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RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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Subject **FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT** Page

Wednesday, 2 September 2009

J MICKEL
SPEAKER

N J LAURIE
CLERK OF THE PARLIAMENT

L J OSMOND
CHIEF HANSARD REPORTER

WEDNESDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER 2009

The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

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

PETITIONS

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

Miriwinni

Mr Pitt, from 483 petitioners, requesting the House to correct the spelling of Mirriwinni and reinstate the second 'R' in the name of the town [809].

Townsville, Boating Facilities Upgrade

Mr Cripps, from 4,145 petitioners, requesting the House to provide an immediate upgrade of boating facilities in the Townsville area [810].

Etna Creek, Dangerous Sex Offenders Relocation

Mr Malone, from 1,450 petitioners, requesting the House to overturn the decision to house convicted paedophiles and dangerous sex offenders in the Etna Creek area [811].

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

Birkdale Railway Station, Parking Facilities

Dr Robinson, from 293 petitioners, requesting the House to transfer departmental ownership of 26-36 Napier Street, Birkdale and to enable the land to be used for car parking for the Birkdale Railway Station [812].

Petitions received.

TABLED PAPER

MEMBER'S PAPER TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following member's paper was tabled by the Clerk—

Member for Redcliffe (Ms van Litsenburg)—

813 Non-conforming petition from 133 petitioners regarding the traffic/road conditions outside Clontarf Beach State School

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Great Barrier Reef

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.32 am): As Queenslanders, each and every one of us has a comprehensive understanding of how unique, how matchless and irreplaceable and how important the Great Barrier Reef is. The reef is important because it is one of the great natural wonders of the world. It is also important to us here in Queensland because this spectacular natural wonder keeps thousands of Queenslanders in work, provides the state with millions in tourism dollars and other income, and attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors from around the world every year to share in its beauty.

These important attributes place us in an admittedly difficult position where we must strike a delicate balance—a balance between making the most of this natural asset and affording it every protection possible. Our reef provides the basis for enormous economic activity. Two million people visit the Queensland coast between Bundaberg and Cairns every year. These visitors generate in excess of $5 billion annually. This vast industry underpins about 50,000 jobs in the tourism sector alone. Additionally, 10 commercial fisheries and a significant recreational fishery contribute a further $290 million annually to our Queensland economy.

Against this backdrop, climate change is the great threat hovering over our reef. The IPCC and the CSIRO estimate—

Mr Messenger: What about the threat of a desal plant at Agnes?

Ms BLIGH: The IPCC and the CSIRO estimate that an average temperature increase of just two to three degrees Celsius could result in 97 per cent of the Great Barrier Reef bleached every year.

Mr Messenger: $30 million and you're putting a desal plant at Agnes.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Burnett.

Mr Lucas: Mr Speaker, he needs some latitude; he's not ...

Mr SPEAKER: I will determine that, but for the moment I will listen to the Premier.

Ms BLIGH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. With a threat of that enormity, we have no option but to build the reef's resilience so it can cope with the threat of climate change. The poor quality of water running into the reef from catchments has been identified in report after report as a major threat. This poor water quality threatens the reef's very heart.

The Reef Water Quality Protection Plan was struck between the Howard and Beattie governments in 2003, but, as we have passed the halfway mark of this 10-year program, it is now appropriate and timely that we renew the reef plan to reflect the rapid effects of climate change since the turn of the century. Put simply, the reef plan has not been delivering the level of improvement in water quality necessary for the continuing health of the reef. To rectify this, one of my first acts as Premier was to approach the Prime Minister to renegotiate the plan and set a more rigorous course to protect this natural asset. Part of that renegotiation was getting to the heart of the matter regulating farm practices in reef catchments to drive the change that we need to urgently see.

I am pleased to inform the House that later today the federal Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Peter Garrett, and I will sign an updated reef plan which will come into immediate effect. This is about the state and federal governments working in tandem to effect change on the reef. This is about a renewed plan that is underpinned by new and ambitious targets, and both governments will deliver critical investment for key activities to achieve these targets.

Through the measures identified in the renewed reef plan, we aim by 2013 to halve the run-off of harmful nutrients and pesticides, and ensure at least 80 per cent of agricultural enterprises and 50 per cent of grazing enterprises have adopted land management practices that will reduce run-off. The reef plan 2009 is a historic agreement because it recognises the complementary strategies of the state and the Commonwealth to protect the reef and explicitly recognises my government's reef regulatory package to be implemented by 2010. This historic program will bring our investment—

Mr ELMES: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I have some concern: we have a bill before the House, which is the Great Barrier Reef Protection Amendment Bill, and I am not at all sure that the Premier should be speaking on that bill.

Mr Hopper: It's exactly what is in the bill.

Mr ELMES: It is exactly what is in the bill.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will listen further to the Premier to make sure that she is not transgressing the rule of anticipation.

