to speak in the address-in-reply following my re-election for a fourth term. Indeed, since 2001 I have learned a lot about the process of government, the workings of parliament and importantly the issues facing my electorate.

I am proud to say that since 2001 much has been achieved for my electorate and the Gold Coast from the very strong representation of Labor members and our voice in government. Some of these achievements include the construction of the Gold Coast Convention Centre; increased policing numbers; the opening of the Robina public hospital to deliver an extra 175 beds; the construction of the Tugun bypass; the return of the Aussie titles to Kurrawa surf club; funding to develop Skilled Park stadium, which consequently secured a licence for our Gold Coast team the Titans; the extension of the rail line from Robina to Varsity Lakes; and a \$32 million commitment for the Broadwater parklands construction at Southport, and I look forward to attending the opening of the first stage of that project this weekend.

I am pleased that I have had the opportunity to have input into these projects and achievements. I am very proud and honoured to have been re-elected by the people of Broadwater to continue my work and to have been offered the opportunity to serve in the Bligh government as the parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Emergency Services. I thank Minister Roberts and his ministerial staff—David, Scott, Fred, Kirsty, Donna and Lucy—for their very warm welcome to the office and for their assistance.

The 53rd Parliament has now been opened by the Governor, and the Bligh government has started work on one of the most critically important mandates I believe could ever be given by the people to the government—that is, protecting jobs and creating jobs. In stark contrast to Labor's commitment, the LNP ran a campaign that was centred around its policy of cutting 12,000 jobs from the public sector. The people of Queensland understood the potential consequences of what the LNP was presenting. It would have meant cuts in staffing numbers of core service areas—police, ambulance officers, teachers and healthcare workers. They were all on the chopping block.

At a time when the global economic crisis was unfolding, the Labor campaign focused on presenting to the people of Queensland our commitment to continue to roll out our \$17 billion capital works and infrastructure plan. Included in this plan are crucial Gold Coast projects, such as the Gold Coast stadium and the Gold Coast University Hospital. The Labor campaign recognised the difficult environment the private construction industry would face should the global financial crisis continue to hit.

By investing in major infrastructure projects such as the rapid transit project, the AFL stadium and the Gold Coast University Hospital, the government will be doing its job to do everything possible to keep the Gold Coast moving and stimulate the economy to support the private sector through this difficult time.

The government has committed to building a new \$1.55 billion Gold Coast University Hospital. This is the biggest health infrastructure project in the country, and it will generate up to 10,000 construction jobs. The new hospital will have 750 beds, which is almost twice the number in the current hospital.

The Gold Coast Rapid Transit project will generate more than 6,300 direct and indirect jobs, support key employment sectors including construction, retail and tourism and bring \$1.3 billion worth of benefits to our city. The Bligh government has committed \$60 million towards the estimated \$130 million redevelopment of Carrara Stadium on the Gold Coast to support the introduction of a 17th Australian Football League—AFL—team. The redevelopment of Carrara Stadium is estimated to generate more than 350 jobs during construction and contribute \$340 million to the economy over the next 10 years.

Another key initiative of the Bligh government that will have a direct impact on Gold Coasters and the Broadwater electorate is the recent announcement of funding to local schools for capital works and maintenance. The government must ensure that we expand and maintain our important education assets. I am continuing to work with local schools to ensure that the federal government's initiative also delivers better learning environments for staff and students.

I am also pleased to see that work on the \$1.4 million upgrade of Hope Island Road and the second stage of the \$154 million upgrade of the Gold Coast Highway through Labrador is well underway. These two road upgrades are vital projects on the northern end of the Gold Coast which will support huge growth in our area. They also mean a greater quality of life for residents and improved access to our wonderful part of the state for tourists and visitors.

The Gold Coast is home to some of the most popular waterways, including the beautiful Gold Coast Broadwater. As I outlined to the House following the election, the Bligh government is, through its department of transport, committed to ensuring that our navigational channels remain safe and accessible. As a course of action, I have met with the general manager of Marine Queensland to discuss boating infrastructure needs for the Gold Coast, and I facilitated a meeting with the Minister for Transport with key marine industry stakeholders from the Gold Coast to discuss the issue of dredging and marine industry needs.

I am also committed to progressing the construction of the \$2 million new Runaway Bay Ambulance Station and a trusteeship with the Gold Coast City Council for the improved maintenance and public use of Wavebreak Island. I will work with the government to see two remaining lots of unallocated state land on South Stradbroke Island transferred into a conservation park to secure more green space on the Gold Coast for future generations.

I will progress the issues of access to efficient and accessible public transport. I will consult with interest groups and stakeholders, such as amateur fishers and divers, to meet our commitment to investigate the potential for an artificial reef off South Stradbroke Island. Until the next election, there will be many more issues that will arise and, as I have done over the past nine years, I will continue to make decisions that I feel are in the best interests of my community and this state.

Ms Struthers interjected.

Ms CROFT: I take the interjection from the Minister for Community Services and Housing. I would like to acknowledge the fantastic achievements she has made in her time as the minister in progressing the issue of affordable housing on the Gold Coast as well.

To the Broadwater residents who supported me in my election to this House in 2001, I again use this opportunity to say thank you. I have enjoyed immensely the responsibilities and opportunities that you have bestowed upon me. I commit to the people of Broadwater and those who once again supported me in my campaign for re-election on 21 March this year. I thank and reassure you that I will continue my hard work on your behalf and for the benefit of our community. I will continue to be approachable and accessible and I will continue to work closely with community organisations, small businesses and the government.

I would like to thank my partner, Garry, for his love, support and commitment to helping me achieve my goals and for allowing me to do the job that I enjoy so much. Together, we know that it is this involvement in politics that we feel can make a difference for the community in which we live. Having had the joy of our very first baby arriving in May last year—yes, Brock has turned 15 months—together Garry and I, like many parents, reflect on the world that we would like our children to live in. As everyone in the House knows, Brock is a great little boy and we love him to bits. During the election campaign, he enjoyed being looked after by family members who dropped everything to help us out. I thank Grandma and Grandpa Hall, Ricky and Kim, and our friend Sandy, who was there for us during her first election experience.

There is only one regret that I carry from the last two years, and that is that my father, Owen Jefferis, did not have the opportunity to meet Brock before his passing in June last year. My father was 83 and, despite the many generations that spanned between our ages, Dad and I were best mates. In fact, it was his interest in politics that we shared in common. My father was a bushy and he taught me much about the perils faced by people living in the outback. I was very fortunate to have experienced life on a cattle property and to have learnt from him and my half-brother, Roger, about mustering, fencing, branding and horsemanship.

Dad understood my political leaning and accepted this. We enjoyed many conversations about the rural and urban divide. As patron of the Runaway Bay RSL sub-branch, I often relied on my father's military knowledge as research for my speeches and special events. My father showed true grit and courage throughout his whole life. He faced many personal hardships, drought and floods. He went to war and, in his later years, endured pain and suffering as a consequence of the worst side of human behaviour. I take this opportunity to dedicate the success and the hard work of my campaign to my late father, Owen.

I thank my hardworking electorate officers, Christie and Melissa. I thank them for their resourcefulness and their commitment to assisting the residents of the electorate no matter how small or big the problem with efficiency, confidentiality, loyalty and humour. I thank my campaign organiser, Braedan Hogan, and his assistant, Luke McDermott, for the four weeks of their lives that they gave to me and my campaign. I thank the Broadwater branch of the ALP. To the members who helped fundraise and doorknock, to those who stuffed envelopes for hours on end, and to those who made me stronger with their genuine show of support and words of encouragement, I say thank you.

I thank Pamela and Tony White, Amanda Dean, Raymond and Abi, Kathy Ludderman, Lori and Johnny Simpson, Bob Brown, Victoria de Silva, Barry Slocum and my very good friend Margaret Nettle. I also thank Anthony Chisholm and Jonathan Priestly. I thank Martin Abbott and Sheila Turner, who were both generous with their time and efforts during the campaign and who inspired everyone with their enthusiasm. I am pleased to have the opportunity to mention the efforts of the students4Anna, the Young Labor Left, and the New South Wales Young Labor members who travelled up to the Gold Coast in their cars to be part of our local campaign.

On the day, there were many people who committed their time as volunteers on polling booths to support campaigns. Some of those people were members of the ALP; some were not. But everyone worked really hard setting up, handing out how-to-vote cards, talking with voters and scrutineering. I cannot mention all of those people—I would like to—but I thank each and every one of them from the bottom of my heart.

In conclusion, I can say that it is a great honour to be here and it is an opportunity that I do not take for granted. I intend to use every opportunity to speak in this House about the Broadwater electorate and its people.

Hon. DM WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (4.55 pm): On behalf of the people of the electorate of Murrumba, I rise to support the address-in-reply to the speech of Her Excellency which she delivered in another place earlier this year. I thank the people of Murrumba for their confidence in me. I am deeply honoured that I have again been chosen to be their servant in this place, and I will pursue their issues with determination and energy. My door is open to all of my constituents, whether they voted for me or not.

I thank the members of the great Australian Labor Party who worked so hard to assist my election. I especially thank my campaign director, Terry Burke, and the members of my campaign committee—Mark, Jan, Paul, Steve, Marcus and John—and all who assisted in the campaign. I thank my staffers, Megan, Karen and especially Sue, who has been with me since my very first day as a member of this parliament.

I thank my teenage children, Dan and Anna, who for the whole of their lives have willingly shared their father with the people of Queensland so that he could work for a better life for all. I thank my sister, Marguerite, without whom I would never have become either a member of parliament or indeed half the man I am.

From the Houghton Highway in the east to the Bruce Highway in the west, from the shores of Dohles Rocks in the south to the banks of the Caboolture River in the north, Murrumba—which means good and beautiful place—encompasses enormous ecological and socioeconomic diversity. The smallest national park in Queensland—the Freshwater National Park—and the soon to be designated Deception Bay Conservation Park contain enormous biodiversity.

The human population of the Murrumba electorate is also diverse, though not as ethnically diverse as in some other places. Our salient diversity is socioeconomic, a diversity of hopes and of life opportunities. I represent young families with two parents working. I represent third generation unemployed. In a youngish electorate, I represent many who are embarking on their lives and their careers. But I also represent thousands in retirement villages and in nursing homes. I represent the homeless and I represent first home buyers.

Many of my constituents have been victims of the worldwide economic slowdown. Some have lost jobs, some have lost homes, some have lost hope. This government is the nightwatchman of their darkest hour. The \$17½ billion infrastructure stimulus package has undoubtedly prevented things from being much worse than they are. As a result of federal and state initiatives, many have been saved from disaster and have merely had to tighten their belt.

But for many of those I represent, the fact that they are young and free is insufficient to make them rejoice. Like the man who was walking his dog one evening and was struck down from behind for no reason. He was horribly injured and found himself facing health issues, legal issues, employment issues, family issues and housing issues. He said he could not understand why for someone in his situation the government did not appoint a person to take over his life and his files and help him through his adversities. Neither can I.

Or the woman who was living in a car with her children for several weeks who, when she came to see me, could not understand why the government did not stop local councils from rezoning caravan parks for development since she would have then had somewhere to live. Or the family who came to see me with a child who had been diagnosed as autistic. I asked the child if she was autistic and she looked me directly in the eye and said, 'Yes, I'm autistic and my friend is autistic and I feel sorry for my friend because she is more autistic than me.' She was one of those who had been falsely labelled by a paediatrician notorious for doing so in an attempt to leverage additional resources from Education Queensland.

Or the mother who had been savagely beaten by her former partner in front of her son and who escaped from that nightmare only to be repeatedly assaulted years later by her son. Or the single father—and nearly one in six of the single parents in my electorate are single fathers—who told me that he could not understand why more attention was not paid to people like him because when the father ends up with the children it is often because the mother is either physically or mentally unwell and this makes single parenting even harder.

His concern at the time was the Legal Aid Commission's merit test, by which the commission funds one side and not the other, thus eroding his limited funds and his ability to support his family. Or the young couple who had bought a house only to discover that they were within easy olfactory range of the Narangba Industrial Estate and who could not understand why the law did not require the estate agents to tell them before the sale. Or the young unemployed man who could not apply for jobs he could do because he had no realistic transport option. Or the 15-year-old girl who had run away from home because she was routinely and harshly belted by her mother and wanted the police to make her mother stop, but she could not be stopped because section 280 of the Criminal Code made the physical abuse she was receiving perfectly legal. While I have been able to help some of these people, others I have not. Nevertheless, the seat behind me belongs not to me but to them, and I will continue to strive for them.

Meanwhile, on a larger scale, big things are happening in the Murrumba electorate. The other day the honourable Minister for Transport came to Redcliffe to sign an agreement with the Moreton Bay Regional Council to jointly fund and fast-track the detailed planning and design work for the Petrie to Kippa-Ring rail link. With luck the project will be shovel-ready by the time of the next federal government's infrastructure stimulus package. No promises; just crossed fingers, but I assure my constituents of this: I will not rest until we have the rail, and it is my intention when I leave this place for the last time to go home by train or else in a box.

The declaration of the Deception Bay conservation park is imminent. After years of hard work, the magnificent nearly 130 hectares of mangroves at the end of the esplanade are going to become an emblem of Deception Bay. There are not many suburbs that have a conservation park named after them. The declaration of this striking stand of vegetation by the Minister for Sustainability will be of benefit not only for the environment but also for the morale of Deception Bay.

The new health hub at North Lakes has already made a difference to the delivery of health services in the region. I am informed that the dialysis unit, which is part of the health hub by courtesy of federal funds and Jon Sullivan, federal member for Longman, will, I understand, be phased in over the coming months. The issues of my constituents are legion, but the resolution of this government to address them is firm. It is a privilege to support a compassionate government. I commend the address to the House.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—LNP) (5.02 pm): I am pleased today to speak to the address-in-reply, although I say at the beginning that this is difficult when events have moved on. It has been five months since the Governor's address, so I think people need to take that into consideration when they read these contributions. It is an insult to the Governor, quite frankly, but I guess it is typical of the way this government is run. Since the budget, we have had new issues that have cropped up.

There are a number of issues that I want to cover that particularly affect my electorate. One of the major issues is the condition of the Warrego Highway, which is really, really bad. It is at a stage where it is dangerous. Accidents are happening on a regular basis. The minister has visited my electorate and has indicated that the road is pretty ordinary.

The section from Roma to Wallumbilla has been reduced from 110 kilometres an hour to 100 kilometres an hour. I think in one section it is down to 90 kilometres an hour. A section on the western side of Dulacca has been reduced to 90 kilometres an hour because of the surface deterioration. I am pleased to report that some work has been undertaken on this section. There is some progress being made, but the money which is allocated is nowhere near enough to get this road into a condition where it is safe. There is an enormous amount of traffic, particularly trucks on the eastern end due to coal freight.

The section between Warra and Macalister is a 15-kilometre death trap. Constituents have written to me as they have witnessed fatal accidents on this section of road. The road shoulders are dangerous and extremely so after rain as they cut out along the edge of the bitumen. The convex surface makes it very difficult for trucks and trailers, many of which are fully loaded on this Brisbane to Darwin freight route.

Another section of this road floods very quickly on the Brigalow flood plain. The dip is very sharp, and constituents who have been unaware of the depth of the water over the road have hit the water and rolled their car and have been lucky to escape serious injury. People in Brisbane would not tolerate a black spot like this. It needs a culvert in there sooner rather than later.

The other issue is that of the upgrade of the Warrego Highway from Mitchell to Roma for type 2 road trains. This section has been progressing. There is federal government money allocated of nearly \$40-odd million. I believe it will be completed within three years, so that is very good news. They will not get to Roma but they will get to the western side. We need to get that done as soon as possible.

Another issue is that of the Warra Police Station. There is great concern in the Warra district about the replacement of the policeman. Warra is midway between Chinchilla and Dalby and near a notorious stretch of the Warrego Highway which has had more than its share of accidents. Residents fear the police officer will not be replaced. I have had contact with the district inspector and expressed the concern of my constituents to him on that matter.

The residents of Tara had a flood a number of years ago. As I said before, this is a little bit outdated but it is still very relevant. The people of Tara shire were badly affected by floodwaters in January 2008. Seven inches of rain fell in a short period in the middle of the night, and approximately seven properties were affected. A number of these families approached the government for help but received a negative response. The Kimmorely family, for instance, lost every fence on their property—every fence. The Harding family have been in the district for 100 years and have never had water in their house, but this time the water went through and they lost most of their belongings. They received no help from the government at all.

Jack Davidson also had floodwaters through his house and the workshop and lost fences. There was no assistance provided by the government. I took photographs of kids lying on kitchen benches and the water lapping at the top of the bench. That gives you some idea of what happened. We took these photographs to the ministers to point out that these people were in just as bad a shape as anywhere else in this state. The bureaucracy kept on saying that they would not provide assistance. I think the ministers could have been stronger and helped these people. They genuinely need assistance and they have received no help at all.

Liquor Licensing in not-for-profit clubs is a very serious issue. One of the common complaints is about the ridiculous impost by the state government regarding Liquor Licensing laws and requirements on small, not-for-profit and sporting clubs. Small community clubs are categorised as those under 2,000 members, and the fee is \$500. Some communities do not even have a population of 2,000 people, let alone less than 2,000 members in their club. Volunteers now have to do the responsible service of alcohol course, which costs about \$80. There needs to be a category for very small clubs—that is, under 200 members—which are not-for-profit and are run by volunteers where they can operate a liquor licence for members. There is a huge amount of nonsense to go through for the local tennis club members to have a beer at their social barbecue once a month. Very few drink more than one or two beers because they have their children with them and have to drive home. These Liquor Licensing laws are using a sledgehammer to crack a nut and are totally out of proportion.

Another very important issue is trying to move the huge wheat crop that we had last year. It will be a problem again this year for the new wheat season, particularly the amount of wheat that is on the bottom end, particularly at Thallon and Noondoo. There is a train each week going out there for two years trying to shift the grain, but there will be another crop coming in soon. Not enough effort has been put in by the government to manage this. The government seems to be more focused on carting coal rather than on basic infrastructure. The quantities that we should be able to cart are not being looked after.

The rail line to Dirranbandi is going to be closed down. We need to keep that line open. We also need to support the Balonne Shire Council to ensure that the road network that is being hammered by these trucks is up to standard. That road should be of a main road standard. Main Roads should be able to provide the funding to maintain that road properly. The council cannot afford to put ratepayers' money in for what is essentially a state government responsibility.

I now turn to vehicle registrations. Many pensioners are concerned about the increase in vehicle registrations. In the state budget we saw the loss of seniors discounts for electricity and the loss of local government rates subsidies. As one of my constituents put it—

As an aged pensioner living on the outskirts of small country town with no public transport, I depend on my car very much. As you would know the age pension is quite limited and a steep increase in vehicle registration would add extra burden to an already difficult situation.

So here we have a state government with its hand in pensioners' pockets even the before the federal government increases the pension by \$30 a week. Now we have a fuel tax as well.

There are also cutbacks to the Queensland Arts Council. We have seen seven of its employees given redundancies. The Queensland Arts Council's last touring season is this year. For 46 years the Queensland Arts Council has partnered with local arts councils to take performing arts of great quality to communities in every corner of the state. The regional arts touring service has made it possible for the Queensland Arts Council to deliver over 3,300 performances, 2,450 workshops and master classes reaching more than 591,200 people across Queensland. The Ontour inschools program will not be visiting schools in term 2 due to the cutbacks. After working for equity for access for 47 years this is devastating for many small, geographically isolated schools.

The river operation plan for the Lower Balonne has been held up because of a court case. It did not need to be held up for that long. The whole water management program has been a disgrace. It took years and years for the people of the Lower Balonne and the Balonne area to fight the government and get independent science to prove that what they were doing was correct and that they were not degrading the river systems. Now that they want to move on and they have the science right, there seem to be hold-ups.

The government got it wrong. It is going to get flogged in the upcoming court case. It would have been far better for the government to reach an out-of-court settlement with the family that is taking it to court. Then everyone would have been able to move on. I predict that the government will lose the court case and it will have to do the ROPs again. There will have to be a whole recalculation, which will take an enormous amount of time and mean further delays.

Fluoride is an issue of importance. A constituent recently inquired about purchasing fluoride tablets from the local chemist. It is now stocking the tablets because drinking water is being fluoridated progressively across the state. However, there are many people who do not have reticulated water supplies. Many supplies will not be fluoridated until 2011-12. People cannot access the fluoride tablets. Fortunately, there is a chemist in Brisbane who is happy to provide compounded fluoride drops for those who require fluoride supplements.

The resourceful Wyandra Town Rural Fire Brigade is faced with a funding shortfall. Rather than asking for a handout, the brigade sought approval to agist 20 head of cattle on the Wyandra town common. However, they ran into red tape because they were advised that to register a cattle brand in the name of the brigade on the town common they would need senior management approval. Can members imagine all this going through?

The brigade would not use its funds to purchase cattle but rather young heifers could be donated to start the herd. The costs of the purchase of the brand and the tags would also be donated by brigade members. But there was more red tape. The rural fire brigade policy advised that they are not involved in the cattle industry. We have a group of people who need to raise \$25,000 within a population of 50 people. The brigade's annual income is \$1,700. They want to help their communities but the government puts red tape in front of them at every turn. It is disappointing when that sort of thing happens.

I have some very interesting letters here that I would like to read out in relation to vegetation management and the moratorium on regrowth vegetation. Greg and Robyn from Cunnyana at Mitchell state—

The Moratorium area affects approximately 10% of our most productive country and within 6 years will be fully regrown, meaning the agricultural production will fall to its lowest level. With the introduction of the Moratorium Bill we expect that our overall production will fall by as much as a quarter in the next 6 years, reducing our property's value to approximately 50%. As responsible land managers we value trees as an essential part of a balanced ecosystem, particularly when used in order to create shade, wildlife corridors and wind breaks. We also use trees such as Brigalow for soil conditioning, as they have the unique ability to place nitrogen back into the soil. However there is a major difference between well managed, ecologically healthy stands of Brigalow, that contribute greatly to soil and plant health, and Regrowth Brigalow, which creates a thick monoculture, causing reduced wildlife numbers and erosion due to lack of ground cover. We have planned for a future on the land, and invested 100% of what we have to give, both financially and physically. We hope that one day our children will want to take on our 'sustainable and profitable' business that provides an irreplaceable resource for Australia and the World. This is looking less likely if we continue on our current political path.