Ms BLIGH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am very conscious of the bill before the House, and I have crafted my language here to be cognisant of that. I am not anticipating debate on the bill; I am advising the House that I will be signing a Commonwealth-state agreement with the federal minister which does go to protection of the reef.

This historic program will bring our investment in reef water quality outcomes to $175 million over the next four years. Under the reef plan to be signed by the federal minister and me, the Commonwealth will continue its commitment to the $200 million Reef Rescue initiative to support those farmers who are doing the right thing and investing in sustainability and water quality improvement in accordance with our regulatory reforms. This plan will be delivered in partnership with industry, with communities and with regional natural resource management bodies.

As custodians of this World Heritage site, it is not only critical that we meet our global responsibilities but also crucial that we protect the Great Barrier Reef for the millions who visit it each year, the Queenslanders who rely on the reef remaining pristine to derive their income, and all Queenslanders who are proud and privileged to have this matchless natural icon as their backyard and their playground.

Celebrity MasterChef

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.38 am): Today I can confirm that I have been offered a unique opportunity to take Queensland produce to the nation and have had no difficulty in accepting. The Ten Network recently approached my office with an invitation to appear on *MasterChef*, and it is an offer I have readily accepted for what I think is a very great reason.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr Messenger: Are you going to be baking corruption cookies? What about Labor mates' meat rolls?

Mr Lucas: It will be a fruit cake for you.

Ms BLIGH: I note the noise from those opposite, Mr Speaker. *MasterChef*, in its first series this year, reached audiences of up to two million Australians. Clearly, Australian audiences are taking to the kitchen in droves and taking their lead from shows such as this. So this provides me with the chance to take Queensland produce to those people. Our primary producers are responsible for some of the best produce in this country and this gives us the chance to show a national audience just how good that produce is.

Exactly what I will be preparing for the cameras is a closely guarded secret. But I can guarantee that it will be specifically and uniquely Queensland. I also reassure Queenslanders that my involvement in this program will not come at any cost to taxpayers. I will be taking two days leave to participate in the event. The Ten Network is picking up the tab for all travel and other expenses.

My appearance fee, which is paid to all participants, will be donated to a local charity, which I would like to make mention of here. It is called A Brighter Future. It has been set up by a group of mothers of children with cerebral palsy. Its aim is to provide families with financial support to buy the equipment that these children often need. One of the founding mothers is known well to many members of the House—Liz Pickering, who is an ABC camerawoman and is often here in the chamber. Liz's daughter Poppy has cerebral palsy and she has been a great mainstay of this charity. It is a small local group of parents. I am very happy to be supporting it and would encourage others to find out a bit more about it.

This is a win for Queensland and for our farmers and producers and gives us the chance to put their goods on the national table where they belong.

Mercedes-Benz Fashion Festival

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.40 am): Last week Brisbane turned into a fashion mecca with the staging of the fourth Mercedes-Benz Fashion Festival in our city. I was delighted that the Queensland government was able to launch the event. I was ably represented by the Treasurer at City Hall on Sunday night. There is no doubt that this year's festival was the best yet—a symbol of the continuing growth of the fashion industry in our state.

This vibrant sector of our creative industries is now earning more than $143 million every year in exports and it is supporting around 23,000 jobs in design, retail and manufacturing. Our government knows the value of this industry and indeed this event to our state. That is why we were very pleased to be a major sponsor this year.

This event is a boost to our retail sector. It is a boost to our tourism and hospitality industries, with people coming from all over Australia. It is a huge boost to the international reputation of Queensland's vibrant design industry. It provides a huge launching pad for our state to showcase its collections to the fashion world.

Our local designers continue to make a name for themselves and to put Queensland firmly on the global fashion map. Veterans like Pamela Easton and Lydia Pearson's label 'Easton Pearson' is currently being celebrated with a 20-year retrospective at the Gallery of Modern Art. We were also joined by emerging talent such as Dogstar Fashion, jewellery designer Chelsea de Luca, bridal legend Paul Hunt and *Project Runway Australia* winner Julie Grbac. These are the Queensland names now on the lips of Australians and increasingly on the lips of international fashion commentators.

During last week's event, their incredible creations were centre stage along with other famed international labels such as Akira, Nicola Finetti and Lisa Ho. This year's festival attracted a total of 30 local and six national designers, six retailers and 12 fashion graduates all showcasing the future of fashion in Queensland.

Around 20,000 people attended shows throughout the week and the fashion hype surrounding the event is expected to result in hundreds of thousands of dollars being injected into our state's fashion industry over the coming months. Last year's festival resulted in an increase in local fashion sales of more than 50 per cent, generating almost $500,000 in sales.

With audience numbers up this year it is expected the flow-on effects will be even better for the industry. I am also pleased that this year's festival has provided new opportunities for regional designers and fashion students. The festival's first regional forum was held in Cairns earlier in the year, providing an opportunity for aspiring talent to hear from a distinguished panel about ways forward in the industry. There is no doubt Queensland's Mercedes-Benz Fashion Festival is now a highlight on the Australian designer fashion calendar, and my government will continue to support the growth of this important industry in our state.