David and Kellie Hannah from Goondiwindi state—

Our family-run property is located near Westmar, on the southern boundary of Dalby Regional Council. Our family has owned and run this property for 35 years, we are a third generation cropping and cattle property, with all three generations living and working for our current and future livelihood. Already due to legislation, we have a third of our property that we cannot touch as it is timbered. The area that you are proposing on the moratorium is partly made up of shade lines and wind breaks that we have purposefully left, so it seems we have been penalized for doing the right thing.

There are a number of other letters that I want to cover. I will read out who they are from and their main points. Peter and Bernadette Wippell from Dirranbandi state—

You instantly think then that there isn't a tree standing on the property yet there are several patches of moratorium blue on our map including the regrowth mulga which has deliberately been regrown by us to use for fodder harvesting should we have another drought, which is inevitable, just a matter of when. Our situation is that we are prepared to keep the mulga for however long we can but we need to be able to use it when we have to (instead of selling our very precious breeding herd again). The stands of mulga are never completely 'wiped out' as it is too valuable to us.

Jon and Theresa Penfold from Glenmorgan state—

Rather than impose restrictions based on no scientific or environmental research, why not give Queensland's primary producers the encouragement and support to continue the great work they are already undertaking in partnership with organisations such as DPIF and Landcare?

Philip Bell from St George states—

We received no compensation, no grants of any sort to help us change enterprise mix caused by legislation changes to land management. The areas under moratorium now represent 22-25% of my most sustainable productive capacity. We have spent considerable resources and money bringing the Blue Areas to productivity. Will I be compensated fairly for the loss of such areas?

Athol and Robyn Mackay from Roma state—

The re-growth that we look after is rubbish weeds, woody weeds and prickly bushes and it will be a cost to us NOT to keep it clear and clean, so as to grow fresh native grasses, as when we have to muster cattle we won't be able to use vehicles and will have to hire musterers. I also submit that the scientific data regarding weed re-growth can be proven as this area has been devastated by Prickly Pear in the past and is still here awaiting for re-growth into which to re-establish.

There is also data available pointing out that trees are not the only carbon absorbers and in fact come third in line (especially as they get to maturity), while in fact grasses and soil as number one, are the greatest carbon absorbers.

John and Ann Martyn from Roma state—

This proposed legislation is such a vindictive piece of work ... If grass areas go back to trees more weeds will come in, and we know just from what is happening in the National Parks that the government will not take on the responsibility of controlling them, whereas now, many landholders carry this out on their properties themselves.

Matt and Kate McInerney from Yuleba state—

This is surely not ideal for the current state of the economy and will not help Premier Anna Bligh's election pledge of 100 000 new jobs for Queenslanders. People in rural Queensland will experience job losses if this Moratorium is passed.

Tony Gillett states—

I am a Real Estate Agent specializing in the marketing of Rural properties in the Roma district. I have attached details on a property we had recently marketed for Auction. However due to the introduction of the Moratorium and the dramatic effects it had on this particular property we had to cancel the Auction in the last few days prior to Auction as all interested parties withdrew their interest once the Moratorium Map ... The Vendors had spent a considerable amount of money on advertising (in excess of \$12,000) and I had also invested considerable time and money in conducting several inspections on the property (250km round trip just to conduct the inspection).

The Vendors had only purchased the property 18 months earlier for \$6M and it was expected that a similar figure would have been achieved at our scheduled Auction. As all interest in the property was withdrawn following the implementation of the Moratorium it can be assumed that this action by your government has resulted in the loss of commission income to this business in excess of \$100k, a loss in Transfer Stamp Duty to your own Government of approx \$200k and an even greater figure, yet to be determined, in a capital loss to the Owners of the property. Contrary to Mr Stephen Robertson's comments that this Moratorium will not result in the loss of any Jobs, this as you can see is already having a negative impact in our business which will impact not only immediately but also on future business sustainability.

David and Betty Salter from Glenmorgan state—

Our land is freehold—we had been promised that freehold land would not be touched by the 'tree police'—it has. Anyone with a house in the city would not accept 'the government' telling them which parts of their lawn to mow—or whether they can say pave an area. Why should we? We have spent money to buy, improve and freehold our asset, why would we not look after it to the benefit of our family, our sons, our grandchildren.....for the long term. We are not in this game for the short term. As custodians of the land which we intend to pass onto our sons and grandchildren, we would not wilfully destroy anything. We manage re-growth to protect the environment.

Rob and Tammie Irons from Condamine state—

The idea that placing a moratorium on regrowth clearing will miraculously return land to its pre-existing 'untouched and natural' state is both ludicrous and unrealistic.

Margie Neill from Surat states—

When Parliament resumes, I want, along with many others, that the LNP makes it very clear to Stephen Robinson who has said and I quote 'the move will have no impact on rural production' that this is not the case. I am only a small operator with 10,000 acres and have continued to employ one person throughout the drought by doing contract fencing etc however with approx 40% of my property covered by the moratorium (all would be box and sandalwood nothing exotic) I will be forced to put off this one person and the 7 family members I am providing accommodation and electricity for. I will also sell my remaining cattle and close the place up. There will be no point trying to improve the property further as it will have no value and I will just have to spend the rest of my life here as it will be impossible to sell.

If of course the Government would like to buy it as a haven for Dingoes etc, I am more than happy to listen to an offer!

(Time expired)

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (5.22 pm): I rise to contribute to the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech at the opening of the 53rd Parliament of Queensland. On behalf of the people of the Hinchinbrook electorate, I request that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, convey to Mr Speaker my congratulations in relation to his election to that high and respected office. While all members of parliament have a responsibility to behave in a manner that reflects positively on this place, the Speaker is particularly burdened with the responsibility of ensuring that the traditional impartiality and dignity of that office is preserved.

I am truly humbled and honoured by the support that I received from the people of the Hinchinbrook electorate at the state election on 21 March 2009 and I intend to repay that support by providing the strong representation to all of my constituents that they deserve. I am pleased and proud for the second time to pledge my loyalty to our most gracious sovereign Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and to her representative in the great state of Queensland, Her Excellency the Governor, and to my constituents in the Hinchinbrook electorate. Once again, I wish to make the observation that the Commonwealth of Australia, including the great state of Queensland, has been very well served by our constitutional monarchy and reaffirm my view that our current constitutional arrangements have served the people of Queensland and the people of Australia well, and I am a strong and committed advocate for retaining our present constitutional arrangements in the interests of good government.

I wish to offer my sincere thanks to a number of people who have assisted me in being successfully returned as the member for Hinchinbrook for a second term. In the first instance, I must sincerely thank the people who make up the branches and committees of the LNP in the Hinchinbrook electorate. These people are very dedicated supporters of the party and helped me enormously during the recent election campaign. I am very grateful for their support. There are also many people in the Hinchinbrook electorate who are not members of the LNP who volunteered their time to assist me during the campaign, and I am very grateful to these people also. It was great to have so many people who are not directly connected to the LNP express confidence in me and I will do my best to repay that confidence.

In particular, I want to extend my thanks to my campaign directors, Nat La Spina and Marc Rowell, who were once again very generous with their time and experience during the campaign. I value the support and guidance of both Marc and Nat. As always, my family were unfailing in their support for my endeavours and I wish to express my gratitude to my mum and dad, Lloyd and Lorraine, for their love and encouragement. They have made a lot of sacrifices for me. They worked hard to give me an opportunity to get a good education and instilled in me the values and the principles that guide me, and for that I am truly grateful and I thank them.

During the course of the 52nd Queensland Parliament I lost my grandmother, Gladys Margaret Cairns, who passed away aged 88 years. When I delivered my maiden speech on 11 October 2006, it was certainly the most difficult public address I had ever given at that time. But that was surpassed when it fell to me to deliver my grandmother's eulogy at her funeral. Marge was not only my grandmother but she was a good friend. Without redelivering her eulogy, she was a modest woman and an honest woman who loved her family fiercely and I loved her very dearly, and I want to dedicate my address-in-reply speech in her memory.

All honourable members in this place understand and appreciate the importance of the support that we receive from our friends and our family. They make significant sacrifices for us to be able to discharge our commitments to our electorates. The other source of support without which we could not do our jobs is that which we receive from our electorate staff. I put on the record my sincere appreciation to the dedication of my staff in the Hinchinbrook electorate office—Leisa Menegon, Jess Exelby and Lorraine Valinoti—who are really dedicated to the job and are genuinely committed to serving the people of the Hinchinbrook electorate. Leisa, Jess and Lorraine are fantastic staff and I am lucky to have them.

I have been afforded the honour and privilege of representing the people in the communities in the Hinchinbrook electorate for the second time in this place. In my maiden speech I described the Hinchinbrook electorate as God's own country, and I stand by that statement. In last year's redistribution I was very pleased to retain all of the communities in my electorate that I represented in the last parliament, but the virtue of the Hinchinbrook electorate has been greatly enhanced following the addition of new areas at both the southern end and the northern end as a result of that redistribution process.

At the southern end of my electorate the boundary was extended from the Black River to the Bohle River on the eastern side of the Bruce Highway so that the Hinchinbrook electorate now encompasses Mount Low, Bushland Beach and Burdell on the northern beaches of the city of Townsville. These communities are dynamic, they are diverse and they are growing, and they face challenges because of that rapid growth. There are plenty of experienced Queenslanders who have retired after their working lives and who are now living on the northern beaches of the city of Townsville. Lifestyle issues such as the amenity of the local area, access to health services, access to other community support services and the affordability of living are matters high on their agenda. They are concerned about issues such as beach erosion, the ongoing problems at the Townsville Hospital, the need for a community centre at Bushland Beach and the increase in the cost of electricity as, in many cases, retirees are on fixed incomes.

On the northern beaches of Townsville there are also many young working families, and they are also concerned about the affordability of living as many are battling to meet the payments on their homes in this difficult economic climate and in this tightening employment market. Young working families on the northern beaches at Bushland Beach and Mount Low struggle twice daily during peak hour on Mount Low Parkway trying to get the kids to school in the morning and home from school in the afternoon and trying to get themselves to work in the morning and home again in the afternoon. The overpass, which has been constructed, will alleviate some pressure on the intersection of Mount Low Parkway and the Bruce Highway, and I acknowledge that that project has improved safety and reduced traffic congestion at what was previously a very bad bottleneck.

However, the overpass is not the silver bullet for many traffic issues on Mount Low Parkway. There will be a large amount of traffic using this road on a daily basis, particularly at the peak times in the morning and the afternoon that I mentioned earlier. There are parts of the puzzle still missing from the solution that I believe includes the construction of the North Shore Boulevard which would directly link the suburbs of Bushland Beach and Burdell. A solution to the traffic congestion problems on Mount Low Parkway includes the expansion of public transport services to Mount Low and Bushland Beach, and I raised this issue last year in my budget reply speech when I spoke about the rapid population growth on the northern beaches of the city of Townsville and the traffic congestion on the Bruce Highway between the Bohle River and Bluewater at peak times.

At that time I noted that there were no public transport services to the various northern beaches communities north of the Black River in my electorate. I also pointed out last year in my budget reply speech that south of the Black River the Queensland Transport funded Hermit Park bus service announced the qconnect route 33 service, which goes only to Bushland Beach twice before 9 am and returns to Bushland Beach twice after 3 pm, which again corresponds with those peak hour periods that I mentioned earlier. But this is really inadequate to service the needs of the community on the northern beaches of Townsville.

At the northern end of my electorate, the redistribution saw rural areas to the south-west, west and north-west of Innisfail included in the Hinchinbrook electorate. Areas such as Utchee Creek Road, west of Mena Creek, East Palmerston, Nerada and Upper Daradgee were included in the Hinchinbrook electorate. These areas are focused on agriculture, such as the production of sugar cane, bananas and other horticultural crops. Cattle are also raised in these areas. This is a very beautiful and a very productive area and I am very pleased to represent it in the Queensland parliament.

The addition of those areas to my electorate reinforces the Hinchinbrook electorate as an important contributor to Queensland's primary production. In a good season, the Hinchinbrook electorate's four sugar mills—Victoria, Macknade, Tully and South Johnstone—will crush about seven million tonnes of sugar cane. The Hinchinbrook electorate grows approximately two-thirds of Australia's bananas. Each year, literally millions of dollars worth of high-value horticultural crops are grown in my electorate. The commercial fishing industry is also a very important high-value industry in my electorate, although along with other primary industries in Queensland it is much maligned and persecuted by the policies of the state Labor government.

The Hinchinbrook electorate has a diverse economy. Tourism is important in places such as Mission Beach. The electorate has some outstanding tourism destinations, including Wallaman Falls, Hinchinbrook Island and the Family Islands group, the Ma:Mu canopy walk and Paronella Park. The nickel refinery at Yabulu, now owned by Clive Palmer, and the northern iron and brass foundry at Wangan give the electorate an industrial base.

Mr Lawlor: Is that the same bloke who owns the LNP?

Mr CRIPPS: Jealousy will get the minister nowhere. However, our great primary industries continue to underpin the economy of the Hinchinbrook electorate. They provide many jobs, both directly and indirectly, for the families who live in the communities that I represent. As I said in my maiden speech, I am ready to defend the rural sector against the aggressive and punitive policies of this government, which always tries to undermine the productivity and take away the property rights of the people who are involved in these industries. They have acquired those property rights in good faith. They have a right to farm and fish. They have a right to provide for their families. I reaffirm my commitment to that today.

I am very concerned about the way in which the Bligh government has commenced the 53rd Parliament of Queensland, with the introduction of the Vegetation Management (Regrowth Clearing Moratorium) Bill and the Great Barrier Reef Protection Amendment Bill. While the Queensland and Australian economies have fallen on difficult times, the rural sector remains relatively strong and the policies contained in those bills threaten jobs in my electorate. As well, they threaten jobs in many other electorates across the state. I am at a loss to understand why the Bligh government is determined to undermine the viability and productivity of our rural industries with these policies. I find it really appalling that those industries were sacrificed and became the subject of a grubby political deal with the Greens in return for preferences at the state election in March. Labor's approach to the environment always involves more bureaucracy and regulation. In contrast, the LNP prefers to be innovative and positive on environmental issues.

Mr Shine: Ha, ha!

Mr CRIPPS: I have some examples if the honourable member for Toowoomba North would like to listen to them. During the course of the 52nd Parliament, the opposition promoted an ethanol mandate to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, a voluntary carbon credit trading scheme and registration concessions for hybrid vehicles. These initiatives were opposed by the state Labor government for base political purposes.

Indeed, the government in Queensland should be embarrassed that the New South Wales Labor government beat it to the punch, because that state has had an ethanol mandate for years. With Queensland's great sugar industry and grains industry, we should have had an ethanol mandate years ago. Over the past six years, on three separate occasions the LNP opposition has introduced private members' bills to provide for an ethanol mandate—between 2002 and 2008. Three times the state Labor government has defeated the proposal to have an ethanol mandate in Queensland. For that the government should be ashamed of itself. At the 2006 state election, the Labor government made a promise to introduce an ethanol mandate by 2010. So next year is crunch time for the state Labor government to deliver on that promise. I look forward to the introduction of that ethanol mandate.

The Bligh government's decision to axe the fuel tax rebate in Queensland will have a serious impact on regional and rural areas, particularly North Queensland, which is heavily dependent on heavy vehicle road transport. In this regard, government members representing North Queensland electorates have really abandoned their constituents. It is not fair for the Bligh government to target the rural sector. Those primary industries employ thousands of Queenslanders and, more importantly, feed millions of Queenslanders. Sooner rather than later the government needs to realise that it cannot continue to take the rural sector for granted.

Since the 2009 state election we have seen an extraordinary series of events that has totally undermined the confidence of the people of Queensland in the state government. Public policy positions, such as the removal of the fuel tax rebate and the sale of public assets, were not canvassed with the people of Queensland before or during the state election campaign. Indeed, in both cases those policies were disavowed by the Labor Party. In a sneaky, tricky manoeuvre, both the fuel tax and the fire sale of state assets were unveiled after the election.

The other major issue that has plagued the state government is the allegations of inappropriate links with lobbyists, many of whom are former Labor members of parliament, and the extent of their influence over government decisions. The state government voted against a motion moved by the LNP opposition to establish a royal commission to investigate the culture of secrecy and allegations of corruption. On 29 July 2009, former Fitzgerald inquiry commissioner Tony Fitzgerald had the following to say in respect of the current state government, formerly led by Peter Beattie and now led by Premier Bligh, which has been in power for the past 12 years—

Access can now be purchased, patronage is dispensed, mates and supporters are appointed and retired politicians exploit their connections to obtain 'success fees' for deals between business and government.

In 1987, amid allegations of a similar nature, the then Queensland National Party government had the guts to call a royal commission and appoint Tony Fitzgerald as the commissioner. The result of that royal commission is well known. It was a watershed for politics and public administration and government in Queensland. Two decades later, the Bligh government has demonstrated that it does not have the same courage to open itself up to the scrutiny of a royal commission. The government is protecting the Labor mates and insulting the people of Queensland.

There is a claim made by the state government that the CMC has the powers required to investigate the allegations of corruption that are dogging the government and that a royal commission is not required. That claim would be laughable if it were not so serious. The state government is asking Queenslanders to believe that the CMC has made royal commissions redundant and that we will never need one ever again. The findings of the royal commission into Dr Patel and the Bundaberg Base Hospital shamed the Bligh Labor government for its mismanagement of Queensland Health. Does the state Labor government really believe that we should have just left that inquiry to be undertaken by the CMC? The Bligh government is just trying to sweep these matters under the carpet. The integrity and the accountability green paper released by the Premier during the last sitting week of the Queensland parliament is just a good old fashioned political distraction. The government is asking Queenslanders to ignore the current scandal and accept its promise that it is cleaning up the system that has seen the Labor mates flourish. It is just a joke.

I was the youngest member of the 52nd Queensland Parliament. I have relinquished that title in the 53rd Queensland Parliament to the member for Morayfield. But I also acknowledge that my colleagues in the LNP the member for Kawana and the member for Beaudesert are both aged under 30. As I said in my maiden speech, the Queensland parliament ought to reflect the diversity of the community and it is appropriate that young people have a voice in this place as well.

I also recognise and appreciate the contributions and the experience of longer serving members. My more experienced colleagues from the LNP have been generous with their advice and guidance to me as a new member during the last parliament. I welcome all the new members of parliament and I offer my best wishes to all former members who left the parliament in a variety of circumstances.

I am pleased to be a member of the LNP. It contested the recent election as a united and genuine alternative to the government, which is out of touch. Queensland responded positively to the LNP with an increase in our primary vote and a strong two-party preferred result. Eleven new members of the LNP have come into the 53rd Parliament with the opposition now numbering 34. I am confident that the people of Queensland will be drawn to the LNP in greater numbers as the government continues to demonstrate its lack of regard for them and as its policy agenda is exposed as nothing but cheap political spin.

I am also enthusiastic about addressing the challenges that my new shadow portfolio of disability services and multicultural affairs poses in a complicated and difficult sector of public policy. My election as the member for Hinchinbrook in 2006 was a humbling experience. I am equally humbled and grateful to the people of Hinchinbrook for placing their faith in me to represent them in the Queensland parliament for a second time. The Hinchinbrook electorate has not been held by the ALP since 1960 but, as I said in my maiden speech, it has never been a long-term safe seat—previously for the Nationals. The LNP has been successful at this election, but I do not expect it to be a long-term safe seat for the LNP either.

The people of Hinchinbrook expect strong and effective representation and, as such, it is a challenge to me to demonstrate to my constituents that I am worthy of their support. I have not taken their support for granted in the past and I will not do so in the future. The people of Queensland have returned the government, but the people of Hinchinbrook have returned me as their voice in this place. I take this opportunity to reaffirm my undertaking that I will do my best to further their interests and to provide them with the strong representation that they deserve.

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—LNP) (5.41 pm): This is my contribution to the address-in-reply to the opening of the 53rd Parliament of Queensland by Governor Penelope Wensley. I begin by discussing some of the priorities for the electors of Moggill.

Firstly, I give my sincere thanks to the electors of Moggill for once again returning me to represent them with a significantly increased majority. I will be representing the electors of Moggill to the very best of my ability on an array of serious local issues. I start with Akuna Oval. In the opening address of Her Excellency the Governor, Penelope Wensley, to this parliament, she pledged on behalf of the government to make sporting facilities and fields more available, particularly to the children and young people of this state. I believe the performance of this government does not live up to the promises and the rhetoric. The hardworking volunteers of the Kenmore Bears and Kenmore Districts Rugby Club provide activities and facilities at Akuna Oval servicing up to the 2,000 young people from Brisbane's west every weekend. The lighting on the oval has deteriorated to the point where it is dangerous and unusable. Tremendous work has been undertaken by Sally Johannsen and her committee on planning and fundraising for a major revamp of the lights to allow children to continue to use these fields as they have done and to ensure they are safe and meet current environmental standards. Unfortunately, the previous minister and the current Minister for Sport have denied applications for major facilities sports funding to allow this project to go ahead. Given that it is a shovel-ready project and it is a vitally important one for thousands of young people, this is clearly a failure of the government to live up to its promise—even those in the Governor's opening address. In desperation I have written to the federal government requesting that its department of sport assist where the state government has refused to do so, but I do not appear to have had any more success there.

I turn now to pedestrian and school safety. Busy and poorly constructed Moggill Road requires a special duty of care by the state government and Minister for Main Roads to ensure the safety of children and other pedestrians who must access this road. For years now the school communities of Kenmore State School, Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic primary school and I have fought an ongoing battle for a school speed zone along Moggill Road adjacent to the two local schools. It is now three months since I met with the Minister for Main Roads, Mr Craig Wallace, highlighting the urgent need to address this busy area through central Kenmore. The urgent need for something to be done is an absolute no-brainer. After years of fighting on behalf of my constituents, the government did finally concede to a three-month trial of a school speed zone outside OLR. While this was welcome news and a win for the local community, we actually have to see it put into practice because to date absolutely nothing has been done. It is nothing more than a promise that has not eventuated. I am appealing to the government to ensure that it is introduced prior to the school recess when obviously it will not apply.

In Bellbowrie after a long and hard fight over six years we eventually had the speed limit lowered to 60 kilometres per hour but only after the death of a young student. During the previous term the government conceded that the intersection of Birkin Road and Moggill Road requires lights together with a pedestrian crossing. Unfortunately, to date, again, we have seen no action or even a go-ahead to improve this urgently needed safety issue.

A particularly disturbing local safety issue is the bus stop at the intersection of Grandview Road and Moggill Road. This is a busy, high-speed section of Moggill Road that has poor visibility where hundreds of people daily take their lives into their hands to cross the road to access one of the area's major bus stops. The government has conceded that to put in a zebra crossing would be dangerous

given that pedestrians using it cannot be seen by motorists and would be put at greater risk. I can say to this House that the same logic applies to the completely uncontrolled section of road as it stands at the moment where people clearly take their lives in their own hands. Many residents have warned of the inevitability of serious injury or possibly even death and many drivers have written to me telling of narrowly missing pedestrians at this bus stop.

The department has indicated that the only way of making it safer is to control the intersection with lights, but it is not prepared to put in the money. Saving money on an issue of serious public safety is false economy and people's lives need to be put first. Mr Dave Davis collected a sizeable petition on this issue which, to date, likewise has fallen on deaf ears in this government.

In relation to safety I have thought long and hard before making this remark, but I would say: how would you feel to be the family who gets a phone call to say your son or daughter won't be coming home from school? I believe these safety issues are of such a magnitude that they justify raising that question.

I turn now to public transport. We need to do much more. Every local resident—and I dare say every member of this House—has heard the concern I have expressed in relation to public transport. The severe congestion of Moggill Road and the Western Freeway is a critical issue in western Brisbane and support for quality local public transport infrastructure is one way of keeping that congestion to a minimum. Once again the difference between the government's rhetoric about public transport and the reality of its performance is stark.

Currently there is no TransLink public transport service between North Ipswich and Bellbowrie and recently the privately owned and operated CityLink service was forced to close because of lack of support. I met with the incoming Minister for Transport in relation to this matter and I would once again highlight to the House that this would be among the largest, if not the largest, community in South-East Queensland that has no TransLink support. I find it extraordinary that we hear the minister and the government in this place talking about public transport, climate change and greenhouse gases and we have a community of 10,000 people with absolutely no government supported public transport. I urge the government to commence a TransLink service through this area.

I am delighted that, after many years, construction has finally commenced on our official park 'n' ride on Moggill Road at Kenmore. I put this proposal forward to the government in 2004, advising of making use of leftover land from the resumption of properties from the widening of Moggill Road. The facility will provide for 140 parking spaces and six cycle bays, together with signalised lights at the intersection to control safe entry. By virtue of the demographics of my electorate, unlike other metropolitan seats where the aim is to have people living within 400 metres of public transport, the sparse nature of the population means that if people are to use public transport they need to be able to drive to it. These people using public transport deserve to have the infrastructure to safely and conveniently access that public transport.

In relation to the Kenmore bypass, we await a recommendation from the study group and we hope to receive same by the end of October. But I do note that, in relation to a submission that I and many residents made about the proposal to close Gem Road if a bypass is constructed, the government has listened. The study group has put forward and circulated to my local residents three options—two of them tunnel options—to keep that road open should the Kenmore bypass recommendation be favourable. I appreciate that response.

The urban footprint remains unchanged. One of the reasons many residents are prepared to put up with some of the appalling transport and lack of services in western Brisbane is the beauty of the natural environment and the commitment of so many people to ensuring something of it remains for our present enjoyment and into the future. Our area comprises a large part of the lungs of the City of Brisbane, with extensive areas of low-density housing and vegetation. It is supported by some wonderful work by local environment and catchment groups such as the Moggill Creek Catchment Group, the Pullen Pullen Creek Catchment Group, the Cubberla Creek Catchment Group, THECA and REPA.

I think it is one of the good news stories not only for our area but for the whole of Brisbane that there is a degree of protection which has continued following the review of the South East Queensland Regional Plan when our submissions that our urban footprint should not be increased were heeded. This is an area where I am happy to give the government a tick for listening to local input.

I turn now to local fire and ambulance services. Local residents expressed considerable concern about the impending closure of Kenmore Fire Station and the opening of a Pullenvale Fire Station, particularly given the area's only fire station will rest on a notoriously congested arterial road and this road will separate the fire station from the closely settled areas of Kenmore and Chapel Hill, which are currently serviced by the one slated for closure at Kenmore. The decision I believe has in part been taken because areas further out around the suburb of Moggill were not receiving adequate fire cover for many years. The emergency services story locally, however, is much more involved.

The Bellbowrie area must have an ambulance station. It certainly would appear reasonable and produce a great emergency services outcome to co-locate an additional fire service with an ambulance service at Moggill or Bellbowrie to ensure that this area gets its badly needed ambulance station. I have put this proposition to the minister. I note in a letter that I received in recent days that the Queensland Ambulance Service has also supported my call for an additional ambulance station in the Moggill-Bellbowrie area as the only way of safely servicing these communities. I will be urging this minister very vigorously to act on the recommendation of the Queensland Ambulance Service.

In relation to traffic congestion, local residents have been forced to endure enormous traffic congestion on Moggill Road, which is well documented as one of the slowest state controlled commuter roads in Brisbane. They have also put up with years of bungling over roadworks. I am pleased to say that after years of mucking around the completion of Moggill Road between Pullenvale Road and Kilkivan Avenue has resulted in significant improvement in a number of dangerous local intersections, particularly Pullenvale Road, Rafting Ground Road and Kilkivan Avenue. As everybody who uses Moggill Road is only too well aware, improvements to the road while welcome will not fix the ever deteriorating bottlenecks. I made my commitment to continue representing constituents in relation to getting a major project aimed at addressing this congestion as central to my commitment to work for the electors of Moggill, and that is exactly what I intend to do.

I understand the government study into the Kenmore bypass will shortly release a recommendation which will go to the minister and cabinet for some consideration before being assessed. It is fair to say that local residents and road users are not exactly holding their breath given the dire state of the government's budget. But it is critically important that we get on the program in this state a major road project in the western suburbs of Brisbane. It is decades overdue and it must include major public transport infrastructure, in particular a dedicated bus service as a priority, and it must include a cycleway link to the cycle network within Brisbane that we currently lack.

Turning to local schools, at a recent estimates committee hearing I raised the appalling state of asbestos in the Chapel Hill State School. This school was not alone. Mount Crosby State School also has asbestos. It is appalling that school maintenance budgets are so low and the performance of the government in this area so slack that we are still standing here arguing about making schools safe from asbestos. I make no apology for raising this issue again and again until the government makes these schools safe.

A number of other schools in the Moggill electorate need some urgent work. Mount Crosby State School is growing at an enormous rate, yet it does not have a school hall, does not have a proper library, does not have a resource centre and has totally missed out on the initial round of funding from the federal government. Kenmore State School has 1,800 students. It desperately needs a school hall but is not eligible for a school hall under federal government programs because it is not a primary school. It was awarded funding for school computers, yet two-thirds of the funding was withheld by the state government and never spent on computers because of the maladministration of the Digital Education Revolution funds.

Local schools are significantly overcrowded, particularly Mount Crosby and Kenmore State High School. A number of state schools are at or above 100 per cent of the government's stated capacity for them. Kenmore State High School has had to have enrolment quotas which have shut out many, many young people even from within my own electorate from attending that high school because they were outside of the catchment area.

There is a desperate need for an additional high school somewhere between Kenmore and Ipswich. It covers a huge distance with thousands of school-age children with no high school in their local locality and in some cases they are not even eligible from a catchment point of view. There are 660 children at Mount Crosby State School, a similar number at Karalee State School, and 580 at Moggill State School—and all of them growing like topsy with no plans for a high school whatsoever from this government. I challenge the government to devote even a tiny number of resources to doing an on-the-ground study which will demonstrate the need and support for a state high school in this area.

Currently schools such as Kenmore State High School and Mount Crosby State School lack a lot of resources that rapidly growing schools require. All three schools, including Moggill State School, through their P&Cs and school communities have done a magnificent job in planning capital works that would benefit the children in these schools. It is a salient lesson from the poor administration of the school funds coming from the federal government. In fact the schools can plan better, more relevant and bigger projects on a fraction of the money but the state government will not allow them to have control of those funds.

I am delighted in the 53rd Parliament to have been given the responsibility of shadow minister for education and training. In 2007, the OECD's educational unit did a report on member countries, looking at what factors drove the world's highest standards in education. That the world's best performing school systems came out on top should be held up as a beacon for directing us not to deliver average

results but to deliver the best results. For far too long in this state, we have set the bar far too low to deliver on the potential of our children. The report could be summarised in the vernacular by saying, 'It's about teachers, stupid.'

We have great teachers who are undervalued by the Bligh government, underresourced and not given adequate professional development. They are certainly not supported and certainly not given enough control over what happens in our schools and classrooms. The experience of the top school systems suggests that three things matter most: getting the right people to become teachers, developing them into effective instructors and ensuring the system is able to deliver the best education to every child through the best school leadership. If Queensland is to be among the world's best, this involves raising the status of teaching as a profession so we can attract quality teachers and students. I think it is important that as an opposition we hold the government accountable and urge action to improve the standards. It is also important that if the government takes action that is in the best interests of children we support that.

In conclusion, I am looking forward to the next 2½ years and trying to face up to the circumstances that this state is in. I would like to sincerely thank my campaign director, Julian Simmonds; my SEC chairman, Leigh Warren, and husband, Chris; my fabulous electorate staff, Leonie and Sue; Peter and Julie Murray; Andrew O'Hara; the Shelleys; Des and Shirley Murphy; and the many others who attended polling stations and put in place corflute signs. I thank my hardworking local LNP councillors, Margaret de Wit and Jane Prentice.

In his absence I would like to congratulate the Speaker for his important appointment as the Speaker of this parliament. I would like to congratulate the member for Surfers Paradise, my friend and colleague John-Paul Langbroek, for being elected as the Leader of the Opposition, and I congratulate my friend the member for Southern Downs, Lawrence Springborg, for being elected as his deputy. I also take the opportunity to welcome my new parliamentary colleagues.

(Time expired)

Mr FINN (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (6.02 pm): It is a privilege to stand in this parliament as a re-elected member to speak in reply to the Governor's address. Whilst it is now five months since the election earlier this year, I take this opportunity to place on the record the importance I place in the responsibility vested on me as a community representative. When I was first elected in 2004, the cohort entering the parliament in that year included the 1,000th person to be elected to this Assembly. There are not many Queenslanders who have the honour of representing their communities in this place.

The March election was fought on a battleground of who the people of Queensland trusted to manage our economy through tough times. A clear choice was offered between a Premier seeking a mandate to make tough decisions in the midst of a global economic crisis or an opposition leader who denied the existence of the crisis. It was an election fought on a jobs agenda, with a clear choice between taking the tough decisions to keep the massive infrastructure program going and protecting 120,000 jobs or cutting jobs across the public sector. And it was an election where a choice was made between massive spending commitments of the Liberal National Party or Labor's responsible spending commitments in tough economic times. It was a choice between responsibility and recklessness.

Mr Dempsey: Be nice.

Mr FINN: I take that interjection from the member for Bundaberg. Every time I stand up he says, 'Be nice.' I often ask him to be nice because he is such a nice fellow and it is incumbent on him to be nice, but I do not think it works coming back at me.

The campaign in Yeerongpilly was fought primarily on the macro issues of economic management and protecting jobs. The electorate I am proud to represent is a diverse mix in a relatively small area. Whilst largely an electorate made up of working families in the inner suburbs, there is a significant industrial zone in the suburbs of Salisbury and Rocklea, as well as some of the areas of Yeronga and Yeerongpilly. With manufacturing, warehousing, the service industry and Brisbane's fruit and vegetable market, the electorate of Yeerongpilly is a jobs engine room of southern Brisbane. Protecting and creating jobs was front and centre of the deliberations of voters in the electorate.

The social mix and proximity of low- and semi-skilled workforces make training and education opportunities a critical concern for local people. There are major training organisations in the area, including the Construction Training Centre, Electro Group and Yeronga TAFE, along with state and non-state sector schools. Support for training programs for the jobs of the future and commitments to working with the federal government to roll out the national stimulus plan of Building the Education Revolution were key issues in how local residents determined their vote.

Major transport routes dissect the Yeerongpilly electorate, and the newly created electoral boundaries determined the Brisbane urban corridor as the southern boundary of the electorate. The announcement of the Rudd government to fund the upgrade of the Mains-Kessels intersection was a key aspect of the 2007 federal electoral victory of Labor in the electorate of Moreton. During the state campaign the LNP announced that it would halt the Rudd upgrade plan and local residents were faced with a choice of a state government that would work with Kevin Rudd to tackle congestion or an LNP plan to create further local traffic chaos. The record of Labor along the Brisbane urban corridor of acting

to reduce truck numbers through camera technology was recognised by local residents as delivering real congestion-busting outcomes, not just the rhetoric and fear campaigns we have become used to from local Liberal Party members and candidates.

Residents living around the Toohey Forest in Tarragindi and Moorooka have long been concerned to protect the special urban green environment they live amongst. Not only does this forest area, along with the Oxley Common, contribute to the green lung capacity across Brisbane; it is critical to the local area as it exists alongside an industrial area and contributes to the amenity of these suburbs. The promise of the LNP to open up state forest parks to trail bike riders without identifying which parks would be affected was a major concern for local people. I was pleased when the LNP were forced to rule out the Toohey Forest trail bike park following my campaign, but the fact that it was not ruled out when the plan was announced shows how out of touch they are with urban Brisbane.

On a micro level, the campaign in Yeerongpilly was a choice between a positive campaign of delivering locally and a commitment to make tough decisions to protect local jobs or the LNP campaign of scare and fear. I have spoken before in this place of the attack on the Yeronga State High School and the community scare campaign claiming the school was to be closed. This was a disgraceful campaign which had little more effect than reducing community confidence in a school that delivers a strong academic program and educates our young people well in preparation for their future careers.

It was pleasing that local residents were able to wade their way through the information bombardment of the local campaign and reject the fearmongering and personal vilification that came with the Liberal National campaign. The micro lesson of this campaign is that voters in Yeerongpilly will not be swayed by smear or lack of substance and will evaluate people striving to represent the local area on their record, their plan and their commitment to serving the community with honesty and respect.

There were several people who made my success possible, including local branch members, supporters, trade union members, friends and family. It would not have been possible to undertake the huge number of tasks required in an election campaign without the great support I received from this group of people. Five months on, I am concerned that I will not recognise some if I try to list them all, but I do particularly want to acknowledge my campaign team of Cameron, Rod, Sasha, Craig, Peter and Bronwyn, Ken, Norm, Bruce, David, Greg and Lee, and others who contributed to that campaign team. I thank Robin and Nicole, who support me so well and are very much part of my extended family. I thank Councillor Steve Griffiths, who gave me good support during the campaign. He is a highly regarded local representative within my local electorate.

I thank my family, who travelled from Melbourne and worked tirelessly on my campaign. My father letterboxed day after day after day, and my mother and sister fed that broader extended family who work for all of us on election day. I particularly acknowledge the support of two trade unions—the Rail, Tram and Bus Union and the CFMEU Mining and Energy Division. Without the support of those trade unions it would have been difficult for me to stay grounded in my campaign.

I value and appreciate the commitment of all of those people who supported both me personally and the party generally. I genuinely seek their understanding as we make the tough decisions through this term of government to chart the course back to economic prosperity, and I seek their respect for the efforts to deliver good government to the people of Yeerongpilly and across Queensland.

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (6.09 pm): I am very pleased to offer my thanks to those who made it possible for us to be elected and re-elected in many cases. It is with great gratitude that I pay my respects to the people of Mundingburra who have once again elected me to work on their behalf. It is always humbling to work with so many volunteers who turn up time after time to support the Labor Party and the Labor government.

In my address I want to again pay tribute to those key people who gave us so many hours to see me elected for a fifth term. First of all, I have to thank my staff, particularly Rhonda Murphy and her family including Anthony Stout, who spent an entire day on Palm Island in the heat to support our new member for Townsville. Michael Paisley and his partner, Krista, performed well and above the call of duty. They had a team of campaign workers who not only gave of their time but also gave oodles of love and humour when it was most needed, and that was very often. To Kiel Shuttleworth, I say many thanks. Kiel now works for me.

I of course pay tribute to my family, many of whom live all over the place. Most of them travelled long distances to come and work on the day. Sam lives in Bahrain, and he came home for the victory celebration. I look back on these past 11 years and at what has happened over those 11 years when all of my children bar one were in school. One had just finished school and was voting for the first time and voted for her mother. I now have grandchildren. My children all have careers and I have elderly parents living with us—parents whose needs have changed over the years and who obviously require changed support. To all of them, I say thankyou. To Russell, you are simply the best.

Now that we have been re-elected, we have had to face the most difficult financial period of any government for many generations. We know that our budget delivered for Queensland in the most challenging economic climate of our lifetime. The global recession has required that we keep

Queenslanders in jobs, we keep our record building programs going, and we deliver front-line services like hospitals and schools. We could have cut jobs, project and services—like the opposition wanted—but we did not. We have done all we can do to keep Queenslanders out of unemployment queues because we know how important a stable income is to working families. We have invested in skills and we have a record building program. In fact, it is just about the only show in town, particularly in Townsville. We have better front-line services and we will emerge from these tough times stronger, not weaker.

We all know that Queensland is still the best place to live and to do business, and our budget absolutely shows this. Let us not forget that Queenslanders pay on average \$400 less state tax per capita than in other states and territories. We still have the lowest payroll tax in the country, with \$15 million in new payroll tax measures which will help businesses who employ apprentices and trainees. That came into effect in July.

Our growth is expected to remain higher than the national average for the 15th consecutive year in 2010-11, and unemployment will remain lower than the national average over the next four years. We have had to make some very tough decisions in the budget but we still put jobs first in investing in a strong future. I will give the House a few examples.

Over the next two years Townsville City Council will receive \$109 million in a funding windfall for 19 local projects. There is also an extra \$18.9 million for the Flinders Street Mall redevelopment and \$10 million for the redevelopment of the historic Jezzine Barracks precinct. Apart from the many, many building projects which the Labor government supports in Townsville including \$66 million for a water sewerage plant at Mount St John, the incredible schools infrastructure program, \$36.5 million for the port access road, the Townsville Hospital redevelopment, the neonatal intensive care unit revamp and the construction of the Palm Island emergency department, we have to contrast what the state government is doing with that of the Townsville City Council.

We continue to give constant support to the Townsville City Council, and this is of concern to me. Let me tell you why. I am concerned that since being elected in March last year the Townsville City Council has raised its rates on average by 24 per cent and in some areas by 30 per cent. That is one thing, but during this period the state government through the same tough economic times has continued to support the Townsville City Council financially through a range of projects.

Mr Shine: Are they grateful?

Ms NELSON-CARR: Well, no. What is disturbing is that the partnership we once enjoyed with the Townsville City Council appears to be a thing of the past. The Townsville City Council mayor and I have had a very long and very positive relationship for many years, but I have to say that his councillors get it wrong so often. Those same councillors claim that the state government short-changes them or rides roughshod over them. It is nothing but a nonsense. We never get answers to questions like, 'How did the council lose almost \$1 million in funding by not meeting its obligations under local government funding guidelines?' They are missing out on nine community projects—things like safety and lighting works, the waterway gardens, leisure centres, swimming pools and so on.

Let us think about it as changing priorities. That is fine; they do change during tough times. But what about the most recent outrage from the council over the state government's new trades and training centre that is going to be built on Ingham Road? A front-page headline assertion by Councillor Vern Veitch stated that the state government had breached local council by-laws because of its close proximity to the water treatment centre—that is, closer than the regulation 400 metres. How can they so consistently get it wrong? It is not 400 metres away; it is 1.4 kilometres away, and it is deliberately positioned on this site because it is an industrial site.

Mrs Miller: They can't count.

Ms NELSON-CARR: No, I don't think they can count. This centre is a key component of the government's skills plan, which has a huge capital works program to modernise TAFE structure and establish trade training centres at four sites across Queensland. Once completed, this facility will help to meet our government's commitment to progressively increased trade training places by 17,000 under the Queensland Skills Plan.

Mr Wilson: If you really cared for the local community you would have inquired from the department about where it was going to be located.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Absolutely. I will take that interjection. Unfortunately, they go straight to the media and get the stories wrong.

Mr Wilson: He has since conceded to the department that he 'stuffed it up'.

Ms NELSON-CARR: He got it wrong. Our new Townsville trades and training centre will go a long way to continuing to meet the needs of skilled workers across the state. The state government again has fulfilled its promises—all of them. I draw the attention of the House to the Kokoda swimming pool in my electorate. Public pools are always owned and run by councils. Kokoda is no different. I lobbied my government to fund part of this project because council plans included a hydrotherapy pool in its design.

We signed over \$1.5 million on 13 May this year to honour that commitment. Now I am being told that it is doubtful there will be a hydrotherapy pool in this complex after all, but thanks for the money. I could go on and on expressing my frustration with some of the Townsville city councillors and their outrageous election promises, like 100 boat-trailer car parks in 100 days. Well, where are we? 500 days later and, you guessed it, no car parks but let's blame the state government.

I will close on the final indignity—one that is very dear to my heart: the old Ross River meatworks chimney. The former Townsville City Council had commissioned engineering and structural reports to determine what was needed to preserve this chimney, and the new Townsville City Council decided it was just a little bit too expensive and so it was going to be demolished. If community members and the old meatworkers had not come lobbying and knocking on my door, had not alerted me to the fact that the chimney was facing its demise, it would be rubble today.

It was the state government which listed the chimney on the heritage register where this icon will not only be saved but preserved for future generations to enjoy. And what do we find? Now the Townsville City Council is taking credit for its preservation. The hypocrisy shown by several councillors once the decision was made is nothing short of gobsmacking. I want to work with the Townsville City Council in a positive way, as I have done for most of my 11 years.

Mr Shine: You're a saint.

Ms NELSON-CARR: More than anything, though, I want a bit of honesty. The state government continues during these hard times to honour its promises—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Order! Member for Toowoomba North, please direct your comments through the chair.