Rodgers, Mr A

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Health) (9.43 am): It is with great sadness that I inform the House today that I have learned of the death of Rockhampton vet Alister Rodgers overnight. I extend my deepest sympathies to his family. Mr Rodgers contracted the Hendra virus when he attended to an infected horse at a stud in Rockhampton. In total, five people with exposure to these horses have been under the care of Queensland Health. This is a terrible tragedy for his family, who are being supported by staff at the Princess Alexandra Hospital. They have requested privacy and I would ask that people respect this at this time. Four other people with exposure to these horses have been monitored at the PA Hospital and have now been discharged. Queensland Health staff remain in contact with these people and follow-up testing will occur again in the next few weeks.

There have been only seven confirmed human cases of Hendra virus infection in Queensland, with four human deaths. These are the only recorded human cases in the world. All human infections have occurred following direct exposure to tissue and secretions from infected or dead horses. There is no evidence of human to human transmission.

I am advised that the CSIRO, in collaboration with US scientists, has been working for several years towards developing human and animal vaccines against Hendra and Nipah virus. This work remains in its very preliminary stages and it is likely to take many years before a vaccine is commercially available, if that is able to be achieved. There are a number of difficulties associated with developing a vaccine for Hendra virus. The small number of confirmed cases of the disease in Queensland makes research into the rare virus more difficult, I am told.

The deceased patient and three other patients, those at highest risk of catching the virus given their exposure to infected horses, had been admitted to Rockhampton Hospital for a five-day preventative course of the antiviral drug Ribavirin. Queensland Health staff remain in ongoing contact with all of the people identified as having been on the property. Because of its insidious and delayed impact it is also more stressful for people potentially exposed. A total of 23 people have had baseline testing for Hendra virus infection. Follow-up testing is required three weeks after the last exposure.

Again, I would like to pass on my condolences to the family of Mr Rodgers and also my thanks to our Queensland Health and DPIF staff who have worked hard to provide the best care and support to everyone concerned.

Mental Health Services

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Health) (9.45 am): One in five people will experience a mental health illness in any one year. The personal and social impact of mental illness is extensive. That is why this government has invested more than $1 billion in mental health since 2005, the largest investment in Queensland's history. Work has already commenced on 17 capital works projects including new acute units at Logan, Caboolture and Mackay hospitals, additional high-security services at The Park, a new medium-secure unit at the Caboolture Hospital, and new child and youth inpatient services at Toowoomba and Townsville. Work is also underway to upgrade the secure rehabilitation unit in Townsville and upgrade the Barrett Adolescent Centre. An additional 146 beds will be created by 2011. More than 374 new positions have been established in community mental health facilities.

This week, health ministers will consider the draft Fourth National Mental Health Plan. The priorities and action items under the Queensland Plan for Mental Health 2007-2017 directly align with those outlined in the draft national plan.

In May the opposition leader called on Queensland to follow WA's budget lead. What did the Western Australian budget deliver for health? It delivered three per cent cuts. In Queensland that is 3½ thousand fewer staff, 34,210 fewer elective surgery procedures and 530 beds. In Western Australia it meant no money in the budget for hospital equipment and hospital budgets were cut by 10 per cent. Even the AMA slammed the Western Australian coalition government's policy, saying it would decimate health services. But more concerning in terms of following the Western Australian lead is that there was no mental health funding in the WA budget despite having a mental health minister and a mental health portfolio.

The member for Caloundra took a policy to the last election that relied on volunteers to staff mental health facilities. That policy was slammed by mental health experts. That is what one expects from the Liberal National Party—no funding, no staff, no ideas.

The Leader of the Opposition is on the record stating that it is up to the Premier to come up with ideas. Our Queensland Mental Health Plan 2007-2017 outlines the Queensland government's plan to reform and improve mental health services over the next 10 years. This is also delivering $9.35 million for a range of mental health promotion and early intervention programs, including child and youth mental health services; $345.8 million to expand the continuum of mental health care by establishing 479 new community mental health positions and developing newer, upgraded inpatient beds; $98.9 million to purchase a range of non-government operated accommodation and personal support places to better

support people with a severe mental illness to live in the community; $4.77 million to establish 20 new service integrated coordinator positions to improve links across the mental health sector so that people can choose from a range of services to suit their individual needs; and $70.82 million to strengthen the capacity of mental health services through a range of workforce recruitment and retention activities as well as enhancing the technology infrastructure needed to deliver contemporary mental health services.

Mental health services in Queensland have been significantly boosted by this Labor government. We are committed to improving mental health care right across the spectrum.

Economy

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Employment and Economic Development) (9.48 am): Later this morning the Australian Bureau of Statistics will release the national accounts. Much will ride on this release. It will be critical in charting the pathway forward. It is however ultimately just another brick in a long road. The March quarter national accounts demonstrated the nation's economic resilience. The recent release of the March quarter state accounts showed Queensland also avoided negative growth in that quarter to sustain growth over the year of 0.6 per cent.

At a national level, much of the resilience is based on the Rudd government's fiscal stimulus measures which saved the retail sector and property markets from collapse, and in Queensland the Bligh government's own economic stimulus—a record $18 billion building program and tax measures to assist first homebuyers in particular—have been critical. Today's release will not provide a growth figure for Queensland or indeed any other state but will include the partial measure of state final demand. Yesterday afternoon's decision by the Reserve Bank to leave the cash rate at the emergency setting of three per cent tells us that we are a long way from economic salvation. While maintaining the Reserve's neutral position, the governor noted prospects for growth in his statement which said that the major economies appear to be approaching a turning point, but he also cautioned against overplaying this trend against the continuing legacy of the financial crisis. The accompanying statement from the Reserve pointed also to the sustained decline in business investment as risk is repriced by financial institutions, highlighting the fundamental importance of a government stimulus such as our $18 billion building program.

Businesses are seeing investor appetite increasing but, as markets overnight demonstrated, this remains a fragile proposition. In the latest forecasts by Consensus Economics, the combined GDP for our major trading partners has been revised upwards but it is still predicted that our trading partners will collectively be in recession in 2009 with a forecast contraction of 2.1 per cent for the year. The US economy at best is stabilising and China's outlook, while strengthening, remains uncertain given the opaqueness of the impact of the Chinese government stimulus. Our resolve as a government remains unchanged. If we are as a nation to avoid the economists' technical definition of a recession, then it will be in no small part due to the combined and concerted efforts of governments across the political divide, across different tiers of government and indeed across the globe.

The long road ahead requires us to maintain our resolve. Our resolve as a government is to maintain our commitment to funding the building program. Our resolve is to maintain our commitment to making the tough choices to continue to fund that program and to chart a path towards regaining our AAA credit rating, as Standard & Poor's noted yesterday. Our resolve is to deliver the infrastructure needed tomorrow through our building program that continues to provide the jobs and support the economy still needs today.

Great Barrier Reef

Hon. KJ JONES (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability) (9.51 am): The Great Barrier Reef is internationally recognised as an unrivalled phenomenon with outstanding natural, social and economic values. It is priceless to the people of Queensland and Australia. I, along with the Premier and the Hon. Peter Garrett, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, will later today be jointly releasing the *Great Barrier Reef outlook report*. This outlook report, which is the first of its kind, provides a comprehensive assessment of the state of the Great Barrier Reef—an assessment of our current management and, as the name implies, the future outlook for the Great Barrier Reef. The report identifies that the reef is generally in good condition but highlights that we may see the health of the reef decline significantly over the next 50 years unless we take strong and effective management action now. It was no surprise that the overwhelming area of concern highlighted by this report is climate change. Whilst effective global action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is critical to the reef's future, continued strong management of the reef and its adjacent catchments is absolutely essential to build resilience to withstand and adapt—

Mr ELMES: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I have to say again that the words that the minister is using are very close to some of the words that are being used within the Great Barrier Reef Protection Amendment Bill, and I would ask for your ruling.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! In view of the fact that there is a bill before the House, I would ask the minister to make sure that her words do not anticipate the discussion on that bill.

Ms JONES: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I made no reference to the bill before the House. The outlook report specifically identifies that two priority issues for management are to improve the quality of water flowing into the reef from adjacent catchments and to protect our key coastal habitats. We all understand—

Mr ELMES: I rise to a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Is it the same point of order?

Mr ELMES: I am sorry, Mr Speaker, but this is going to the core of what is the Great Barrier Reef Protection Amendment Bill.

Mr SPEAKER: I will seek a ruling from the Clerk after we examine the bill.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Under the standing orders, the member is quite entitled to take that point of order. I would ask the minister, in view of the fact that it is impossible for us to get across the detail of the bill, to ensure that the ministerial statement that she is making does not anticipate the discussion on that bill.

Ms JONES: I thank the Speaker for his ruling. I was actually referring to the outlook report, which we will be releasing today. We all understand that the projected growth in population and economic activity along the coast, combined with the likely impacts of rising sea levels associated with climate change, will continue to place pressure on Queensland's coastal zones. In response to these increasing pressures, I recently released a draft Queensland coastal plan to improve planning for urban developments in coastal locations. By using up-to-date projections from climate change science, this draft plan incorporates action to address the risks that climate change impacts pose to the lifestyle of Queenslanders and our valuable coastal areas. This highlights just one example of how this government is willing to tackle the tough issues identified in the outlook report.

Later today, in conjunction with my federal colleague, the Hon. Peter Garrett, I will be releasing a joint government response to the outlook report of which I have been talking about this morning. Through this, we have committed to protecting the ongoing health of Queensland's icon and one of the wonderful natural assets of the world—the Great Barrier Reef.