Mrs Miller: He said she's a saint.

Ms NELSON-CARR: I'm a saint to want to work with the council? I would have to agree with that at the moment. We continue as a state government to work through these hard times. We are delivering, and we are honouring our commitments and our promises. It is time that the Townsville City Council worked with us for the future of Townsville, not against us.

Mr DEMPSEY (Bundaberg—LNP) (6.19 pm): It is a great privilege to rise to speak to the address-in-reply. First of all, I would like to thank the people of Bundaberg for giving me the opportunity to continue to serve as their voice in parliament. I have said this many times, but it continues to be true: I find it both an honour and an incredible privilege to be elected as the member for Bundaberg, and I will continue to work hard to put the people of Bundaberg first.

Since being elected into this parliament, which is coming up to three years, there are three words that I continue to say to myself when I come into parliament. They are poverty, poverty, poverty. I would like all members on all sides to reiterate those words from time to time and remember what a great privilege it is to be in this House and be an elected member of parliament. Because of our work commitments and because we are working hard for our communities and putting those extra hours and effort into things, we are sometimes taken away from those people in our communities who are affected most by the decisions we make in this House. I am asking everybody to say those words—poverty, poverty, poverty.

It is incumbent on all levels of government to be constantly reminded of the people out there on the streets and in the alleys and those who do not have a meal or a roof over their heads to make sure that we do whatever we can to assist them. There are other people who are affected by drugs and alcohol. There may come a day when we can help them in some way to get over their misfortune or help them with some of their decisions. We may actually be able to help them make better choices for a better future, particularly young people. At the end of the day they are the ones we leave behind.

Since the election I have been appointed as the shadow minister for child safety and the shadow minister for sport. As the shadow minister for child safety I will be looking to achieve successful outcomes for the children, families, carers and staff. Unfortunately, not all children are born into happy circumstances. Too many children in this state are living in poverty or fear of violence and abuse. The many stories that I have heard in the few months since I took on this shadow portfolio have strengthened my resolve to find long-term, viable solutions for our state's children in need.

Protecting at risk children is a complex issue. One area that desperately needs improvement is the cooperation between government departments. Too many times we have seen news reports indicating a lack of cooperation between police, child safety, Queensland Health, disability services and housing. I hope the creation of the new superdepartments assists with communication between these groups. At the end of the day, it is our state's children who pay the price for the lack of communication between departments.

During my 19 years as a Queensland police officer I saw firsthand the appalling situations many children, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, face in this state. Unfortunately, many Queenslanders simply are not aware of the hardship faced by so many children.

It was very refreshing to see the rally outside Parliament House today. The Indigenous community gathered to have their voice heard by the parliament. One of the issues they were pushing was the issue of child safety and its impact on Indigenous communities. They were crying out for help and for their stories to be heard.

I was very privileged to be able to meet with those people today. I obviously set in train a number of lines of communication. That is what we are all in this House to do. We are here to help people, represent them and, hopefully, at the end of day, do something that will improve their quality of life. I thank those people who turned up for the rally, were passionate about these issues and took the time out to be heard. The people who attended can feel that even though it was a small rally it did something for Indigenous rights in Queensland and increased the awareness of child safety issues in Indigenous communities.

As a community we need to build a culture where the neglect and abuse of children is simply not tolerated. We need to build a culture in all government departments that child safety is the first priority. We need to keep Queensland's children safe because children are our future.

I would like to turn to an article that was in the Cairns *Weekend Post* last weekend. I acknowledge one of the columnists, health reporter Carenda Jenkin, and thank her for the open, transparent and passionate report she wrote in the Cairns *Weekend Post*. I have sought advice on this. On the front page was a young person's picture. They would have had to get permission to print that picture. To table the article I have covered the picture. The headline on the front page of the Cairns *Weekend Post* says, 'Bureaucracy failing our foster kids', '9-year-old child shunted through 70 foster homes', 'Triple workload for caseworkers'.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Order! Member for Bundaberg, please do not hold that up as a prop. If you want to table it, please do so.

Mr DEMPSEY: I will table the front page of the Cairns *Weekend Post*.

Tabled paper: Copy of the front page of the Cairns Weekend Post, dated 15-16 August 2009 [759].

There were many articles inside. I will go through some of the headlines—'Failing foster children', 'Overworked officers on sinking ship', 'Four centres cop massive funding cuts', 'Motel stays "inappropriate"' and 'Information "withheld" to get placement'.

I would encourage the government and the department to look at those reports in an open way. I know that it is sometimes hard to take things on the chin. We have to make sure that these issues are identified and something is done so we can all move forward together. These are hard and complex issues. They need to be put out there. We cannot push things aside and think things are working because they simply are not working. I will table that page with those headlines.

Tabled paper: Extract from the Cairns Weekend Post, dated 15 August 2009 page 9 [760].

One of the other reports in that paper had the headline, 'Kids paying price for failing system'. I will read some of that article. This report stems from the frustration of many members of the Cairns and Far North community. They were feeling as though they were not being heard in relation to the issues affecting them on the ground. The article states—

It has been said that in *The Simpsons* there are observations about the human condition that rival those of the great philosophers. For me, what comes to mind this week is not Homer's famous "Do'h" or the drooling sounds he makes pining for an ice-cream donut. It is Reverend Lovejoy's wife Helen, 'Won't somebody please think of the children!' she screams whenever a crisis hits Springfield, before sobbing helplessly into her yellow palms. I've felt much the same at times in recent months.

That is probably a modernisation of the frustration that this reporter felt talking to people from the different community sectors as well as the government in relation to her frustrations about child safety, fostering, foster-carers, carers and the system as a whole. I have spoken to this reporter on the phone. I could hear the passion in her voice. She wants child safety to be the best. She understands the frustrations. I thank her for her reports and getting the issue into the community.

As a police officer I was fortunate to run several police citizen youth clubs throughout the state and I became involved in many junior sporting activities and events. It is no secret that Queenslanders love sport, but the benefits stretch far beyond the arena. Sport stimulates our economy by providing jobs, boosting tourism and encouraging stronger communities. That is particularly important in the current economic crisis.

Sitting suspended from 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm.

Mr DEMPSEY: A single major football event injects tens of millions of dollars into the state's economy. It creates employment and supports the tourism industry and many other sectors of the community. Brisbane stadiums are not the only place where sport has a beneficial effect on the economy. So far this year my electorate of Bundaberg has hosted the Australian Money Tournaments, the Bundaberg Tennis International and the Queensland touch football state cup. Also, hundreds of students travelled to Bundaberg for the primary schools netball championships and the Queensland independent schools confraternity cup, which happened to be won by the Deputy Speaker's—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the chamber. The member for Bundaberg has the call.

Mr DEMPSEY: I appreciate you calling everyone to order to particularly hear this part of my speech, Mr Deputy Speaker, because it was a magnificent win by St Brendan's from Yeppoon. That team is indicative of Queensland spirit. It was down and struggled and toiled hard throughout the whole competition. It was up against the mighty Ignatius Park College from Townsville who had only one try scored against them the whole carnival. St Brendan's came out and blasted them off the paddock. It just shows that mateship and sticking together are so very important, not just on the football field but in life generally. It is great to see so many younger people involved in sport, and I would love to see participation in sport across all levels and age groups increase to build stronger, healthier communities.

While my portfolios provide new challenges, as the member for Bundaberg I am still very much committed to ensuring that the existing concerns of Bundaberg residents are resolved. Unfortunately, five years after the crisis began, residents and staff are still waiting for a fresh start for the Bundaberg Base Hospital. I am fully committed to rebuilding community confidence in our health system, boosting staff morale and attracting quality doctors, nurses and health professionals to our wonderful city.

I look forward to working with the new Minister for Health to correct community concerns about the delivery of health care in Bundaberg. I also look forward to the delivery of the \$41.1 million hospital upgrade which was promised to the people of Bundaberg in 2006 and which was supposed to be delivered in early 2008. There is currently work underway, and the building site is very busy. It sends a message to the community of hope. There is an age-old saying that bricks and mortar are one thing, but the heart and soul of a community are its people. The people at that hospital—the staff, the patients and all of those people involved in the Bundaberg Base Hospital—certainly need support from this government.

While more than a year overdue, this upgrade will deliver more beds and improve the maternity, rehabilitation and emergency departments while also delivering a fresh start for the Bundaberg Hospital staff. For almost three years now, the hardworking hospital staff have been told that the upgrade will bring real change to the hospital. It will be a new start for this iconic heart to Bundaberg, and it is very fitting that the Bundaberg Base Hospital is situated in such a central location within this great city. For this reason, I urge the health minister and the Queensland government to ensure this upgrade remains a priority. The people of Bundaberg and the staff at that hospital need this fresh start. As I said before, hospitals are built of not just bricks and mortar but also people. We need to encourage more doctors, nurses and specialists to come to Bundaberg as a priority, and that will be a priority for me during the time I have the honour of being the representative for Bundaberg.

One of the most concerning findings from the Brennan report into the Bundaberg Base Hospital's emergency department regarded inaction by the department. Dr Brennan noted that most of the recommendations for change at the hospital had been made previously but real change had not occurred. I look forward to working with the new administration team at the Bundaberg Hospital to produce good outcomes for our community and our health providers. While talking about the hospital, I want to thank Kevin Hegarty, the regional manager, and Beth Norton, the district manager, for their help and assistance. Through good communication, we can get the best outcomes for the community of Bundaberg.

Bundaberg is a community that I am very proud to represent. It is the home of Bundaberg Rum, Bundaberg Brewed Drinks, Bert Hinkler and Bundaberg Sugar. We have a strong agricultural sector, a growing manufacturing industry and a variety of businesses which have so far helped to prevent Bundaberg from feeling the full impact of the global financial crisis. With low-cost housing, reasonably priced industrial land and skilled job seekers, Bundaberg is a city of opportunities for businesses. In recent years we have seen an increase in manufacturing businesses leaving congested South-East Queensland behind for the greener pastures of Bundaberg, and I will continue to promote decentralisation of the state and growth of regional areas.

However, one of the biggest threats to the growth of the regions is this state government's rushed fire sale and the introduction of the petrol tax. Queensland is a big state. The entire state of Victoria would fit into Queensland a number of times. While the size of Queensland has given us an array of country—from good farming land to rainforest, the outback and the coast—it has also given us plenty of road to travel on. For many residents living in regional Queensland, swapping their car for public transport or even a bicycle is simply not an option. Bundaberg residents who work nine to five cannot take the bus to work because there is simply no adequate bus service to get them there. Outside South-East Queensland, residents travel more distance to go to the shops, to work or even to access health care. Taxing Queensland residents 9.2c or more for every litre of fuel they use is going to hurt our community. Small businesses will see a sharp increase in their fuel budgets. They have already been hurt by the increase in vehicle registration costs, and now this state government will make life even harder. For a government that went to the polls on 21 March promising new jobs, this surprise tax will only place more hardship on business and see more jobs cut.

The jobs generated by the proposed upgrade and development of the Bundaberg port precinct are also at risk following the decision to sell, sell, sell the Port of Brisbane Corporation. While the Bundaberg port has been spared the chopping block, the port has been lumped in with the Gladstone Ports Corporation. The Gladstone port is predominantly heavy industry and minerals, so its direction and its vision for expansion are quite different from the Port of Brisbane Corporation's vision for Bundaberg. The proposed land use plan for the Bundaberg port precinct featured retail shops, cafes and restaurants, accommodation and commercial offices. These businesses would have regenerated the port precinct and surrounding community of Burnett Heads. They would have created more jobs in the region. But, as a result of the fire sale, this plan and the region have been left with nothing but more taxes.

In conclusion, as the people of Bundaberg's voice in Brisbane I will continue to work hard to ensure that much needed infrastructure is delivered on time and on budget for this region. Finally, I want to acknowledge the work of the Bundaberg Disability Sector Network and I want to thank the disability minister for her support in relation to this fine and hardworking group of people who go far beyond the job that they have to do.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—LNP) (7.39 pm): It is with much pleasure that I speak in this address-in-reply as a result of the 21 March election, when the people of Gregory again re-elected me to this House to be their representative. At the outset, I thank the people of the Gregory electorate. This afternoon I heard the member for Caloundra say that he represents all the people of his electorate regardless of their political persuasion. That is exactly how I represent my constituency in Gregory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I ask you to convey to the honourable the Speaker, John Mickel, my sincere congratulations to him on his elevation to the high office of Speaker of this parliament. In doing so, I want to recognise the professional way in which he is carrying out the responsibility of Speaker of this parliament. I also want to congratulate the Governor of Queensland, Penelope Wensley, on her speech at the opening of parliament. I believe a very important part of our Westminster system and our democratic process is the right to be able to exercise our vote with the stroke of a pen, not with the muzzle of a gun. I know we have some robust debates in this parliament, but at the end of the day we can talk to each other in an amicable way. I hope and pray that that never ceases to happen in Australia and especially in our state of Queensland.

I want to thank my family for the support that they have given me over the years. I think family is what life is all about. My kids are always there and my wife is there, too. I get great strength from my family. I was overwhelmed when my son, Michael, came home during the election campaign, along with my two daughters, Monique and Tanya, and our four little granddaughters. They are pretty important to me. I think our families are a reflection of what we are about as people who represent their constituencies. The most important natural resource we have is our children. I treasure mine and I know every member of this parliament who has children treasures theirs. For those who do not have children, I know the respect and admiration they have for people who have children.

I also want to thank my electorate staff. Carole Tanks at my Longreach office has been with me now for nearly 20 years. She is currently enjoying her long service leave and it will be her decision as to whether she returns to that position in my office at Longreach. I salute Carole for the wonderful work that she has done over that period. Mr Deputy Speaker, you know Carole and her family well from your time in Longreach. The loyalty of people like Carole must never be forgotten. Our electorate staff are at the front line. They are the ones who handle probably 95 per cent of the problems. As local members I do not know whether we even know about some of those problems a lot of the time.

I also want to thank Mark Maguire, who operates my Emerald office. He is a young man who has been with me now for about three years. It is not an easy job. With the redistribution of the Gregory electorate, a lot of the work of the Gregory electorate has gone to the eastern end. I also want to thank Sue Mitchell, who works with me at Parliament House. She gives me a hand to look after the operation at this end now that I have lost Charleville from my electorate. Sue's workload has increased along with my area of responsibility, especially in the area of police and corrective services. I thank Carole, Mark and Sue from the bottom of my heart for the loyalty that they extend to me.

I want to thank my campaign team, Lenore Johnson and her husband, Peter, for the efforts and the contributions that they have made to my campaign and also for the work that Lenore does in looking after a vast area of Queensland as the LNP representative on the state executive. Lenore is a lady who does a power job. I really salute her and thank her not only for supporting me but also for supporting this great party of which I am proud to be a member. I also want to thank my electorate council chairman, Mike Burns, in Emerald. Mike has been a wonderful support to me. He is an absolute champion bloke. They broke the mould when they made these people. I think we can all probably make that boast when we talk about our support staff in our electorates regardless of the side of the House we sit on. These people are champions for the cause. They stand proud of what we stand for. They certainly support us. I am truly overwhelmed by their support of me. I think it is only fitting that we recognise such people because, at the end of the day, we do not survive without them. I also want to thank all of those people

who worked throughout my electorate on 21 March manning booths from Woorabinda right through to Jundah, Windorah and down to Quilpie, my home town. I think it is important that we recognise the effort that these people make.

I also want to pay tribute to a former colleague of ours, the honourable Jim Pearce. After the redistribution last year, I now represent a great deal of the old Fitzroy electorate. I suppose you could say that Jim's electorate was devoured by the electorates of Gregory and Mirani and probably a little bit of it also went into the Rockhampton electorate—I do not know. Jim Pearce is a man of great decency and great integrity. Jim represented the Fitzroy electorate with distinction for nearly 19 years. He is a good mate of mine. I think he is a mate of everybody in this House who has ever worked with him. We know that last year Jim did not enjoy good health, but I have seen him around the House in recent times and I think it is fantastic to see him back on deck and enjoying life. I say to Jimmy—wherever he is—that I wish him every success for the future. I wish him good health and good luck in his future life as he pursues whatever career path he chooses.

Following last year's redistribution my electorate has moved further east into an area that is probably one of the wealth generators of Queensland. I see sitting in the House here tonight my colleague the member for Mount Isa. Her electorate and my electorate have many similarities. They are both large, remote electorates. She has taken on a fair amount of the areas that I used to represent, having taken over the areas that cover the Diamantina shire. I know she will look after those wonderful people who live there as well. My electorate has lost the Murweh shire to the Warrego electorate. That area is probably my heartland. It is very close to me and very sacred to me. I wish Robbie Dare and his team out at the Diamantina shire every success. I also wish Mayor Mark O'Brien of the Murweh shire at Charleville and his team every success. They are two wonderful blokes. They are champion blokes who are doing a really top job for the people they represent. They are passionate about representing their areas. I know they will achieve whatever they want to in life. They have proven that to date.

As I said, the Gregory electorate is a diverse electorate. One part of my electorate that I have not touched on yet that I am going to touch on—and I am going to elaborate on it, too—is the Aboriginal community of Woorabinda. Woorabinda is now a part of my electorate and I have to say that I am very proud to represent the people of Woorabinda. They supported me very well during the election campaign. I am grateful to Councillor Roderick Tobane and his team. His community supported me. I won the booth at Woorabinda, for which I am very grateful.

We have to make a lot of progress with Indigenous affairs in this state. I think I canvassed that yesterday in this House when I made my contribution to the debate on the Corrective Services and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I see the former minister for police and corrective services in the House. She knows my thoughts on these issues. I think her views and mine are probably similar.

That is the beautiful thing about this place: we represent people of all colours, of all creeds and from all walks of life. Our Indigenous brothers and sisters need a lot of extra representation at the moment. We have a long way to progress. We have to help them achieve the education and health standards and purpose in life that we enjoy. The one thing we have to remember is that as children of Christ or children of God, we cannot help what colour our skin is, but by God we do have a responsibility to each other whether they are the folk at Woorabinda, Windorah or some other part of my electorate or other part of this state. They are our responsibility. I say to the people of my electorate that I will represent them to the last ounce of sweat or blood regardless of who they support, whether it is me or somebody else.

The electorate of Gregory is a great electorate in many ways. It is a very diversified electorate covering just on 400,000 square kilometres, over 100,000-odd square kilometres smaller than the electorate of Mount Isa. Spare a thought for both the member for Mount Isa and me as we drive around this vast tract of Queensland. It is a long way around. Also think about the dollars that are generated in these areas.

One of the real issues in my electorate is that of road infrastructure and its deterioration. I see the Minister for Main Roads sitting in the House tonight. I say thankyou to him for coming to Winton last week in conjunction with his colleague the member for Mount Isa and I say thankyou for bringing forward that \$23 million on the Winton to Hughenden road to be spent over five years instead of 10 years. That is going to mean things not only to the Winton and Hughenden people but also to the whole of north-west Queensland. I also thank him for the \$1.2 million that he has given to the Barcaldine Regional Council. I know the honourable member for Mount Isa appreciates the \$1.1 million in Diamantina. All these moneys are certainly going to be of advantage and worth while to many people, not just the people in close proximity to those areas.

While I am on road infrastructure, the other road I want to talk about tonight is the Clermont-Alpha Road. We know of those massive coalmines that will be going in there, jacking out millions of tonnes of coal over the next few years with that 396 kilometres of standard gauge railway that will be built from there through to the port at Abbot Point at Bowen. I do not think any of us could comprehend the magnitude of these exercises and I do not think we can comprehend the magnitude of the dollars that are going to be generated in this part of Queensland over the next 40, 50, 60 or 100 years. The planning

has to be right and the infrastructure has to be right. I hope that in time the honourable minister will travel that road from Alpha or Tambo through to Clermont as he did the Winton to Hughenden road the other day to see how grave it is. It certainly needs a lot of dollars invested in it because of not only the mining industry but also the cattle industry, which is very important to that region.

Education and health are two of the main priorities in my electorate—and in every electorate. Remote education is something that is very sacred. I have a lot of remote students in my electorate who do not have the financial funding or support to be able to receive the good education that I would like to see them have. I hope we can find ways and means of getting them to boarding schools or other facilities around the state where they can complete their grade 12 education and have that equal footing with children in other parts of the state who take a grade 12 education for granted.

Health is an area of contention at all times. I hope we see the retention of the Flying Gynaecologist and the Flying Obstetrician service in the west forever. It is paramount to the health of women in our part of the world. Can I say what a wonderful service the mobile mammography unit for breast screening is. It is even more sophisticated with the digital service. It really benefits the ladies in the region who have to take advantage of this wonderful concept.

There are a couple of other issues of major concern such as racing. I believe we have been tipped on our head in relation to country racing. We have lost our annual race meeting in my home town of Quilpie this year. It is usually in the fourth week of September, but that meeting has been taken from us and given to Longreach, which has nine meetings. This is our one meeting of the year, the one social outlet of the year, where the people really go out and enjoy themselves. Honourable members know what country racing is all about and know its importance to those regions. I note the minister for tourism is in the House tonight. I hope he is able to help us make certain we see the reinstatement of that meeting next year.

We have seen similar situations such as in Emerald which usually holds a big Sunflower Festival over Easter. Its race meeting is always on the Saturday, which complements the big festival that is held every Easter. That meeting has been taken away from them and placed on the Sunday. I think Easter Sunday is one of the most sacred days. It is a family day and a lot of people would not want to go the races on that day. I think it is a situation where the powers that be have got it wrong. I urge the powers that be in Queensland racing to see the ills of their ways and return some of the sanity to the industry so that once again we can see the greatness of this industry in our rural and regional areas.

Police is another contentious area. We have wonderful police in our area and I am very honoured to be the shadow minister for police and corrective services in this state. I would certainly like to see the police advantaged where possible in terms of upgrading their technology and the properties they work from. The Hon. Judy Spence was in Longreach just before the election and opened the refurbished facility there for which we were truly grateful. We would have liked a new police station, but we are pretty happy with what she did.

Another contentious issue is rail services. Rail is something else that is sacred to our region. We have real problems at the moment with Cattletrain trying to get loaded cattle out of places like Winton and Quilpie and right across this state. I have had meetings with the honourable minister and she is adamant that there are going to be corrections there. I look forward to working with her, as do my western mayors, to ensure we get those much needed outcomes to get those cattle down here for processing whether it be on the eastern seaboard or here in the south-east corner. It is absolutely paramount that we see that return to its full glory so that Queensland Rail can again be proud of the only livestock-carrying operation in Australia. In our diversified state of Queensland we certainly need to ensure that that great enterprise and that great operation remains in full swing.

In the couple of minutes I have remaining I want to talk about biosecurity. A few years ago we saw the absolute wipe-out of the citrus industry at Emerald because of citrus canker. We saw the decimation of some 300,000 fruit trees and over a period probably 1,000 jobs in peak season when people go there to pick the fruit. That has been a real slug for the Central Highlands. When there are people who are passionate and caring such as the Pressler family and Maurie and Connie Iddles and Joe Cordoma it is absolutely paramount that we give them the support they need. We see with 2PH that the Pressler family have replanted that great orchard. It is probably one of the most sophisticated orchards in the southern hemisphere. It is worth a trip just to have a look at it. I congratulate John and Craig Pressler and their families on that great work.

At the end of the day we can talk all we like about biosecurity. I see the minister in the House this evening. I say to him that in relation to the clearing dip at Alpha I hope and pray that he is going to ensure that a stock inspector is located there to see that those cattle are scratched properly and are dipped properly so we do not see that tick line move. The most important thing to remember is that there will always be cowboys who will try to breach the deal. Biosecurity can absolutely destroy our agricultural industries and we do not want to see that happen.

We have seen a lot of hurt with the forced amalgamations of shires in Western Queensland and that hurt is still ongoing. Small places such as Isisford, Aramac, Muttaborra and Tambo that are on the highway do not feel the hurt like other places do, but they have been devalued. Tonight I say—and I

hope it is passed on to the minister for local government—that we need our share of support in trying to keep those communities viable and making certain that the services are kept there. As the Minister for Main Roads knows after our meeting with mayors recently, road funding is the most important way of securing jobs and maintaining a quality of life for the citizens of Western Queensland.

In closing, I thank the government for the ongoing operation of the subsidised air services to Western Queensland. That is certainly an artery of strength and prosperity for us.

Mr GIBSON (Gympie—LNP) (8.00 pm): It is an honour to rise in this address-in-reply to the speech the Governor, Penelope Wensley, gave in this parliament. May I place on the record what a fantastic job our Governor is doing. I had the privilege of attending the reception at Government House as part of Ekka week. She is conducting her engagement with the community in a way that is bringing her own style to the role.

The great Roman philosopher, statesman and political theorist Cicero once said, 'No-one was ever great without some portion of divine inspiration.' I find myself here in the 53rd Parliament in this chamber with 88 other MPs who indeed have great potential, not just because of their talents or abilities but because of that which inspires them from the divine. We may differ in our race, our religion or our family structure, but we have come here united in the view that the true riches of this state are found in the people of Queensland. We may differ in our life experiences, but we have come here united in our desire to be of service to the people who have elected us.

We may differ in our political ideologies, but we have come here united in our desire to contribute to a better Queensland. We may differ in the solutions we offer to the challenges that we face, but we have come here united in wanting the best for all Queenslanders. We may differ in our party membership, but it is clear to me that in this parliament there is more that unites us than divides us. All 51 government and 38 non-government members are united in their view of serving this parliament, and that is what makes this job one that is particularly enjoyable. In my speech today I would like to focus my remarks on three main areas: the election results, some reflections on my first term in parliament and then the Gympie electorate.

The 2009 election was indeed an historic occasion. Labor, seeking its fifth consecutive term, was being seen by the public in the light of scandals and mismanagement. But for the LNP the stakes were far higher. The new party had been formed just seven months before the election was called, and its success or failure was dependent on the 2009 election result. I congratulate the Premier on becoming the first female to be elected as Premier in any of the states of Australia. But the result was actually a lot closer than the ALP's 13-seat majority suggests. Election analyst Paul Tully identified that if a mere 2,892 voters in Queensland had changed their votes the result would have been an LNP government. The Premier must remember that, in an election where over 2.4 million votes were cast, winning government by fewer than 3,000 votes is no clear mandate.

For Lawrence Springborg and Mark McArdle and the whole LNP parliamentary team and candidates, to our party president and vice-president and all of the LNP membership, to Michael O'Dwyer and Mary Carroll and all of the secretariat: this result was nothing short of miraculous. For a new party just seven months old, to be within 3,000 votes of taking office shows that conservative politics is alive and well in Queensland and has a bright future.

Of course Labor has been undergoing a trend against it for the last three elections. We have seen in both the 2004 and 2006 elections and now the 2009 election a swing against the Labor Party at each election. That in itself is significant, because it shows that, after nearly 20 years of Labor in power in this state, the people of Queensland are growing tired—tired of the spin, tired of the mismanagement and tired of the scandal.

They realise that the problems we are facing today are problems that are caused by both the Goss and the Beattie governments. The challenges we face with water are a direct result of the failure of Labor governments to embrace water security alternatives which could have delivered water to South-East Queensland. The failures we face in our education system today are a direct result of the failure of Labor governments to invest in social infrastructure in our teachers and students and to invest in the physical infrastructure like upgrading our classrooms in a timely manner. It is clear that as you sow, so shall you reap. In Queensland we are now reaping what we have sowed over the past 20 years of Labor governments.

In every election there are winners and losers, and I would like to take a moment to recognise all who had the courage to put up their hand to seek public office. It is never easy, but our democracy is stronger because of their involvement. I had the good fortune of meeting with many of the LNP candidates, and I know that they worked with passion and enthusiasm. To those 11 new LNP members of this parliament here today, I say well done.

Of course there are those who did not return to the parliament, and I would like to thank two in particular. To John English, the former member for Redlands, who I had the good fortune to work with on the Public Accounts Committee: I always found you to be a genuine individual. Indeed, when he had to evict me from the chamber in his role as Deputy Speaker he sought me out and apologised for doing it,

but I knew at the time that I deserved it and his action was appropriate for the role that he was playing in the chair. I know that the electorate of Redlands will be equally well represented by its new member, Peter Dowling.

I also thank Bonny Barry, who labelled me affectionately as the 'Gympie rattler' when I sat on the backbench behind her. Whilst I did not share all the views that Bonny holds so passionately, her passion for helping women get into politics was infectious. I enjoyed being involved with her in the Campaign School for Women in Cairns last year. Her commitment to bringing women into politics from the South Pacific area is one that I am sure will pay dividends.

In this the 53rd Parliament there has already been talk of reform. We have seen that with our committee system, but more needs to be done. We should not be afraid to encourage debate on parliamentary and electoral reform. With our unicameral version of Westminster government here in Queensland, we must always ensure that accountability is a fundamental feature of good governance. Reform of the estimates committee process should be looked at, along with standing orders and of course fixed terms, and even a discussion should be occurring on the restoration of an upper house, although I note probably without any increase in the number of politicians.

I would also at this point like to congratulate the Speaker on his election and for the dignity and fairness that he has brought to this chamber in the time that he has occupied the chair. I would also like to pay recognition to the previous Speaker and acknowledge his support for the deaf. Right from the very beginning when I approached him to seek permission to give my maiden speech in sign language, I found him to be sincere and willing to help in whatever way he could with regard to deaf people.

As I look back over the previous term of this parliament I see that there were many highs and lows, and I would like to take a moment to reflect upon them. The previous parliament can be very proud of the fact that it was the first Australian parliament to give any MP an opportunity to give a speech in sign language, and I am grateful for the bipartisan support we have seen from all within this House for the deaf community. I recognise the efforts made by many MPs to learn sign language, and that has been well received by the broader deaf community. As a child of deaf parents, I know firsthand how disengaged they can be from the political process, and if my presence here in this parliament continues to raise awareness of the challenges deaf people and those with hearing impairments face then it is something I will continue to support and push with vigour.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my wife and family. What they do not tell you when you are running for public office and are then successful is the price that your family pays for the role that you take within the community. My children, Izaac and Hana, have been incredibly patient. When their father goes to buy the milk and it takes 20 minutes because he is stopped on the way to the dairy cabinet, stopped by the check-out assistant and then stopped in the car park, they have each time stood quietly by knowing that, even though they are bored to tears, this is Dad simply doing his job. I also thank my wife, who has taken on the role of not just wife and mother but also father to our children whilst I am away from home so often. To my darling: I could not fulfil my duties without you there and I thank you for that.

To the broader community: I appreciate the support that you have provided each and every time. To the LNP members in Gympie: thank you for your support. They have been a great team. They have willingly taken me into their fold and helped me understand the finer points of politicking and what needs to occur.

I particularly want to thank my campaign team and my campaign manager, Llew O'Brien. With his enthusiasm, he has taken on the role of that job particularly well. I also wish to thank my electorate office staff: Hayley, Kylie, Jess, Mathew and Sharon. At various stages, they have all been in the office and have worked particularly hard to ensure that the people of Gympie are well represented. I also thank the interns that I have been privileged to work with over the previous term. They have all provided valuable reports and assisted me in my duties here.

Another group that I wish to reflect upon and I made reference to in my maiden speech are the students at Gympie Special School. Gympie Special School is a school that focuses on outcomes for some of the most disadvantaged students we have in our education system. Unfortunately, the school continues to struggle for appropriate funding and relies heavily upon the dedication of the teachers, the parents and the broader community. These students face incredible challenges in their own lives and in obtaining an education, and those who support them and provide their time, talents and energies are some of the great champions that we have within our educational system. They are also some of the greatest champions we have within our community.

There have been some successes over the past 2½ years, and I am very proud and grateful to have been a small part of those success stories. In my maiden speech, I made reference to the Bruce Highway and how at that point in 2006 the RACQ had once again identified the Bruce Highway as being only worthy of a two-star rating in its AusRAP report and that the section between Cooroy and Curra was designated as one of the most deadliest sections of highway in Australia. Community outrage and media campaigns ensured that funding was made available in this federal budget of \$488 million to see

a section of the Bruce Highway completed. But one section is not enough. The Cooroy to Curra stretch of the Bruce Highway is still the deadliest stretch of road in Australia, and this whole stretch of road must be bypassed.

Unfortunately, federal governments of all persuasions have underfunded this section of highway for too long, and indeed too many lives have been lost. The \$488 million that was announced and is welcomed was exactly the same amount of money that was stripped out of commitments for this road back in 2007 when the Rudd government came to power. The harsh truth is that lives have been lost while federal governments have dillydallied for far too many years. No-one can argue that, no-one can doubt that. Families have been torn apart, people have been injured and goodbyes have been said to loved ones because we have not upgraded this road.

One of the problems of having both state and federal Labor governments is the cosy relationship that can develop and an unwillingness to rock the boat. This was clearly evident with the Bligh Labor government after the election of Kevin Rudd. Since 2007, various Main Roads ministers have been missing in action when it has come to the Bruce Highway. Whilst Queenslanders' lives have been put at risk on this stretch of road, state government Main Roads minister have been silent and too frightened to rock the boat.

When I came into this parliament, the then Premier, Peter Beattie, had announced in April 2006 that he was building—in his words, not mine—'a mega dam'. That would imply a dam bigger than our current dams that exist in South-East Queensland. Over the past 3½ years, this has been shown to be an absolute con job. It was a con job then when Peter Beattie announced it—aided and abetted by the then Deputy Premier and now Premier. In that time, we have seen the yield from Traveston drop to the same amount that is being released from the Somerset Dam every three days when all four pipes are open. That con job has been forced on the people of Queensland and has continued to be exposed day after day as delays occurred.

This project clearly does not stack up. The Coordinator-General has not signed off because he continues to have concerns. After three years of that announcement, the Mary Valley is in a slow state of death. It is as if the Mary Valley has been put on a life support machine and the government has neither the courage nor the commitment to either bring in a surgeon to restore the valley to its health or turn off the life support, so in its comatose state the Mary Valley continues to struggle. There is some good though that has come from the Traveston Crossing Dam and I wish to talk about the establishment of the Community Futures Task Force under Major General Peter Arnison. It has been a good move that has shown a great commitment to the community, and the Major General needs to be commended for his work in the community.

The idea of the task force was that it would be there not only for the lead-up to the dam announcement but also for about 12 months after the dam construction began. The community task force mandate now expires in December this year, and I call on the government today to extend the community task force until a decision is made regarding approval or otherwise for the dam. If approval is to be granted, allow the community task force to do its work for another 12 months beyond the approval date as was its original intention.

The third area I wish to address is the electorate of Gympie. It is a wonderful part of Queensland that I have the privilege to represent and call home. As Queensland celebrates 150 years of independence from the state of New South Wales, my community has a great sense of pride to be known as the town that saved Queensland. This is no grandiose claim but a recorded fact. In 1867 Queensland, which was then less than 10 years old, was facing bankruptcy. There was widespread unemployment and the banks were closing in Brisbane when James Nash discovered gold near the present site of Gympie. Overnight, the wealth from the goldfields led to Queensland's first gold rush and saved the state from potential disaster.

Gympie quickly grew and within months there were over 25,000 people on the goldfields. Within a year, a gold battery had been built. Gympie was proclaimed a municipality in 1880, it became a town a decade later and it was a city by 1905. The railway arrived in 1881, and in 1888 it became one of the few towns in Australia to have its own stock exchange. Goldmining continued in a large way until 1925. The city then became the most important regional centre for the area servicing the rich variety of agricultural activities which spread from the coast to the hinterland.

Gympie today is so much more than meets the eye. It is the centre of a wide and diverse economic base. Whether it be the Laminex particle board factory or the Nolan Meatworks, the Nestle factory in Gympie or the Mary Valley agricultural district, they all contribute to the layer of our community.

Tourism also plays a major role in our local economy, and I commend all those who have been involved from the Cooloolo Coast through to the Noosa hinterland for their great commitment to tourism activities. A special mention must always go to the Mary Valley Heritage Railway and the Woodworks Forestry and Timber Museum that provide opportunities to experience a part of our history.

Mr Schwarten: Thanks to me.

Mr GIBSON: I do wish to thank the minister because his efforts and the efforts of the Gympie Regional Council have kept the woodworks museum in community hands, and that is something we greatly appreciate.

In August every year—and this is happening next week—the Gympie Apex Club holds the annual Music Muster in the Amamoor State Forest. I proudly declare that I am a member of the Gympie Apex Club and it never ceases to amaze me that over 50 community groups and over 2,000 volunteers get together to turn that Amamoor State Forest into a tent city each year for music fans from all over Australia to flock to.

Mr Horan: Are you still under 40, or has Apex extended its age?

Mr GIBSON: Apex has extended its age to 45 so I have not yet been forced to retire. The muster cannot occur without community support, and it is the community of Gympie that steps up to the challenge every year. Over the years, the government has provided a great deal of support for this event and I encourage the government to continue to support it. There is a real risk of this event going interstate because of charges that have been laid upon it for the emergency services. We must keep in mind that, unlike other commercial events or music festivals, this is run by a not-for-profit community based group and all of the funds go back to charities and community groups Australia-wide.

One of the other great things the city of Gympie has is the Heart of Gold International Film Festival. This year the festival screened over 100 Australian premieres and 10 world premieres of films that made you laugh or cry, that gave you hope and inspired you to do more or that got you focused back on what is really important, each other. To all the members of the board and the hardworking volunteers, thank you for showing us films that make a positive contribution to the world.

This brings me back to Cicero and the saying, 'No-one was ever great without some portion of divine inspiration.' I am an optimist by nature. I am blessed to be a father and a husband with a companion who is my eternal soul mate. I always try to recognise within everyone that we are brothers and sisters united in a global family. May we all seek out divine inspiration each day as we fulfil our duties to the people of Queensland.

Hon. TS MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland) (8.19 pm): The state election highlighted the fact that people across the state still believe Labor is the only option for a stable government in Queensland. The Bligh government is intent on creating a diverse economy in difficult fiscal circumstances—an economy that is powered by bright ideas, new technologies and new science. We are a government that is committed to protecting the lifestyle of Queenslanders, with a focus on preserving the environment through research and development and the latest science. We want to make Queensland Australia's healthiest people, with an emphasis on exercise and fresh food.

The Bligh government has invested heavily in the future by delivering world-class education and training programs. This will ensure everyone in the state has access to schools, whether they be primary, secondary or tertiary or other education programs like apprenticeships and traineeships. A hallmark of the Bligh government's success at the last election was our determination to protect jobs while continuing to develop infrastructure across the state. Projects this government has started include roads, schools, hospitals and other major infrastructure. Having been re-elected, the Bligh government will now oversee the completion of these major projects.

I want to thank the people of Mackay—a community which re-elected me and which continues to put its faith in me and the Bligh Labor government. This will be my 14th year representing the people of Mackay, and I want to express my gratitude to those who have given me and the Labor government another three years to finish what we have started. It is an honour and a privilege to know that I have the support of the Mackay electorate while standing before this House. I thoroughly enjoy working with the Mackay community. I have lost none of my drive and passion to achieve significant results for those who live in and around Mackay.

During the election campaign, I urged voters in the Mackay region to re-elect me to ensure people in the region were represented by an experienced member of the Labor Party who would deliver significant outcomes to the community. I mentioned earlier that the Bligh government is intent on developing and delivering new or redeveloped schools, hospitals and major infrastructure like bridges across Queensland. The situation is no different in Mackay. The Bligh government has a comprehensive plan for education in the Mackay region, and in the next three years will invest more than \$8 million. More than \$2 million was spent on the early years centre, which was opened on 4 December. The early years centre, which is known as the Shakespeare Child and Family Centre, is located on the site of the former Victoria Park State Preschool.

The centre provides education and care services, family support and health services plus referrals to specialists or intensive support services where required. The Shakespeare Child and Family Centre is one of the first of the early childhood education and care centres to start operating in

Queensland. More than \$5 million in funding has been allocated to the Mackay region under the government's State Schools of Tomorrow program. The funding will be used to upgrade 32 classrooms in the Fitzgerald, Mackay Central and Victoria Park state schools.

Under the State Schools of Tomorrow program, eight science bases at Mackay North and Mackay State High will be refurbished, and the library at Mackay State High will also be upgraded. Almost \$700,000 will be provided for additional assistance at schools in the Mackay region. The funding will be used for painting and upgrading of floors, gutters and downpipes and other associated external works. The Bligh government is spending \$1.8 million to establish a new kindergarten at Beaconsfield Primary School. The kindergarten is expected to open in 2010.

The funding is part of the government's \$32 million commitment to opening 18 new kindergartens along with upgrading two others across Queensland over the next two years. In 2008-09 I secured funding of \$11.9 million to construct and upgrade public housing and land, and an additional \$2.7 million towards affordable rental accommodation. I would like to thank my mate and colleague the member for Rockhampton for the support that he has given in addressing the issue of homelessness in Mackay. Not only that, the member for Rockhampton has been a great advocate for affordable housing and dealing with homelessness on the national stage. It was only with the election of the Rudd government that a federal government turned its attention to the real issues that impact on people of lesser means in the need for housing.

Last year the Bligh government announced \$405 million to redevelop the Mackay Base Hospital. It is interesting going back a couple of elections that we were the only party which went to the people saying we would commit ourselves to a clinical services plan from which we would develop a master plan. The history of the Mackay Base Hospital is that the Labor government committed to a two-stage process of upgrading the hospital. I notice my colleague the member for Toowoomba South has just entered the chamber. When he was health minister the second stage was kyboshed. The \$80 million that was allocated for that project was redirected to the Toowoomba Hospital. The honourable member for Toowoomba South probably did us a favour in the longer term, because out of that we will get a brand-new hospital and the bed capacity will increase from 163 to 318.

The redeveloped hospital will provide additional services. There will be a dedicated coronary care unit, expansion of renal support services, day oncology, dental services and delivery suites. Once completed, the new Mackay Base Hospital will be a state-of-the-art facility with the latest in technologies. I believe at the end of the day it will help us to attract and retain the medical profession in the Mackay region. It is a great partnership with Queensland Health and James Cook University. James Cook University will have facilities on the Mackay campus which will in the longer term provide not only doctors and specialists for regional people who live in the north and in rural areas but also in other allied health areas.

I now turn to road infrastructure and particularly bridges. In the last term of government I secured \$128 million in funding for the Forgan Bridge duplication, which is a signature project for Main Roads in the Mackay-Whitsunday region. My colleague the member for Thuringowa was recently in Mackay inspecting the duplication of the Forgan Bridge. It is the largest project of its kind undertaken in the region, and it will certainly reshape a major entrance to the central business district. It is replacing the 72-year-old existing Forgan Bridge. It will also improve congestion on the busy commuter route while also improving the safety and network efficiency.

The existing Forgan Bridge is a two-lane concrete structure about 450 metres long and currently carries about 30,000 vehicles per day. The new bridge will be a four-lane structure and is expected to carry up to 40,000 vehicles a day over the next 25 years. The Forgan Bridge replacement and the duplication project extend beyond construction of the bridge, with a package of roadworks to ease congestion. The package includes turning Barnes Creek Road from two lanes into four lanes and construction of a new six-lane bridge over Barnes Creek.

To continue on the topic of bridges, the new \$42 million Hospital Bridge was officially opened on 26 April, and the community of Mackay is waiting with anticipation on the naming of this new bridge. The minister encouraged people to put submissions forward. My colleague the member for Whitsunday and other prominent Mackay people were on that selection committee that has made recommendations to the minister. We are still waiting for that advice. During the opening of the new bridge we had a big family day. There were thousands of people who turned up to celebrate the opening.

Mr Wallace: It was a good day.

Mr MULHERIN: It was a great day. It was good to get the future leaders of Mackay—the young children who turned up—to cut the ribbon rather than the normal suspects such as politicians and local mayors. I know the kids got a real hoot out of that.

The completion of Mackay Hospital Bridge was really a pivotal moment in the transport history of Mackay. Replacing the existing Hospital Bridge was critical to help prepare the road network for the future growth of the Mackay region. These new bridges are part of the Bligh government's ongoing commitment to meeting the road infrastructure needs of communities in the Mackay, Whitsunday and

Bowen Basin region. The bridge complements the \$17 million duplication of Mackay-Bucasia Road, which was recently opened by the main roads minister and the member for Whitsunday, and the \$14.2 million Joint Levee Road. This will certainly assist us in providing some flood immunity to residents who live in the North Mackay region.