Port of Brisbane, Trade Figures

Hon. RG NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (Minister for Transport) (9.55 am): I am pleased to report that the Port of Brisbane's diverse trade portfolio has led to its 16th consecutive year of continuous growth in total trade. Total trade reached 31.9 million tonnes, up 1.7 million tonnes or 5.6 per cent from last year. During 2008-09 the Port of Brisbane's total exports reached 15½ million tonnes, up 17½ per cent on last year's results, due to increases in cereals, coal, iron and steel. Drought-breaking rain has helped agricultural commodities recover at a time when containerised trade has declined due to a fall in household spending. Cereals, including sorghum and wheat, achieved a substantial increase of 273 per cent to 1.9 million tonnes while favourable growing conditions also produced good harvests of export chickpeas and cottonseed, up 50.5 per cent and 124.4 per cent respectively. Export coal reached its highest ever annual volume of 6.3 million tonnes, up 15 per cent, and iron and steel exports were up 24.1 per cent to 536,959 tonnes. Imports of refined oil, up 11.5 per cent to 1.4 million tonnes, and gas, up 72 per cent to 175,553 tonnes, contributed to the increase in total trade.

Despite a 4.9 per cent fall in container trade to 896,199 teus, or 20-foot equivalent units, the port achieved a 10-year average growth rate of 9.9 per cent. These trade results demonstrate that the Port of Brisbane is a strong, mature, commercial organisation that no longer needs to remain in government ownership. The Port of Brisbane is well positioned to grow and expand as a private organisation. In private ownership, the port will benefit from being able to access the full financial and technical resources of the commercial sector. The future growth of the port will be good for jobs and good for the economy. The scoping study to determine how the port will be structured for sale is progressing well and is expected to be complete by the end of 2009. While the sale process progresses, the port will maintain its focus on its commitment to reducing the port's greenhouse gas emissions, improving resource efficiency and investing in vital new infrastructure for the long-term growth of the port.

Security Providers

Hon. PJ LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading) (9.58 am): Office of Fair Trading inspectors checked more than 730 businesses and 3,500 people for appropriate security provider licences in the last financial year. Between July 2008 and June 2009, 21 compliance operations were completed throughout the state, with 733 businesses visited and the licences of 3,678 security providers checked.

Office of Fair Trading officers visited licensed venues, critical infrastructure, shopping centres, major events and any other place where security providers are employed. They checked that all security providers had the right licences and that all the details on these licences were correct. These checks were conducted to ensure that only appropriate people were working in the security industry. These types of compliance checks improve public safety and should act as a warning to anyone working in the security industry without a licence. Compliance checks are ongoing throughout Queensland and spot checks can happen at any time. From the compliance operations last financial year, 151 warnings and 223 infringement notices were issued. Nine prosecutions have been finalised through the court, including one matter where an unlicensed security guard was fined $15,000. In another matter, a security firm was prosecuted and fined $10,000 for employing an unlicensed security provider.

While the onus is on the security provider to ensure that they have the appropriate licence, it is also important that employers check to make sure that the people who they are hiring are correctly licensed. It is an offence to employ an unlicensed person to perform the duties of a security provider. The Office of Fair Trading website has a free online licence checking facility where anyone can log on and check the licence status of a security provider. Anyone caught working in the security industry without a licence faces a fine of up to $50,000.

Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition should go and do these checks and hire himself a security provider. He might need more than one, actually, because after the debacle of yesterday I am sure the member for Gregory is not particularly happy with him. That just demonstrates the importance of thoroughly checking your information.

Bushfire Preparedness; Queensland Ambulance Service, Appointment

Hon. NS ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (10.01 am): During the past two weeks, 22 local government areas across the state, mainly in southern areas, have been subject to complete fire bans because of a very high or extreme fire danger. Our urban, auxiliary and rural fire crews did an excellent job in responding to wildfires, protecting property and lives. Let me place on the record the thanks of the community for their efforts. Thankfully, weather conditions have improved in recent days. However, Queenslanders must remain on alert and continue to prepare for bushfires. No-one can afford to be complacent.

The tragic legacy of Victoria's Black Saturday bushfires in February demonstrates that we need to be physically and mentally prepared for every fire risk scenario. On Sunday while in Bundaberg for community cabinet the Premier, the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability and I received an update briefing from the fire commissioner on the bushfire threat. His advice is that 44 per cent of the state has the potential for above normal fire activity. A further 41 per cent has the potential for normal fire activity.

The QFRS is continuing to progress a range of initiatives to reduce bushfire hazards and to improve the safety of the community. The QFRS works with other government agencies through the interdepartmental committee on bushfires on a coordinated approach to bushfire preparation on public land. It also works with private landowners to undertake back-burning as part of its comprehensive wildfire mitigation initiative. While the QFRS is doing all it can to prepare and respond to any incident, private landholders need to ensure that they have done all they can to safeguard their properties and families.