I recognise that this has been a controversial project. It has removed some marine habitat. With an offset policy we have been able to improve the marine habitats in other parts of the Mackay region. At the time when this project was first mooted the member for Mirani, Ted Malone, and I were the lone voices in the community on this. I want to place on record my appreciation to the member for Mirani for his support in this project. At the time we did not have a hardworking member like the current member for Whitsunday. I am sure that she would have been there with the member for Mirani and me supporting this bridge. She has been a great supporter of it since her election.

The replacement of the Hospital Bridge will take traffic away from the front of the Mackay Base Hospital and will provide safer access for emergency services and a more peaceful environment for patients. The new bridge is 550 metres long. I think it will serve the community of Mackay for decades to come.

I would also add that the state government contributed in excess of \$6 million to Bluewater Lagoon, a project which is part of the Q150 Legacy Infrastructure Program. It was the second biggest grant to a council in Queensland. This program has assisted local councils create a long-lasting legacy to commemorate 150 years since our separation from New South Wales.

The Queensland government provided \$29 million in funding for the Mackay Convention Centre and \$5 million towards the construction of Bluewater Lagoon, which is a very popular place for residents and visitors to our fair city during the summer months. We are also providing a new boat ramp at East Point which will be funded during this term.

As a long-serving member from Mackay, I want to support a safe and caring community and continue to push for measures to increase the safety of Mackay residents, including the appointment of eight new police officers. The Bligh government is also intent on ensuring that Queenslanders have access to adequate sporting facilities to give our children and adults the opportunity to stay fit and healthy. Recently we announced funding in excess of \$2.2 million for Harrup Park Country Club, the home of cricket in Mackay, and South Suburban Bowls Club for a covered area.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank members of my campaign team who saw me re-elected. I would like to acknowledge my campaign director, Andrea Pozza, campaign members Wendy Clements, Greg Thomson, Pat Noonan and Frank Gilbert, and all those people who helped out on the day. I would also like to acknowledge the support I have been given by my electorate staff—Mrs Kerry Bonaventura and Mrs Zoe Pozza—who continue to provide help to the community of Mackay when I am away on ministerial duties.

Finally, I would like to place on record my appreciation, thanks and love to my caring family. My wife, Erin, does a wonderful job with our three young children, Declan, Liam and Rory. As a father of three young boys I am not home often enough. I really miss those defining moments. I know that, as the member for Gympie said, Erin plays the role of both father and mother. I think I was the luckiest mug in the world when I met Erin many years ago. It is really tough for Erin. Not only does she provide wonderful care and support to our three young boys; we also have her mum living with us. She has failing health. Erin does such a wonderful job and I love her dearly.

I would also like to thank my mum and dad for the wonderful support and encouragement they have given over time. I am very lucky that I have got parents like Leo and Helen, who not only help Erin and the kids but also provide company and support to my mother-in-law, Rose. I think we can be really blessed with our families. I come from one of those big extended Irish Catholic families where family is really important. I am eternally grateful for the love, support and warmth given to me by family.

Mr NICHOLLS (Clayfield—LNP) (8.36 pm): It is an honour to represent the electors of the seat of Clayfield in this the 53rd Parliament of Queensland. I am of course again grateful for and humbled by the support I received in my efforts to be re-elected. I also express my appreciation to Her Excellency the Governor for her gracious attendance at the opening of parliament. It is indeed a pity that the government cannot get its act together sufficiently in order to complete the address-in-reply in a timely fashion and with the respect due to the institutions of this state and Her Excellency the Governor. It is indeed remarkable that the most urgent business of the government when parliament first returned was to pay off the debts to the Greens that saw it get re-elected by shamelessly ramming through the antifarmer, antijobs, tree-clearing legislation in a guillotined debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker, would you pass on to the Speaker my congratulations on his election. I must say that the conduct of the business of the House has been both vigorous yet well controlled under his guidance. I say this with some experience as I sit next to the member for Gregory, who, as you may know, is something of an expert on all aspects of standing orders 252 and 253 and is a source of ongoing support and advice to the Speaker particularly during question time.

The member for Cook I am sure appreciated the guidance in the early sessions when he had some difficulty understanding the standing orders so far as they relate to questions.

Mr Watt interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: As Deputy Speaker one would have thought that he might have had more than a passing acquaintance with the standing orders. But obviously he did require that additional guidance early in the piece before he fully exercised his powers in the role.

I also congratulate all the new members who join the 53rd parliament. The member for Everton will be surprised to hear that. After his gracious contribution to the debate so far I thought I would extend the hand of friendship to him and say: welcome along. I hope you enjoy the time you are here. It was a close one out there in Everton, I believe. I think it might be closer next time round.

In particular, I welcome the 11 new members of the LNP and I must say what an outstanding crew they are and it is a pleasure to have them on board to provide some more sense and balance to this House in terms of the members that they have replaced. I hope that those new members of the LNP—in fact, I hope all members of this place—find the job as interesting, as challenging, as daunting and ultimately as fulfilling as the rest of us do. I listened carefully to many of the maiden speeches delivered by members from both sides and it is indeed a representative and diverse parliament in which we find ourselves in the 53rd Parliament. I also congratulate the member for Surfers Paradise on his election as leader of the LNP and opposition leader and thank him for the opportunity to play a role as the shadow Treasurer in the opposition.

In my first speech in this place in October 2006 I told of the people that I had met while I was out doorknocking—the unsung heroes of the electorate of Clayfield who go about their business each day with little or no expectation of acknowledgement or great reward. They are satisfied with knowing they are providing for themselves and their families and contributing to the diversity and makeup of their community. I also pointed out that many of those who I met felt that they were being let down by the government, that bureaucratic process was more important than effective outcomes and that spin was more important than substance.

No better example of this on the north side of Brisbane was the decision by the government to close the Royal Children's Hospital at Herston. I want to make it clear that I opposed the closure of the Royal Children's Hospital at Herston and the transfer of its significant and well-established medical facilities to the Mater Hill site at South Brisbane. In no way does this impugn the abilities of the doctors, nurses and other health professionals at the Mater Hospital. In fact, my own three children were all born in the maternity wards at Mater Mothers'. However, it seems crazy to shut down an existing paediatric centre of health excellence and to transfer all of its facilities to the south side of Brisbane when a better alternative was available.

Let me declare that I have more than a passing interest in this matter. As well as having used the facilities at the Royal Children's and the Royal Brisbane and having a brother-in-law who is a registrar at the Royal Brisbane campus, there is also a lengthy family connection. My wife's paternal grandfather, Dr Alex Paterson, was the superintendent at the Brisbane Children's Hospital during the 1930s and in fact there is a ward at the hospital named after him. My father-in-law, Dr Robert Paterson, as well as having served as a registrar at the hospital in his younger days, also spent many years as a visiting medical officer in his speciality of radiology. He not only served patients in A&E; he taught registrars for many years there. Following his death in 2003, the emergency imaging ward at the Royal Brisbane Hospital was named after him.

But over and above these connections, it was the community's connection with the Royal Children's Hospital that struck me as the most apparent during the election campaign and which saw the backlash and the changing of votes against a government that was so heartless and cruel it could not care that it was taking away a much loved and valued and needed facility on the north side of Brisbane. There is no way that residents believe that the removing of the children's hospital services from the north side of Brisbane and locating them on the south side will provide them with any better paediatric health outcomes.

Mr Watt interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: The member for Everton needs to listen to this, because this is the thing that affected him in his electorate. There was an 11 per cent swing against him because he refused to listen to the people on the north side of Brisbane when they said, 'We don't want this hospital closed.' The member for Aspley was sacrificed on the ego of the Premier who was not prepared to change her mind, who was not prepared to listen to the voters, to the people and to the residents on the north side of Brisbane. There is no way that they believed that moving that health service to the south side would provide them with better health care for their kids. Many question the distance to be travelled and the convenience of being able to move from the north side to the south side in order to seek specialist paediatric medical care or indeed emergency medical care with the full suite of services necessary to provide comprehensive health services for children. The closure of the Royal Children's Hospital continues to be a source of concern and frustration for residents in the electorate of Clayfield and residents on the north side of Brisbane.

Since the last election in 2006 the boundaries of the electorate of Clayfield have changed. In fact, the seat has gone from being nominally the third most marginal Labor seat in the state with a 0.2 per cent margin to now being marginally better at 56½ per cent in favour of the LNP. The electorate now encompasses the suburbs of Lutwyche and Kedron to the north and north-west of the old boundaries, and it was great to be able to visit these new areas and to welcome the residents to the seat of Clayfield. Of course, the federal Treasurer was greatly pleased to be able to have some decent representation at long last at a state level, and he joins other notable ALP constituents such as Anthony Chisholm and Cameron and Lauren Milner who now will be benefiting from at least some decent representation. And then of course the councillor for Inala on the western side of Brisbane was a constituent of mine until his recent relocation in March for electoral reasons to the west side of the city. So they of course join many LNP representatives and members who live in Clayfield and enjoy the benefit of strong, solid representation.

One particularly pleasing part of the change to the boundaries is the inclusion of two more schools in the electorate. I particularly welcome the opportunity to represent the Kedron State School and Kedron State High. While I previously represented Kedron High as a councillor, it was just out of the Clayfield state seat boundary. Both schools do a great job and Kedron High has a great academic reputation as well as an outstanding music program that sees many of its students take up positions at the Queensland Conservatorium. In this respect, they join other schools in my electorate such as Ascot State School, Eagle Junction State School, Hamilton State School, Hendra State School, Nundah State School, Woolloowin State School, Aviation High, Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Primary School, St Joseph's Primary School, St Margaret's Anglican Girls School, St Agatha's Primary School, St Rita's College and Clayfield College. I particularly make mention of Eagle Junction State School where my three children attend and also acknowledge Mr Ken Falvey, the principal of that school since 1990. Ken is currently on long service leave but has signalled his intention to retire at the end of this year after 20 years as principal at Eagle Junction. I think it is fair to say that Ken and I are the two longest current serving members of the Eagle Junction P&C association. I have been a member there for 10 years and Ken has been there of course since the beginning of his tenure.

Other local issues in and around the electorate involve most particularly the construction of the Airport Link tunnel. It is amazing what a difference 2½ years makes! Only 2½ years ago the then sitting Labor member for Clayfield was quietly contributing to the anti tunnel campaign. While she could not quite come out and say it, she really did not want to be supporting the tunnel and she never felt comfortable with the proposal. At those public meetings where she did manage to turn up, she was lukewarm at best in her support and often attempted to undermine the project. Some 2½ years later, my Labor opponent sought to associate himself with both Airport Link and the airport roundabout works in an effort to buy himself popularity. What is interesting is that neither he nor his supporters had been heard of in the prior 2½ years when the reality of the need for Airport Link had to be discussed at community groups, P&C meetings, public meetings and various other forums. In fact, it was often a very lonely place to be at the front of a crowd to explain the necessity for the Airport Link.

Let me make it quite clear that I have supported Airport Link since it was proposed by the Brisbane City Council, of which I was then a member, led by Councillor Campbell Newman. I have spoken strongly for the Airport Link as a necessary part of dealing with transport and traffic congestion on the north side of Brisbane. I have also for many years now been an advocate of an upgrade to the airport roundabout located on the Gateway Motorway next to Nudgee Road and in fact to fix the abomination that it became under the former transport minister, the member for Lytton, when he put his traffic lights in and slowed everything down even more.

I have always said that any such project needs to properly and fully take into account the needs and concerns of the local community if it is to be effective. The local community needs to be dealt with honestly, fairly and transparently if they are to support these projects. In recent months it has become apparent that this process of consultation and fair and honest dealing has not been as good it should have been. This has been exacerbated by the recent request for a project change at Woolloowin. This will see a property owned by the main roads department in the middle of a residential area turned into a construction site surmounted by a 17-metre-high workshed with 85 truck movements a day for a period of up to three years. I have opposed this project change not out of any opposition to the Airport Link project but out of an adherence to fundamental principles—in particular the principle that the risk of a project in a PPP is borne by the successful proponent. That things may not have turned out exactly as that proponent had hoped or thought or envisaged is not an excuse for the risk to be transferred back to the community and for that community to carry the can. It is incumbent on this government in this term not to wash its hands of this issue but to work to make sure local residents do not wear the brunt of its poor planning and execution of this project.

It is also becoming increasingly obvious that better and more communication needs to be undertaken by the project team. Members of the community in and around Kedron are most substantially affected and have borne with considerable grace the restriction on access, the additional noise, dust, loss of services and inability to access their properties, as well as the inconvenience of major construction works. However, they are reaching the end of their tether. The continual unexplained problems, brush-offs and a lack of communication are rapidly harming this project.

I have made my views on this matter known to the proponents of the project, the project owner, BrisConnections, as well as the contractor, Thiess John Holland. Members of the community can rest assured that I will continue to pursue this matter to ensure this project is completed in a timely and efficient fashion but with due and full regard for members of the Woollooin community. No longer is it good enough to just turn up with a bulldozer and start work. Times have changed and so must the way in which these projects are handled.

I turn now to the wider issues of the election campaign. We now know why the Premier rushed to hold an election six months early. If the parliament had sat for its full term we would now be in the second week of an election campaign. And how different things would have been. The full extent of Labor's deceit has only become apparent since 21 March this year. The full extent of Queensland's budgetary woes only became apparent when the budget was delivered in June.

The Premier, the Treasurer and the Labor Party, aided and abetted in full by their union mates, told the people of Queensland that they would not be imposing a fuel tax that would add 9.2c to the cost of every litre of petrol that they purchased. The Premier and the Treasurer, aided and abetted by their union mates, gave assurances that there were no plans for asset sales. And, of course, the Premier promised 100,000 new jobs for 100,000 breadwinners. It was not an aim, not an objective and not a target but 100,000 new jobs for 100,000 breadwinners guaranteed—not working one hour a week but full-time jobs to pay the rent, to pay the mortgage, to put food on the table, to feed and clothe the kids, to take a holiday; to, in short, have a life.

Since then the promises have been broken and the deceit and the lies have been exposed to Queenslanders for what they were, and it is Queenslanders who are paying the price. It was nothing but short-term populism and the embodiment of Graham Richardson's famous motto 'whatever it takes'—the Labor Party mantra: 'whatever is necessary to get ourselves back in and to make sure that we control the levers'.

Where do we find ourselves now? Queenslanders now know, much to their regret and disadvantage, that the cost of running a car in Queensland is the most expensive of any state in Australia. Registration fees have gone up by between 17 and 21 per cent. Fuel prices have skyrocketed. Where, on average, fuel in Brisbane was the cheapest of any capital city in Australia, as of last Saturday in Brisbane we are now, on average, the most expensive capital city in which to fill up the tank.

In a hodgepodge of policy prescriptions, the government has rushed into a fire sale of assets in order to plug Queensland's burgeoning debt black hole—a black hole that in this year's budget papers has been projected to blow out to \$85.5 billion by 2013. By that time, if this figure is reached, the cost in interest will be something like \$5.2 billion alone—and that is interest only; there is no principal being repaid.

More than 10 per cent of the state's income will be used to pay overseas bankers' interest and deficits will continue. In 2011-12 we will reach a nadir deficit of more than \$3 billion on the operating balance, with no end in sight and with the Treasurer having admitted that in 10 years the total forecast deficit will be \$18 billion. We have seen a government that has wasted the good times. The rivers of gold from the resources boom and the property boom that flowed into this state's coffers and the GST that they took as fast as they could from the Howard government have been wasted. Queensland went bust in a boom and is now entering a period of structural deficit—that is, annual deficits for as far as can reasonably be reliably predicted.

We heard the other great deceit practised on Queenslanders—that is, we were going to have only a temporary deficit. We found out the deceit of that particular statement during the estimates hearings, when the Treasurer said that he does not regard 10 years as a temporary deficit. But that is what he is predicting. The state's AAA credit rating has been downgraded by all the major rating agencies. The government has started a fire sale of assets in a desperate attempt to fill the budget black hole without any endorsement from the electorate at all, directly in contravention of assurances to the electorate. Is it any wonder that 58 per cent of voters believe that Anna Bligh lied to them? Is it any wonder that this government struggles with allegations of cronyism and corruption? More than anything else, this Premier is responsible for the low regard in which her government is now held.

Of course, we now have the great deceit about jobs. The great jobs promise of 100,000 new jobs for 100,000 breadwinners has been discredited already. Full-time employment is on the decline, with 40,000 fewer people in full-time employment now than a year ago, 24,000 full-time jobs have been lost since the election in April and there are budget projections of unemployment reaching 7.2 per cent. We may well wonder what the people of Queensland would have decided had an election been held in two Saturdays time, had the full facts been placed before them, had this government not manipulated the system and had the Premier and Treasurer been fully truthful to the electorate. And that is not to mention the ALP's nasty, negative, dishonest advertising campaign and the shameful campaign by their union mates.

I make mention of those members of the LNP who led the charge on our side in that election campaign. I pay particular tribute to the member for Southern Downs and the member for Caloundra—a leadership team that was forged during the amalgamation of both parties last year. Both Lawrence and

Mark showed incredible resilience, determination and force of character. Despite the cheap, nasty and oftentimes untrue advertising that was dreamt up by the propaganda meisters working in the smoky back rooms of trades hall, both Lawrence and Mark displayed the characteristic attributes of leadership that is so sorely lacking in Queensland under Labor. Not for them was the cheap refuge of slander and salaciousness; rather it was the promotion of policy and substance and, most importantly, honesty—honesty that this government is serially incapable of demonstrating.

I thank my campaign chairman, Daryl Fennel, who has been a friend and supporter; my campaign treasurer, Darren Barlow; and the various members of my team. But most particularly I want to thank my electorate officer, Ros Cutting, and her assistant, Robyn Maguire. I also acknowledge the help of Councillor David McLaughlin and his wife, Nicole. Finally, as always, I would like to thank my wife, Mary. Mary has persevered with me for 10 years and has done all the hard yards. To Mary: from the bottom of my heart and with all my love I say thank you. I thank my three kids for their perseverance while Dad is often away, and I thank my parents, Barbara and Peter Nicholls, who are, of course, the best judges of the party games program and invariably find that I beat the Treasurer every Friday morning.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—LNP) (8.56 pm): 21 March was a black day for Queensland. 21 March was the day that this Labor government went to the people of Queensland nearly six months early to an election that they knew they had to have before the truth became known to the people of Queensland. It is nearly five months ago now that we went to an election and in that five months the people of Queensland have come to regret the decision that they made on 21 March.

Five months later we are completing an address-in-reply that should have been completed in the first week of this parliament. That in itself is another example of the mismanagement of this Labor government. The fact that we are completing this address-in-reply five months after the election is itself another indication, if the people of Queensland needed further indications, that this Labor Party government could not run a chook raffle. It cannot run this parliament and it has become patently obvious to the people of Queensland that it cannot run this great state.

As the member for Clayfield indicated, we should be in the middle of an election campaign now. If the government and the Premier had been honest with the people of Queensland, had served their full term and had gone to the people of Queensland when the election was due, we would have been in the middle of an election campaign now. What a different result it would have been had the people of Queensland known about the horrendous financial position the state was in. What a different result it would have been had the Premier been honest with the people of Queensland and told the people, who should have been voting in two Saturdays time, about the massive sale of state owned assets that was necessary to keep the state's financial situation in check.

What a difference it would have made if the people of Queensland had known that for the first time in Queensland history they would be paying a fuel tax that the last coalition government made sure Queenslanders did not pay. One of the great legacies of the last Queensland government was the fact that we were able to avoid that fuel tax, but it was introduced immediately after the election. What a different Queensland we would have if the people of Queensland had known those facts before they went to an election or if they had the chance to vote on the performance of this government in two Saturdays time.

As we complete this debate in this parliament, there are hundreds of thousands of Queenslanders—there are probably millions of Queenslanders—who are sitting in their homes tonight saying, 'If only we knew then what we know now. If only we knew when we voted on 21 March just what a financial mess this state was in. If only we knew just how horrendous that financial situation was that has moved the Labor government to sell such icons as Queensland Rail.' If only they knew that all along the reason for going to an election early was to ensure that the people of Queensland did not know the real facts before they had a chance to cast their ballot. If only they knew that it was a strategy that was based on sheer dishonesty and deceit, a strategy that depended on the dishonesty and the deceit of the Premier during the election campaign and a strategy that depended on the dishonesty and the deceit of a state government to get itself re-elected before the true situation was known.

However, those Queenslanders will not forget. They will not forget the extent to which they were deceived, they will not forget the extent to which this government was dishonest and they especially will not forget the extent to which the Premier was dishonest. The fact that this debate is being held some five months after that election gives us an opportunity to reflect on some of the things that have transpired since the election, and the events that have transpired since the election indicate the true character of this government. The events that have transpired in that five months are instructive to the people of Queensland about the government that was re-elected in such dishonest and deceitful circumstances.

I want to talk about a series of issues that affects groups of people in my electorate which represent, if you like, the extent to which this government has disappointed and has let down so many hundreds of thousands of Queenslanders. Every member of this House will well recall that the very first piece of legislation that this House had to consider after the election—before we had even paid due respect to the Governor, before we were even able to reply to the speech that the Governor made on

behalf of the new government—was one that set out to repay the dirty little preference deal that the government had done with the green movement. That was the dirty little preference deal that saw an outrageous impact on so many landholders right across the state—so many landholders who had in good faith accepted the harsh imposition of the Vegetation Management Act in 2006 and who had in good faith accepted that the government was prepared to work with them under the new regime. They suddenly found themselves slogged with a further restriction—a restriction that continues today. The three-month moratorium on the clearing of so-called endangered regrowth has now become a six-month moratorium and it continues to place an enormous imposition on a great many of my constituents. It does so from a philosophical base that is grossly dishonest, grossly deceitful and was the product of that dirty little preference deal that was done with the green movement.

The other group of people in my electorate who are particularly disaffected as we stand here tonight five months after the last state election are the schoolteachers. In the weeks that I have travelled around my electorate I have been amazed at the degree of anger that the teaching profession has towards this re-elected government. The schoolteachers in my electorate are an admirable bunch of people. They work in difficult situations in a range of schools in many small communities in isolated situations. I have the somewhat dubious honour of having the most schools in my electorate of any member in this House. I am not sure how my electorate staff established that, but they established that my electorate has the largest number of schools, and every one of those schools has dedicated teachers. They range from bigger schools of 500 or 600 students down to the small schools of 10 or 12 students.