On another issue, yesterday in this House the member for Mirani used the privileges of parliament to question the integrity of the appointment of a QAS officer who happens to be the partner of a union organiser. The member implied that this officer was appointed to a plum job in the QAS by inappropriate means. For the information of the House, I point out that the officer concerned has 14 years service with the Queensland Ambulance Service and was appointed to her current position following an open, transparent and meritorious selection process.

In his unfounded and unsubstantiated attack on this officer, who is highly regarded within the Ambulance Service as a person of integrity and competence, the member has also impugned the integrity and professionalism of the members of the selection panel who made the appointment, which included the current deputy commissioner, two assistant commissioners and an independent recruitment specialist.

This is just another example of the member's grubby and ill-informed undermining of public confidence in the Ambulance Service and the professionalism of QAS officers. He should immediately issue a public apology.

Wedge-leaf Tuckeroo Bridge

Hon. CA WALLACE (Thuringowa—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads) (10.03 am): I recently had the honour of announcing the new name of the FE Walker Street Bridge on the $100 million Bundaberg ring-road as the Wedge-leaf Tuckeroo Bridge. Naming the bridge after a rare plant recognises the work undertaken by Bundaberg environmental officers and local environmental groups to protect the vulnerable plant and its habitat location underneath the bridge.

While construction of the ring-road began in November 2007, environmental officers have been undertaking studies for the project to protect species such as the wedge-leaf tuckeroo since 2005. This clearly demonstrates that my department considers environmental management and conservation to be one of its highest priorities.

The wedge-leaf tuckeroo plant is listed as vulnerable under several acts and the work carried out by environmental officers will provide additional valuable research into the translocation and propagation of the species for its ongoing protection. Several plants were translocated and another 250 compensatory plants were planted underneath the bridge and at the Baldwin Swamp Conservation Park. It is an excellent example of my department minimising the impact of road projects on the environment.

It is quite appropriate to be naming the bridge after a plant that is so prominent and important in the FE Walker Street area. Recognising the environment in such a manner is a first for the region and provides the community with an opportunity to recognise the region's outstanding biodiversity values. It also increases the profile of all threatened species throughout the community and shows that we do our very best to manage road networks to optimise environmental outcomes for natural, human and built environments. Local environmental groups have been very supportive of the proposal to name the bridge after this rare plant. I thank environmental officers and the environmental groups in Bundaberg for their involvement in the project and congratulate them on their support throughout construction.

Whales, Shark Nets

Hon. TS MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland) (10.05 am): Yesterday, our Marine Animal Release Team freed the first whale of this migration season caught in shark control equipment. The eight-metre whale—a juvenile—was heavily entangled at Coolangatta. For more than three hours our team worked to free the whale and I congratulate them on an excellent job. It was not easy. Just as the team nearly had the young animal free a large aggressive adult whale spooked it back into the gear and it became entangled for a second time. Local lifeguards notified us about the whale at 11 am. The entanglement was then confirmed by one of our whale watch volunteers and the MART was activated.

More often than not, younger whales are caught up in shark gear because they are inexperienced in identifying obstructions in the water. Since 2000, including this rescue, 24 whales have been caught in shark netting in Queensland. Of these entanglements, 20 whales have been successfully freed by the Marine Animal Release Team, which has members based on the Gold Coast, Mackay, Mooloolaba and Noosa. Our release teams are some of the most experienced and highly trained groups of their type in the world, with access to specifically designed equipment. They are committed to continually improving whale release techniques.

To further support these teams, today I can announce that they will trial mobile helmet cameras to film releases. The cameras will be mounted on the helmets that are worn already for safety during releases. If successful, the cameras will allow officers to analyse and refine their release techniques while also using the vision to train new officers.

Following any entanglement we often get calls to remove shark control gear from our beaches during the whale migration season. Swimmer safety is the No. 1 priority and the Queensland government is not prepared to put swimmers at risk by removing shark netting at any time of the year. Statistics show that beach visitations are still relatively high in winter. The shark nets and drum lines that protect 85 Queensland beaches will remain in place all year round.

Great Barrier Reef

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Local Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (10.08 am): The Great Barrier Reef, World Heritage listed since 1981, stands out as one of the most recognisable icons that is renowned for its beauty and its significant biodiversity. Reef tourism and other activities contribute more than $4.3 billion to our economy and employ over 50,000 people. Protecting and preserving the reef is a cultural, environmental and economic imperative.

In 2007, the Bligh government commissioned a review of sewage treatment plants across Queensland, supported by the Local Government Association of Queensland—not very glamorous; nonetheless very important. This review identified 66 sewage treatment plants across the state that required replacement or upgrade, of which 46 were in the high or very high risk categories. Twenty-seven of these plants were identified as having a direct or indirect impact on the reef itself. We have already completed 14 of these upgrades.

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Ms BOYLE: Wait for the answer. The Bligh government is committed to building tomorrow's Queensland—a Queensland that preserves our unique way of life, and that includes working to protect the reef. The Bligh government has committed over $110.6 million in funding over the next three years to upgrade the remaining 13 high-priority sewage treatment plants and protect the Great Barrier Reef.

This funding supports more than 850 local jobs. The honourable member for Warrego might wish to take notes. This includes $66.7 million for upgrades to water infrastructure in Townsville; $1.36 million for Palm Island; another $450,000 towards the Bucasia waste water treatment plant in Mackay; and $22.6 million for upgrades to sewage treatment plants across Cairns. These are examples only.

The upgrades will reduce the amount of effluent and pollutants discharged onto the reef and help protect its stunning and unique coral as well as the many species that call the reef home. This is another example of the Bligh government supporting regional Queensland and local councils. In 2006 we promised $325 million over five years for the upgrade of water and sewerage infrastructure across the state. In fact, in only three years we have committed much more than that: $449.3 million—that is $124.3 million over our regional commitment. This is prudent spending. Not only is it helping to protect one of Queensland's most valuable assets and building the infrastructure to meet the needs of tomorrow's Queensland; it is also part of our $18 billion building program which protects more than 127,000 jobs.

Building the Education Revolution

Hon. GJ WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Education and Training) (10.11 am): The Bligh government's building program is about protecting and creating Queensland jobs. Our building program was a key plank of our agenda for re-election. It is the reason we are in government. Labor understands that building infrastructure builds our economy and jobs. But it takes tough decisions in the budget to fund our state's growth. We are working hand in hand with the federal government to build and rebuild Queensland's future to protect and create Queensland jobs.

The Rudd government recently announced the third round of funding in the P21 projects. There are 372 state schools that will benefit from funding to the value of $515 million approved under the latest round. There has been some comment and criticism by some commentators of the Queensland government's administration and delivery of this project within the state school sector. Some have claimed that state schools were not receiving value for money on these projects. I want to make sure that Queensland parents and students in state schools benefit as much as possible from this unprecedented funding opportunity being provided by the federal government. That is why I asked my department to engage independent agency PricewaterhouseCoopers to review the delivery and administration of the Building the Education Revolution program within the state school sector by the Department of Education and Training and the Department of Public Works. The Department of Education and Training also informed the Queensland Auditor-General of this course of action. The government is not involved in the delivery of the program in the Catholic and independent school sectors.

I am pleased to say that the PricewaterhouseCoopers report was overall very positive. It found that the BER program in Queensland will achieve value for money and that the design standards are based upon current best practice. Coordination of the BER program by the Department of Education and Training means that state schools are better able to maintain their focus on the core business of teaching and learning.

An area pointed out by PWC to be addressed is the need to plan for the long-term maintenance of these buildings and to budget accordingly. The department has taken up this constructive advice and is examining the manner in which that can be done within the state budget. With a BER building program of this magnitude being rolled out at such speed it is important that the department take stock of how it is going and gets an independents eye to look over progress and that is what we have done.

I will be presenting the report to the BER steering committee that I established some months ago, a steering committee of stakeholders, and I will be asking for its feedback. The committee includes the Queensland Master Builders Association, the Department of Public Works, the primary and secondary principals associations, the Queensland Teachers Union, the Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Association, and the Federal Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations. I want to hear their opinions on whether we could be doing even better and any comments they have on PWC's assessment of the administration and delivery of this important program within the state school sector. Most of all, I want to be certain that all parents and students in the state school sector are getting what they deserve from this unprecedented project—modern school infrastructure and a much needed boost to the economy.

Dr FLEGG: I rise to a point of order. I request that the minister table the document to which he is referring, not just refer to selected parts of it.

Mr SPEAKER: Under the point of order provisions you can move that the minister table it if that is the course of action that you want to take.

Dr FLEGG: Thank you. I move—

That the minister table the document to which he is referring.

Mr WILSON: I indicate that I am quite willing to make the document available to the parliament. As a courtesy to the steering committee that I have been working with, I was first going to be briefing them this afternoon. I am certainly happy to make a copy available. This afternoon it is going to be made

public to all and sundry. I am very happy for this parliament to have multiple copies of this report. We undertook this review to give assurance to Queenslanders that we are doing the right thing with the administration of this BER program. If there are opportunities to improve the delivery of this program then we will leave no stone unturned to ensure that we do that. The Queensland public would expect nothing less than that to ensure that we are getting value for money from this important program.

Mr STEVENS: I am happy to second the motion.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Mr WILSON: I will arrange for a copy to be obtained so that I can table it, which I am very happy to do.

Mr SPEAKER: The minister has indicated that he does not physically have the document on him. It has been decided by the House that he will table it and I would ask him to do that at the earliest opportunity.

Mr WILSON: I am very happy to table it. I have already asked for my staff to bring me a copy now. It is a public document that will be made available to the people of Queensland.

Mr SPEAKER: Let us clarify that the House has resolved in the affirmative that the document be tabled and the minister will abide by the ruling of the House.