Without exception, the people who work in those schools as teachers are furious with the treatment that they have received from this Labor government, and so they should be. It is totally unacceptable that Queensland teachers, wherever they work, are paid less than their equivalents in other states. It is especially unacceptable when those teachers work in difficult situations such as some of the small schools in disadvantaged communities in my electorate where the workload on the teachers is especially harsh because of the socioeconomic situation of the families of so many of their students. The fact that those teachers work in those isolated small communities with problem students and get paid less than teachers who work in Sydney or Melbourne is the cause of an anger that has developed within the teaching community for which this government will pay a high price. When I travel around my electorate to places such as Proston, Mundubbera, Murgon, Kilkivan, Widgee, Woolooga and all those little schools that I visit on a regular basis I have been particularly struck by the extent of the anger that the teaching community currently feels for the way that they have been deceived and betrayed by this Labor government.

The other group of people who are particularly angry with the treatment they have received from this Labor government since the election are those men and women who serve in the local governments that are the basis of so many of my communities. Those local governments have to deal with the totally unacceptable situation of having the amount of money that they receive from the state government cut on the eve of bringing down their budgets. On the very day that a number of councils were presenting their budgets, they had \$200,000 and \$300,000 cut from the amount of money that they were budgeting to receive from the state government. What an intolerable situation those people were placed in; what an intolerable situation they had to deal with! They had to go to their local communities and try to rearrange their budgets to an extent that could somehow make up for a cut of \$200,000 or \$300,000 in funding which they had been promised and which they had written into their receipts for the coming year, simply because this government was finally forced to admit the extent to which it was broke. It was finally forced to confront the extent of its financial mismanagement and it sought to deal with the result of that financial mismanagement by passing the consequences on to local government. It was a despicable transfer of responsibility and it is something that those local governments will not forget and the people who live in those small communities will not forget.

The election on 21 March was contested on new electoral boundaries. Those new electoral boundaries extended the electorate of Callide to the west and to the east. The electorate of Callide took in more of that area of Central Queensland that is currently experiencing severe development pressure as the coal seam gas industry, which has the potential to be an enormous industry for the whole of the state, develops throughout the southern Bowen Basin and the northern Surat Basin. Much of the development pressure that is associated with that industry is now within my electorate.

It behoves me to make it clear to the House at every opportunity that, while the coal seam gas industry has enormous potential to be a great economic boost to the people of Queensland generally, it does have severe impacts on individual landholders, and it needs to be recognised that those people need to be properly considered and properly consulted in the development of what can be a world-class energy province. In particular, I refer to the construction of the pipelines from the gas fields to Gladstone. There are currently four pipeline proposals, all of which run through the centre of my electorate as they plot a route to Gladstone.

Tonight I want to repeat my call for the government to adopt the policy that we have enunciated now for nearly 10 years—that this type of public infrastructure should, wherever possible, be built on public land. Unfortunately, the situation that is becoming all too apparent in Central Queensland and on

the Darling Downs is that this government's policy is the opposite. This government's policy is to ensure that that sort of infrastructure is built on private land wherever possible and that things like road reserves, forestry reserves and public land of all sorts are the last resort for the construction of that sort of infrastructure. That simply is not fair to the individuals who have to bear the brunt of that sort of construction for the sake of the community generally.

The extension of the electorate also brought within my electorate the Mount Morgan historical mine site. The old mine site at Mount Morgan is an environmental disaster waiting to happen. Last week I met with landholders in that area who have for many years dealt with the run-off from the Mount Morgan mine site and who are now being asked to pay for water meters by a government that has not been prepared to make any contribution towards the enormous job of ensuring that the water quality those landholders are able to access is suitable. It is outrageous in my view that the government can seek to impose upon those landholders the cost of installing water meters for the potential use of a product which most of the time is not suitable for use.

It is an issue that this government and the federal government have to grapple with. The historical mine site at Mount Morgan has been there for 120 years. It is conveniently ignored by both the state and the federal governments. We hear plenty of contributions in this place and we hear lots of rhetoric about the efforts that are being made to protect the Great Barrier Reef, but we hear nothing from the government about how it is going to deal with the consequences of probably the greatest threat to any of the rivers and watersheds that drain into the Great Barrier Reef—that is, in particular, the historical mine site at Mount Morgan.

The extension of the electorate also brought into my area of responsibility a range of small towns in the western part of the electorate including Baralaba, Wowan and Dululu. Baralaba has recently had to deal with the closure of its hospital, which served that community for 85 years. For 85 years the Baralaba Hospital has provided health care to the people of that region and suddenly the bureaucrats within Queensland Health decided that it was itself a health risk, that somehow or other it was a fire risk that had to be closed. Members in this House can imagine the effect that had on that particular community. While we have received promises from the Minister for Health that a new facility will be built some time in the future—2012 or 2014—nobody will, with any degree of confidence, trust this Labor government to deliver the sort of infrastructure that those communities are so dependent on. The whole issue of health remains a great example of this government's failure to address the basic infrastructure that communities need.

Another example of this government's failure to address infrastructure within my electorate is the Nathan Dam on the Dawson River at Taroom. The Nathan Dam has been proposed and talked about for 70 or 80 years. It has been seriously on the agenda for the last 10 or 12 years. We are now being asked to believe that the Nathan Dam has been postponed because somebody has discovered a colony of 100 small snails in a swampy, boggy patch of ground about half as big as this chamber. That is the sort of nonsense that this government is trying to get the people of Central Queensland to believe—that a piece of infrastructure like the Nathan Dam, which has the potential to ensure reliable water supplies for most of my constituents and for a great many constituents of members who represent the northern Downs region, has somehow been delayed for the sake of 100 snails that live in a tiny little boggy patch of ground about half as big as this chamber.

I have no hesitation in saying that, for me, people have always been more important than snails and people always will be more important than snails. The truth is, as the Treasurer knows as he sits over there with a sly grin on his face, that this government is so broke that it cannot build that sort of infrastructure. It is so financially embarrassed that it cannot continue to build the sort of infrastructure that is necessary to ensure Central Queensland is able to develop and is able to continue to provide economic benefits to the people of Queensland, and so it is with so much of the infrastructure in my electorate.

The Burnett Highway, which is an important road transport artery for north-south movements of cattle because it is the only road transport artery that allows for the transport of cattle outside the tick line, has become grossly overloaded and grossly underfunded. The government's ability to even maintain that sort of road infrastructure in its current condition is woefully inadequate, and the people of Central Queensland, the people whom I represent, know only too well that they will always be ignored by this Labor government. The people whom I represent have never voted Labor and they will never vote Labor. The rest of Queensland will learn from the lessons of 21 March and hopefully hundreds of thousands of them will never vote Labor again, because they know now what they should have known on 21 March—that this is a dishonest, deceitful government that sought to deceive them about the real situation in Queensland and sought to get itself re-elected before that situation became apparent. It is now apparent and the people of Queensland will not forget it.

(Time expired)

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ryan): The last leg of the relay. I call the member for Southern Downs.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (9.17 pm): I start this evening by expressing my loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen, an absolutely fantastic monarch—a person who has gone about her role with extraordinary dignity, extraordinary diligence and extraordinary application in the time that she has filled that role, and a person who is a role model for many people around the world. On anyone's objective analysis, we are looking at a monarch who has barely put a foot wrong in the time that she has held her very, very esteemed position.

I would also like to express my thanks to the Governor, Penelope Wensley, for her attendance at the opening of parliament. I also take the opportunity to congratulate the Speaker on his election to this high office. In the time that I have been here I have seen a lot of Speakers take on that particular role and have had a chance to objectively consider their consistent application of the rules of the House and the way that they have fulfilled their role. I think that we are seeing in the Speaker a person who, without an ounce of partiality, is adjudicating the matters of this House very well and, again, I would like to express my congratulations to the Speaker.

I also thank my family who have been extremely supportive of me over a long period of time in my role as the member for Southern Downs and the various other office positions I have held—whether it was as a shadow minister, as a whip in government or opposition, as a minister, as Deputy Leader of the Opposition or even as Leader of the Opposition. It is impossible to do this job without the support of your family, and I think all members absolutely appreciate that.

To my wife, Linda, I say thank you very much for your forbearance and thank you very much for what you have done with your dedication, your support and your loyalty under what no doubt from time to time has been trying circumstances, particularly when I was Leader of the Opposition and away from home so much. I was away up to probably 250 or 260 days a year; I actually counted it. I was regularly away 14 or 15 nights in a row.

I thank my wife for raising our four children largely in my absence—Megan, Jens, Laura and Thomas. I also thank them for their support in having a father they have got to know more over the telephone than in person. I am very proud of them—we are both very proud of them—for what they have done while growing up and the way they have always held themselves with great dignity and great respect when they have been in the community. We are certainly proud of the application they show in everything they do.

I also thank my electorate staff and the staff who supported me in my role as Leader of the Opposition and in my current role as deputy leader. To the electors of Southern Downs, thank you very much for your support over the last 19½ years. I will continue to serve those people with great application and great loyalty because they have expressed their loyalty to me over such a long time.

I thank those people who were involved in my local election, and I will not name all of them. To my electorate chairman, David Littleproud, and campaign chairman, Jill Smith, and to the whole team, I say thank you very much for doing such an able job in generally my absence during the campaign. You ensured that everything went so smoothly and that we were able to deliver a very strong result for the people of Southern Downs.

I also thank those people throughout Queensland who supported our side of politics—indeed, those people who supported the LNP. I am very proud of the fact that over 49 per cent of Queenslanders actually supported the LNP in Queensland on our first outing. That is no mean feat. On 26 July last year when we formed the LNP—which people said was absolutely impossible—a lot of people did not think we would be able to go to a state election eight months later and competently put together an organisation with such a wonderful team of candidates who produced such a strong result and built for the future. So to the people of Queensland, I thank you very much for your support. We have laid a very solid foundation for a great alternative government in the future.

I thank the fantastic team of LNP candidates whom we had standing for us. They were an outstanding team of LNP candidates. To all of those new members who were elected to parliament, we are very proud of you and your contribution. As we look towards the back of the House now, we are seeing the numbers swell on this side—the numbers that we actually should have on this side. I remember when I was here in 2001 and we basically had members of the government sitting behind us here. To see the balance restored now with such a fantastic team of members really makes me proud. I have no doubt that a lot of our candidates who lost will be back next time. I have no doubt that they will be back and they will actually be in this parliament next time, particularly after the active betrayal we have seen from those members opposite. The government members have hoodwinked the people of Queensland.

To the organisation competently run by Bruce McIver and Gary Spence, I say thank you very much. To Michael O'Dwyer, our state director, and our wonderful team at the secretariat, I say thank you very much. To Mark McArdle, who joined me on the journey for the formation of the LNP and was such a wonderful deputy, I say thank you. I thank all of the shadow ministers. With the shadow Treasurer sitting here, I would like to indicate what a wonderful job he did with our costings during the election. We had

34 pages of costings, and then I look at this piece of trash I am holding that was put out by the most unpopular member of parliament, the Treasurer, who is sitting over there. He had 36 per cent of the vote—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ryan): Order! Member for Southern Downs, if you want to refer to a document, please do not use it as a prop.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am holding the summary of the Labor Party's commitments at the last state election. This is what the Labor Party came up with. Isn't it wonderful? With the whole resources of Treasury leading up to the election, Labor came up with 60 line items and it only has costings with regard to expenditure on five of them. There is one offset here, some sort of fanciful payroll tax; it is a one-off cut that it will give to the people. After this effort from the most unpopular member of parliament—with 40 losing candidates actually getting a higher primary vote than him—is it any wonder that we are seeing the level of deception and betrayal now being practically expressed by the people of Queensland in the opinion polls, with their opinion of the Premier and this particular government?

While I was listening to the Governor's speech, which was delivered in good faith by the Governor at the opening of parliament, I noticed there were two things in particular that were actually there by omission; actually there were probably a number of others. One of them was the fuel tax. The government did not tell us anything about a fuel tax even at the opening of parliament, and the government told us nothing about its privatisation agenda at the opening of parliament. There was nothing about a fuel tax and nothing about the privatisation agenda at the opening of parliament. I wonder what the Governor thinks now after she outlined the intentions for her new government for this particular term. It just goes to show the level of active deception by this government. We now understand the level of heartache and the level of financial strain which has been placed on the people of Queensland by this government as a consequence of its act of betrayal, particularly with the introduction of an 8.35c per litre fuel tax, which is over 9c a litre when the GST is put on top of it.

I go back to the government's Q2 document from last year. It was this 'wonderful' document—and I use the word in inverted commas—which Mike Kaiser brought out of New South Wales as this Helen Demidenko look-alike thing. It was devised by Mike Kaiser and he forced it down the throat of Morris Lemma and then brought it up here. The Q2 document says that the people of Queensland travel further than anyone else because we are the most decentralised state and it is very important to maintain the competitive advantage by not having a fuel tax in Queensland.

What about those mothers in the western part of Queensland up near Urandangi who actually drive 300 kilometres one way—a 600-kilometre return trip—once or twice a week just to take their kids to playgroup? What are they paying? I look at my own wife and the amount of running around she does. Sometimes she drives up to 600 or 700 kilometres a week just taking the kids to sport, let alone other things she needs to do. That is the normal thing that people do in the country. There was no mention of that and the impact of the fuel tax on the people of Queensland—the impact on the battlers, the impact on the pensioners, the impact on food prices, the impact on transportation prices—by this government during the election campaign.

Isn't it amazing what the privatisation agenda has done to actually disconnect the true believers? The honourable member for Brisbane Central spoke before about the level of outrage which was felt by certain people regarding Work Choices. I can tell honourable members opposite that it is absolutely nothing compared to the level of outrage which is being felt out there in the community at the moment because of the privatisation of Queensland Rail, our ports, Forestry Plantations Queensland and Queensland Motorways Ltd. This is nothing to do with good financial management. This is about a fire sale from a desperate government which is now trying to plug an election black hole and plug the black hole of its own maladministration during the last almost 20 years in office.

The people of Queensland will not forget. It is very interesting to look at the fellow traveller of this government, the union movement, which is now squealing, bellyaching and carrying on.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: They have to do a lot more to atone for their sins, because the union movement was absolutely complicit in the election of this government. They are the ones that funded it and I actually share the views of the member for Callide.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Order! Member for Callide! Member for Brisbane Central, if you wish to interject, please return to your seat. I would ask members on my left to give their deputy leader a chance.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I reflect on the comments of the member for Callide, who was talking about the way that the good, decent, hardworking teachers of Queensland have felt betrayed by this government. The government said that it was going to do certain things in good faith if it was elected.

Yet this government has been backing away, backing down, and maligning and marginalising teachers in Queensland. Now we are seeing unprecedented industrial disputation from teachers in Queensland. We have the Teachers Union pretending to stand up for teachers. This Teachers Union is the same Teachers Union that donated money to the Labor Party to get the government elected. We have this ignominious situation at the moment where we have the union movement putting up a billboard saying, 'Vote out Rachel Nolan because the member for Ipswich has betrayed you.' Yet, on the other hand, it has stuck its hands into its coffers and pulled out money to get the government re-elected. What sort of absolute hypocrisy is that?

This Labor government in Queensland has put this state into a situation of generational debt whereby it will be almost impossible to bail out future governments. If we look across Australia, what we will see at the end of the current foray into this extraordinary debt situation by the Rudd government, and with all of the debt right across Australia with regard to all the other states which they are guaranteeing, is that we will be about half a trillion dollars in debt. The interest bill on that alone is about \$35 billion a year. That is more than the sum total of all of the surpluses of all the Australian governments, whether they be Commonwealth or state, at any time in our history in any financial year. It is impossible to pay the interest alone, let alone bail us out of that debt.

What we have is Kevin Rudd running around talking about being an economic conservative. He makes Gough Whitlam look like an economic conservative. That is how bad this bloke is. The *creme de la creme* is the Treasurer—the most unpopular member of the Queensland parliament, with 40 losing candidates getting a higher primary vote than him. We have seen some budget wizardry produced by him. Over the next couple of years we will have peak debt in Queensland approaching \$100 billion. How do you pay that off? The Treasurer has no plan whatsoever other than to sell everything in Queensland and then hope for the best after that.

I want to look at some of the issues across my electorate that continue to cause people concern. There are a number of things that I would like to talk about.

Mr Fraser: How did Newspoll go once your face was on TV every night?

Mr SPRINGBORG: I would like to engage with the Treasurer a little bit more, but I have only five minutes left. It is great to see that he has finally got going. I was wondering if he was sitting over there finally having a synapse. We had two neurons that finally came together.

The first thing I would like to do is table a non-conforming petition with 341 signatures from the people of Killarney calling for this government to invest in an ambulance station for the people of Killarney.

Tabled paper: Non-conforming petition regarding the establishment of an ambulance station in Killarney [761].

Their contention is right. These people pay their ambulance levy in Queensland. Many of them, because they are hardworking businesspeople and individuals, pay more than once. They pay on multiple occasions. They have recently lost their doctor as a consequence of the closure of the small private medical practice in town. They are most concerned now that they do not have that mantle of cover and would like the government to consider the provision of what they call a one-person ambulance station in that community. I think that is a reasonable ask. I certainly back their call for a new medical centre. There is an application which has gone to the Commonwealth government for funding through its programs for the establishment of regional medical centres. One would hope that the current government in Queensland would be prepared to provide at least some degree of support in lobbying for that as well. That is the least that this government can do. When I wrote to the former minister for health in Queensland he showed absolutely no interest in that issue on behalf of that community.

When it comes to the people of the Granite Belt, I am most concerned that they do not have this government's commitment to a new water supply. They have experienced the government dillydallying for a long period of time. The government has had the issue before the Coordinator-General in Queensland. The local council has jumped through all of the hoops and now the government is sending it back to taws. They have been waiting for this now for almost 20 years. We have an issue of expanding population—albeit steady expanding population—on the Granite Belt, particularly in the community of Stanthorpe, and we do not have a commitment from this government in supporting them in their need for a new water supply.

Another major issue for the people of the Granite Belt is that of the scourge of flying foxes.

Mr Wettenhall: Why do you hate flying foxes?

Mr SPRINGBORG: I bet the honourable member likes to have a lovely peach, a lovely plum, a lovely nectarine or a lovely apricot. I do not know where he thinks they come from. They might just materialise from thin air! While he is at home tucked up in bed, maybe dreaming about a nice, juicy pre-Christmas peach, he must realise that there are people in my constituency who are trying to defend their crops.

If the government wants to bring in non-lethal means of protection, then let us do it. Last year it did away with damage mitigation permits. The Ministry for Primary Industries said that they would have a solution this year. There is no solution. No solution has been put forward. The DPI alone has estimated that the loss of production on the Granite Belt and the cost to individual farmers was \$12 million. Some people lost 40 per cent of their crops. Government members are chortling and carrying on. If something as catastrophic as that happened in the city, there would be an immediate response—and so there should be. But in this case it is out of sight, out of mind—but please keep sending the peaches, the plums, the apricots and the nectarines.

If this government does not have an alternative non-lethal means this year then I call on it to do what the New South Wales Labor government has done—that is, bring in interim damage mitigation permits until it has a solution. The Labor government in New South Wales has enough common sense to do that. It is something that needs to be done unless the government can come up with a solution in the next 10 weeks.

There are a whole range of issues in the area of health, particularly the provision of dental services, which has been made even more complicated with the superhealth districts in Queensland where our area is being serviced from Ipswich. Frankly, we are being lost in this huge amorphous mass. The smaller communities are basically out on their own. What we have here is a government which is out of touch, which does not understand what the people of Queensland are going through and which is more interested in playing with budget black holes than solving the real issues of Queenslanders.

(Time expired)

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, the address-in-reply will be presented to Her Excellency the Governor at Government House at a time and date to be advised.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (9.38 pm): I move—That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 am on Tuesday, 1 September 2009.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (9.38 pm): I move—That the House do now adjourn.

Canecutter Way, Petition

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (9.38 pm): The Old Bruce Highway from Silkwood to Innisfail via the towns of Japoonvale, Mena Creek, South Johnstone and Wangan is now known as the 'Canecutter Way'. The Canecutter Way runs through agricultural land and is particularly busy during the sugarcane harvesting season. In recent years, the road has become extremely busy with drive tourism visitors, including many caravans and motorhomes, mainly heading for the very popular tourist attraction Paronella Park, which is No. 11 on the list of Queensland's 150 iconic locations and No. 1 on the RACQ's list of must-dos for domestic and international visitors to Queensland. Main Roads is responsible for the Silkwood-Japoonvale Road and the Innisfail-Japoonvale Road, which make up the Canecutter Way. This route is approximately 42 kilometres long.

Since the new Bruce Highway alignment was established, the grade and condition of the Canecutter Way has deteriorated. In recent years, drive tourism, primarily associated with Paronella Park, has added an enormous extra burden on this road in addition to the local traffic. The deterioration of the Canecutter Way has accelerated.

Tonight I table a non-conforming petition on behalf of 386 petitioners who are calling for the upgrade of the Innisfail-Japoonvale Road and the Silkwood-Japoonvale Road.

Tabled paper: Non-conforming petition relating to an upgrade of the Japoonvale Road between Innisfail and Silkwood [762].

The petitioners are concerned about the number of accidents and the damage caused to vehicles from travelling on this route. The petitioners also complain about the perceived lack of maintenance by Main Roads and point to the increase in tourist traffic associated with the success of Paronella Park as justification for additional funds. The petitioners request that Main Roads allocate sufficient funds to upgrade the Canecutter Way to accommodate the increased traffic and improve safety.

I have been concerned about the condition of the Canecutter Way for some time. Over the last two years, I have raised various aspects of the condition of the Canecutter Way with the previous minister for main roads, including the condition of the Liverpool Creek bridge at Japoonvale and the condition of the road over the range between Silkwood and Japoonvale, particularly while the Maccarone Bridge on Walter Lever Estate Road was closed.

I have also raised concerns about the narrowness of the road and the poor maintenance of the road between Innisfail and Japoonvale, particularly between South Johnstone and Mena Creek. Earlier this year, I was pleased to undertake an inspection of the Canecutter Way with Main Roads officers. I am pleased to advise that Main Roads has been able to allocate additional funds to this road.