Residential Tenancies Authority

Hon. KL STRUTHERS (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women) (10.16 am): The Bligh government is looking after the housing needs of Queenslanders no matter where they live. I was in Townsville last week with the local member, Mandy Johnstone, for the Residential Tenancies Authority's regional board meeting. It was good to see the RTA board reaching out into regional Queensland. It was an opportunity to listen to the local concerns of tenants, lessors and real estate agents.

This year has been a milestone for the RTA. It is its 20th year as an authority and it is a year that has seen sweeping changes to rental laws. Some of the changes include a ban on rent bidding, new grounds of entry for agents and giving tenants the right to challenge terms they consider unreasonable such as excessive rent rises. Our new laws strike the right balance between protecting the interests of both tenants and property owners.

The feedback so far is that they are working well. That is important at a time when families are under increasing pressure with housing stress and a competitive rental market. We ought to make life that little bit easier for Queenslanders in the rental market. That is why we have expanded our RentConnect service so that we can help more people enter into the private rental market. It began as a trial in Caboolture and Rockhampton. It was so successful that we are now expanding it to the Sunshine Coast, Mackay, Whitsundays, Wide Bay-Burnett, West Moreton and the south-west. RentConnect helps people negotiate the private rental market. I am talking about young people, people without a recent tenancy history and single parents, many of whom are discriminated against in the private rental market. Officers work one-on-one with them so that they can overcome the challenges of the private rental market. They are given simple and effective tips and advice on how to find a property, how to apply for it, how to start a tenancy and a tenancy guarantee of $1,000. There is a big demand for private rental housing with a lot of competition out there.

While we are rolling out more than 4,000 new social housing dwellings across the state, we are not about to turn our back on people who need help entering the private rental market.

CRIMINAL CODE (MEDICAL TREATMENT) AMENDMENT BILL

Declared Urgent

Hon. JC SPENCE (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.19 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That under the provisions of standing order 159, the Criminal Code (Medical Treatment) Amendment Bill be declared an urgent bill to enable the bill to be passed through its remaining stages at this week's sitting.

Normally the government would not want to bring on emergency bills such as this. We appreciate that members would prefer to have two weeks to study the bill and to talk to people about legislation that is being proposed and is before the House. However, any member of this chamber who has watched the media in the past couple of weeks and listened to the concerns of doctors would understand the reasons for the urgency of this legislation.

Last night in his second reading speech the Attorney-General outlined very clearly that we need to give certainty to our doctors. Medical practitioners at some public hospitals in Queensland have raised doubts over the current position at law of medical procedures. As a result, doctors are concerned about possible criminal prosecution for administering nonsurgical treatments whereas suboptimal and riskier surgical procedures would be protected. As a result, some procedures have been cancelled or suspended until the law is changed. It is critical to give doctors and their patients some certainty about these matters. That is why the government believes it is urgent that we debate this bill today.

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.21 am): I second the motion moved by the honourable Leader of the House. The Criminal Code (Medical Treatment) Amendment Bill is a critically important legislative measure that requires urgent consideration by this parliament. This urgency is not borne out of a desire to disadvantage any member of the parliament or to stifle debate on the matter. This is an important issue and needs to be dealt with accordingly. The urgency is borne out of a real need to ensure that medical practitioners in Queensland have certainty in respect of the protections available to them under the criminal law.

We all rely upon medical professionals throughout this state to make their professional decisions frankly and fearlessly, with primacy being given to a doctor's medical advice in consultation with their patient. There has been significant public reporting of concerns raised by medical practitioners in some public hospitals in Brisbane. Those concerns were the result of doubts over the current protections afforded to them by the criminal law.

This parliament has a duty to the people of Queensland to ensure medical professionals are able to do their job. This issue is not solely about pregnancy terminations. Potentially it affects all medical treatments. When urgent issues arise, as parliamentarians we must act urgently. Both doctors and patients need to be certain of their rights and responsibilities under the law and the amendments proposed do precisely that.

There is a need to clarify these matters sooner rather than later to ensure that medical services in Queensland are given the protection they require under the law. It is an unsatisfactory result, both in policy and in law, to leave in limbo the hardworking medical professionals across our state who need to treat their patients but are left uncertain of how legally they may best do that in the absence of the bill becoming law. I commend the motion.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—LNP) (10.22 am): The motion moved by the Leader of the House and seconded by the Attorney-General proposes a profound suspension of the standing orders of this place. It proposes that a bill that was introduced into this parliament last night after the dinner break can be passed into law in a period of less than 24 hours. To justify such a profound suspension of the standing orders, a situation would need to be very urgent indeed. The opposition and I do not believe that the government has made a case that this bill seeks to address a situation of that urgent nature.

The points that have been made this morning by both the Leader of the House in moving the motion and the Attorney-General in seconding the motion in regard to the provision of certainty to the medical profession are valid. The bill itself contains transitional provisions that allow for the retrospective application of the amendment, which will provide that security to the