The Innisfail-Japoonvale Road will be upgraded for 1.42 kilometres between Juhas Road and Germantown Road, while the 1.5 kilometre section of the same road between MacDonald Road and Bombeeta Creek will also be upgraded. The cost of upgrading these two sections of the Innisfail-Japoonvale Road will be approximately \$600,000 and will primarily widen the road. Some of this work will be undertaken later in 2009, while some will be undertaken in 2010. These works are relatively small and fall short of what the petitioners are seeking. I share the concerns of the petitioners and I will continue to push for improvements to the Canecutter Way.

(Time expired)

Mount Ommaney Electorate, Rotary and Lions Clubs

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (9.41 pm): I am pleased to be able to address the House in relation to the great work of my local Rotary and Lions clubs in the area. In the electorate of Mount Ommaney there are many service clubs, including the Jindalee Lions, the Jamboree Lions, the Oxley-Sherwood Lions Club, the Rotary Club of Brisbane Centenary, the Rotary Club of Sumner Park and the Rotary Club of Jindalee. Each year I endeavour to attend their changeover dinners as they celebrate their achievements and the wonderful community work they have undertaken over the previous 12 months.

The Lions clubs in the area, with their hardworking members, always support each other and sometimes get involved in joint projects for the area. They fundraise through a variety of methods, including regular sausage sizzles, and are always willing to provide support for the disadvantaged in the local community.

As a founding member of the Lions Club of the Queensland Parliament, I am familiar with the activities of Lions International and the difference they make in relation to humanitarian issues across the world. I congratulate our new president, Paul Hoolihan, the member for Keppel, on his appointment.

Since 2001 I have been an honorary member of the Rotary Club of Sumner Park and I love being part of this small but active group of enthusiastic businesspeople. They always have a lot of fun and are committed to using their skills to undertake community projects. One of the community events I was able to attend a few months ago was the Rotary Mental Health Forum held at the Centenary State High School. There has always been a lack of understanding about people with mental health issues and the growing number of cases of depression. I commend the Rotary Club of Jindalee past president, Ron Clark, for organising this forum with expert speakers who were able to bring about a better understanding of mental illness to members of the public.

This Rotary club also assisted to raise funds for the Sisters of St Rafea who support poor children in Lebanon. Each year I am invited to attend this charity event organised by Hana Torbey at her home. Hana received a Paul Harris Fellow award for her dedication and commitment to this important humanitarian cause.

During the recent changeovers long-term member of the Rotary Club of Brisbane Centenary, Nick Curry, commenced his term as district governor to the delight of all of us, his colleagues in the club. Past president John Cridland presented Rotarian Andrew Rogers and community worker Ann George with Paul Harris Fellow awards. Andrew's was for his great work for the club. The club actually supplied eight tonnes of meat to Foodbank in 2008-09. Ann got her award for her support for foster-children in the community through Project: Love & Care.

It is a great honour to receive the Paul Harris Fellow award. It is an award which is given in appreciation of tangible and significant assistance for the furtherance of better understanding and friendly relations among people of the world. It is without doubt the the pinnacle of Rotary's awards and is only ever awarded to very special people who make substantial contributions. I commend the work of the service clubs and their volunteers who make a difference in the local area.

Cleveland Electorate, Vietnam Veterans

Dr ROBINSON (Cleveland—LNP) (9.44 pm): I rise today to pay tribute to the thousands of Australians who served in the Vietnam War. On Tuesday, 18 August thousands of Vietnam veterans commemorated Vietnam Veterans Day at services throughout Australia. In my electorate of Cleveland the service took place at the local war memorial cenotaph, where some 200 ex-servicemen and women attended.

Before a small crowd of onlookers, wreaths were placed in memory of the fallen comrades. Of particular note were the six wreaths placed in memory of local Redlands residents killed in action: Leslie Prowse, Kenneth Duffy, Erald Nilsen, Kevin Conway, Kenneth Gant and Dennis Brooks.

Australia's military involvement in the Vietnam War was the longest continuous engagement ever committed to by our nation. Australian involvement commenced on 3 August 1962 and ended on 23 December 1973. Over 50,000 Australian ground troops, Air Force and Navy personnel served in Vietnam during that period. Of that 50,000, 520 lost their lives and a further 2,398 were wounded.

Being the first Australian unit into Vietnam and the last out, the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam—AATTV—affectionately known as 'The Team', was operational for 10 years, four months and 16 days, achieving the distinction of being the longest serving Australian unit of any service in any theatre of war. A total of 114 individual decorations, including four Victoria Crosses, were awarded to members of 'The Team'.

The Australian task force headquarters were located at Nui Dat. It was from the Nui Dat rubber plantation that all of the combat operations and activities took place. Perhaps for Australia the most recognised of all the battles waged during the Vietnam War was the Battle of Long Tan, which took place in a rubber plantation to the east of the task force headquarters. It was as a member of Delta Company of the 6th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment that local Redlander Private Kenneth Gant was killed on 18 August 1966. The battle received recognition from the then President of the United States, Mr Lyndon B Johnson.

The service personnel who saw action in Vietnam continue to suffer the long-term physical and psychological effects of their tours of duty. In 1995 a new group, Redlands Vietnam Veterans Group, was formed to assist those locals requiring help. Totally run by volunteers, the association is located at the Redlands RSL Veterans Community Centre and has a membership of 120 Vietnam veterans. I acknowledge their good work among the residents of Redlands city.

I also wish to acknowledge Paul Field, a Vietnam vet and resident of the Redlands. Upon his return from Vietnam, Paul devoted himself to building a better Redlands through work and community involvement in the chamber of commerce, the Redlands Tourism Board, schools and sports groups and as a councillor from 1988-97 and deputy mayor of the Redlands Shire Council from 1994-97. Again I salute all of our Vietnam veterans.

Whitsunday Arts

Ms JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (9.47 pm): As someone who can neither sing nor dance, I am a great admirer of those who possess these talents. I love a good show and last Saturday night I was treated to one of the best. Whitsunday Arts, or WARTS theatre group as they are better known, has for many years now been nurturing young people in the Whitsundays to identify and develop skills such as singing, dancing and acting. This year's WARTS production called *Space Evaders* was a visual and auditory feast that examined the role of the individual in achieving and maintaining interpersonal and intergalactical peace and goodwill.

In the production, brother and sister Demi and Colin, played by Eva Lorenz and Calum Docherty, accompanied by their dog Dougie, or Daniel Gilbert in his other life, were transported by a very groovy and somewhat noisy spacecraft to the warring planets led by Queen Scarlet, played by Tyga Diesel, and Queen Sapphire, played by Kyra Hadley. The two queens, once best friends, had been deceived and led to war by the evil Sir Slither, played by Joshua Fiedler, and Miss Demeanour, played very effectively by Brodie Townsend. Everyone loves a villain and Joshua and Brodie did not let the team down.

Not surprisingly, their dastardly plan came undone but not before the story took a romantic turn. Queen Scarlet's son, Prince Bravo, played by Cael Delaney, and Queen Sapphire's daughter, Princess Grace, played by Kaitlan McGill, being driven by the desire to see an end to the suffering of war and hatred between their people, uncovered the evil pact hatched by Sir Slither and Miss Demeanour. Happily, the story ended on a positive note with the return of the peace dragon and the reuniting of the two queens as friends.

The great message embedded in the performance was embellished through its delivery which included solos, group singing, dance and incredibly good lighting effects. The costumes and stage sets were imaginative, colourful and very professionally designed and executed. The young WARTS performers owe much to the dedicated band of adults and mentors who have given up hours of their

time to help nurture the talents of the group. They are too many to mention, but I must make special mention of WARTS directors Melissa and Paul Saunders, costume designer Lisa Atkinson, choreographers Jenny Featherstone and Nina Wilson, committee president and public relations manager Bindi McGill and all of the mentors who work tirelessly behind the scenes. I thank WARTS for a great night and say how delighted I was to win one of the raffle prizes—a lovely hand-made quilt that features an intergalactical theme. All I can say is: 'Far out! Beam me up, Scotty!'

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Aspley, you try to beat that!

Craigslea State School

Ms DAVIS (Aspley—LNP) (9.50 pm): I rise tonight to speak about one of the wonderful schools in my electorate—Craigslea State School. Under the leadership of principal Mr Hugh Goodfellow and deputy principal Debbie Spanner, along with their team of dedicated and hardworking staff, a very supportive P&C and, of course, the fantastic students, this school has a vibrant and active school community. I had the opportunity last week to visit the school and meet with the year 7 students and their teachers to speak to them about my role as their local member as part of their curriculum in learning about the three levels of government in Australia.

These student leaders were an amazing group of young people whose interest in and knowledge of the topic was extremely impressive. Anyone who thinks that our young people are not interested in the parliament and how the political process operates clearly has not met the year 7 students at Craigslea State School. I was very impressed and, I confess, a tad overwhelmed by the calibre of the questions that the students asked—from political campaigning to legislation and even the impacts of redistributions. What great ambassadors for their school and a great reflection on their teachers and their parents. I am very much looking forward to meeting them later this month when they visit the parliamentary precinct. Given their interest in the parliament, I would not be surprised to see any one of them take a seat in this House in the future.

After the robust session with the year 7s, I took a moment to regain my composure over a cup of tea with the ladies who volunteer in the tuckshop. The smell of the food and the sound of hungry children brought back fond memories of my own time as a tuckshop mum, and I proudly sport the arms to prove it! The tuckshop is run by the P&C and, under the stewardship of President Michelle Robertson and her hardworking committee, it provides a great support to the school not only for the various fundraising activities it runs but also in providing general support for the school, including the operation of the tuckshop, the bookshop and the uniform shop.

Their passion and commitment to the school was no more evident than in June when the school held its biennial carnival. This event is a major fundraiser for the school and the amount of work that went into making this such a successful event was enormous. The tireless efforts of the school community were rewarded with an event to be proud of. The school oval was awash with colour and activity, with school families and the local community enjoying the rides, the food, the stalls and the entertainment. The prize tent was packed to the rafters, which is a testament to the generous support that the school receives not only from within its own community but the broader business community. Special mention should be made of fete convener Kylie O'Neill and her team in putting together this very enjoyable and successful event. Happily, the threat of inclement weather did not dampen the spirits of those in attendance and a great day was had by all.

Craigslea State School community has great heart. The spirit of cooperation between the staff and the parent body is obvious and it clearly demonstrates their deep commitment to providing the best opportunities and outcomes for the children.

Q Song Awards

Mr FINN (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (9.53 pm): Queensland has produced some of the finest songwriters of Australia's contemporary music as the names Grant McLennan, Keith Urban, Pete Murray and Powderfinger attest. These artists are household names across Australia and have recognition across the world. Last week I attended the Q Song Awards at the Tivoli Theatre, which recognise and award unpublished songwriters in 22 categories across the spectrum of contemporary music. Q Song is a program that is supported indirectly by Arts Queensland through its support for Q Music, Queensland's music industry development association. What I saw last week on the awards night was a showcasing of Queensland's emerging song-writing and contemporary talent. Along with the award presentations, the crowd was entertained by emerging artists like North Queensland's reggae and roots band Zennith, The Hungry Kids of Hungary—Brisbane's emerging indie four piece—Q Song Award winner James Grehan, Brisbane's alt country duo Texas Tea, up and comers The Boat People, and previous Q Song Award winner Jazz D'arcy, who won the primary school award last year and who showcased her continued artistic development this year.

One of the highlights of the award ceremony came early in the night with the announcement of the primary school award winner, Romany Elmas. Romany is a 10-year-old who lives in Tolga on the Atherton Tablelands and who won the award for her song *Country Outback Girl*. Romany's acceptance speech showcased a young person of maturity and grace with a strong awareness that success for emerging artists arises from the personal support of family and friends and industry support by sponsors and mentors. Other winners on the night included Andrew Redford, Bec Shuker, Lucas Proudfoot, Adrian Brim, 8 Ball Aitken—you have to see him—Claire Whiting and the people's choice winners, Mexico City. These artists will be well known to all keen followers of emerging contemporary music over the next few years.

There were two major announcements on the night that I also acknowledge—the awarding of the Billy Thorpe Scholarship to Alan Boyle, a scholarship that provides \$10,000 to an emerging artist to establish their professional career, and the announcement of the Grant McLennan Lifetime Achievement Award to the Bee Gees. The contemporary music scene is alive and well in Brisbane and across Queensland. One of the big events on the calendar for Arts Queensland is Big Sound. Big Sound combines an industry event showcasing emerging talent and will be on show in Valley venues from 9 to 11 September. Big Sound is an important international conference that brings together people in the music industry during the day and then spends the night showcasing emerging talents. There will be 120 acts in the Valley during this time and I encourage all members of parliament to get out and enjoy some of the contemporary music that is at the forefront of the Brisbane music culture.

Gympie East State School, High Ropes Course

Mr GIBSON (Gympie—LNP) (9.56 pm): Tonight I rise to recognise the great work that is occurring at a school in my electorate, the Gympie East State School. This school is well recognised for its commitment to the environment and has received many green school awards, and I have had the great pleasure of being at that school and seeing its commitment through things such as waste-free lunch boxes and student involvement across all grades from the worm farm all the way through to the activities that are taken in each class. But this school has gone one better. It has gone one better with the establishment of a high ropes course in the school grounds. For a primary school in the area, that is just an outstanding achievement and it has done that with great community support.

It was a vision of principal James Watt who came from Charters Towers and had been involved in high ropes in the school environment there and who decided that Gympie East could contribute to this region. What we have seen established with the high ropes course is nothing short of simply brilliant. It is a great resource for our cluster and we will be encouraging both primary and secondary school students in this area to take advantage of this. But it would not have been possible without community support.

I particularly want to place on the record my thanks to Jamie Dunn when he was at ZincFM. Jamie took on the challenge that he would pole dance for each pole that was dedicated for the high ropes course. With a webcam in the studio, he danced away and helped raise sufficient funds so that the school could build the high ropes course. I also want to place on the record the support from Education Queensland. Without its commitment to this vision, we would not have this great facility. I have used the high ropes course. It is something that is thrilling.

Mrs Keech: Did you fall off?

Mr GIBSON: No, I did not fall off but took the leap of faith from the single pole across. The adrenalin rush will carry you for the remainder of the day, and that is the great advantage of this high ropes course. It will give students of all ages an opportunity to face their fears in a safe and controlled environment and, in doing so, they are able to conquer those fears and build on them and have the confidence that will serve them well into their future.

We are hoping that not only the students within the Gympie region will be using this high ropes course but also the course can be extended to other programs. I would certainly like to see those involved in work for the dole or those involved in other projects, where they perhaps have not had the opportunities in their lives to take on some challenges, to face them and to learn teamwork. I had a great opportunity at the launch of the program. I wish to thank all of those businesses, large and small. Their donation was well received. We now have within the Gympie East State School a fantastic facility—one that will serve the students and the community for many years to come. Thank you, James, for your vision. Thank you, too, to the people of Gympie. To the students who are privileged to use it I say: take that leap of faith.

Perry Park, YMCA Facility; Sporting Organisations, Assistance

Ms GRACE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (9.59 pm): Under Toward Q2 the government is committed to making Queenslanders Australia's healthiest people. That is why we continue to provide support for programs, projects and facilities that help Queenslanders, particularly young Queenslanders, participate in sport and active recreation. Therefore, I am particularly pleased to welcome the recent announcement that Bowen Hills residents will benefit from a \$4 million government sports funding

boost. Together with the YMCA, the new \$11 million multipurpose community indoor sport and recreation centre will be built at Perry Park in Bowen Hills as part of Brisbane's urban footprint for the future. This YMCA facility will be the central hub for the growing Bowen Hills community, which is expected to grow by 10,000 new residents in the next 10 to 20 years.

The \$4 million provided to the YMCA over the next three years under the Major Facilities Program will help construct this modern indoor sport and recreation centre providing for netball, soccer, futsal, basketball and other health and fitness activities. We all know that playing sport and getting active is one of the best ways to improve our quality of life, both physically and socially, and Perry Park is ideally located for many northside residents.

As part of the declared urban development area, the new Bowen Hills centre will be making maximum use of existing space. It will be sharing the site with the Brisbane Strikers Football Club, providing additional community meeting and training facilities, including creche and small cafe facilities. The centre will also provide opportunities for state, national and international training and competition for gymnastics and disabled sports, including wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby.

Without this funding program, it is often impossible for sporting and recreation organisations such as the YMCA in Brisbane to fund major sporting and community infrastructure. I would particularly like to commend the work of Alan Bray and Ross Melville of the YMCA for their vision, hard work and commitment in making this project at Perry Park a reality. It has been a delight working with them and assisting them where possible.

In addition, I want to thank and acknowledge the work of the Minister for Sport, who has taken a keen interest since his appointment to the Sport portfolio. Soon after the devastating storms and floods a couple of months back, Minister Reeves and I visited the Brisbane Women's Hockey Association and the Downey Park Netball Association, where we witnessed firsthand the extensive damage that was caused by flooding. It was not a pretty sight, with nearly-new equipment, records and facilities ruined. Following the floods, the government immediately announced the Sport and Recreation Disaster Assistance Program to assist badly affected clubs with funds to help restore and repair courts, fences, clubhouses and equipment damaged by the rising waters.

I am extremely pleased that the Downey Park Netball Association, the Brisbane Women's Hockey Association and the Brisbane City Soccer Club have received a total of \$75,000—\$25,000 each—in disaster funding, helping to get these clubs back quickly to full operation so that they can continue providing great sporting facilities and programs for the thousands of players who use these facilities on a daily basis. I know that they are very grateful for the assistance and for the quick manner in which their applications were processed. The players are now back out there playing sport and getting active.

Government Computers, Identity Protection

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (10.02 pm): Some of us live in the public eye all the time, but there are a lot of people in our society who, although they provide a service in their communities, do not want their private lives and their personal details spread across the countryside. I am talking about doctors. When we think of the load that is put on doctors nowadays, any spare time they get would be the most precious thing they have. I know that in my area doctors are in fairly short supply. Many of them have closed their books and are sending potential patients to see doctors in other towns nearby.

Recently I was quite concerned when a constituent called out to me as I was walking down a street in one of the small towns in my electorate and said, 'Hey, Dorothy, look what I've found.' That person handed me a piece of paper and on it was the names of 12 doctors, their private mobile phone numbers, their provider numbers, their registration numbers and a few other details—everything that anybody who wanted to steal an identity would want.

How did this gentleman get these details? He bought a government computer and underneath the keyboard was taped that piece of paper with those details. When he went to plug in the keyboard he looked under it to make sure that it was all right and he found this piece of paper. He thought, 'Wow, if I was a dishonest person, I could have a real ball with this.' It is a good thing he is not. It is a good thing that we have honest people in our communities who are very aware of how dangerous that sort of information can be if it is stolen. We hear all the time about people stealing prescription pads and how much trouble that can create.

Who is responsible when government computers from hospitals et cetera are sold or disposed of? Is it anyone's responsibility to ensure that there are no details left on the computers? I know that the computer drives get wiped, but in this case there was an oversight. Who is responsible? These doctors would not appreciate all of their details being made public and I am pretty sure the AMA would not like to have doctors' private details put on show in such a way.

I am very grateful that there are honest people in my electorate and I am very grateful for the doctors in my electorate. I hope that in the future not one of them has anything stolen from them owing to somebody's inefficiency.

Seniors Week

Ms JOHNSTONE (Townsville—ALP) (10.05 pm): On Saturday, 15 August I was privileged to represent the Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women at the launch of Seniors Week 2009 in Townsville. The theme of this year's Seniors Week is 'Positively Ageless' in recognition of the importance of a positive attitude to life. This event was a great opportunity for us to reflect on and celebrate the contributions that thousands of seniors in Townsville make to our community.

The Townsville Regional Committee on the Ageing—or TRCOTA—has put together a great seniors program for this year. Activities this week have included intergenerational tenpin bowling, a barbecue lunch at the Upper Ross Community Centre, morning teas and this Sunday a seniors music day on Magnetic Island. The amazingly successful annual Picnic in the Park and Lifestyle Expo was held yesterday at Sheriff Park and, as usual, it was a great success, with over 2,000 seniors attending and with the announcement of our 2009 Seniors of the Year, Mr Ron Piper and Mrs Glenys Davey.

At the function on Saturday I was speaking to Mr Errol Neale, the current president of TRCOTA, who very aptly pointed out that this is a week when we recognise the contributions of both those seniors who are out front and centre in the public eye and those who play a quieter but not less important role behind the scenes. During the morning as I was speaking to the guests attending I asked what they felt were the most important issues facing seniors at present. Two consistent themes emerged: the worrying trend of elder abuse in our communities and the need for support for older people who are raising their grandchildren.

The issue of elder abuse is a worrying one. During my work in the community sector I often heard firsthand or second-hand stories of this disgraceful practice. One way people receive help is from the Seniors Legal and Support Service in Townsville, which is a service that is staffed by both a lawyer and a social worker. On Saturday, several people mentioned this service to me and told me how important it is to them or to someone they know.

Caring for spouses, relatives, children and grandchildren places added pressures and stresses on many older people in our neighbourhoods. Make no mistake about it: this is hard work. Many of these people would not have expected to find themselves in these caring roles after raising their own children and instead would have expected to relax in their retirement.

I would also like to acknowledge some of our older leaders in Townsville, such as most recent past president of TRCOTA, Mr Neville Abbey, and others such as Robyn Moore, Errol Neale, Marge Mills, Neal Ace and Ginni Hall to name only a few, who are examples of how appropriate the Positively Ageless theme is. These fantastic people demonstrate values that I really admire: resilience, loyalty, friendship and connection with community. Nearly always in a volunteer capacity, these people contribute to their senior citizens clubs' gardening and sewing groups, political associations, seniors advocacy groups and the like. I also know for a fact that many of these people continue to inform and contribute to their professional networks.

Seniors Week is a great chance to promote positive attitudes to older people and ageing, encourage older people to lead active lifestyles and foster intergenerational relationships. I thank the organisers for having me involved and I hope that the rest of the week is a success for them all.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.09 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, Struthers, Stuckey, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wellington, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson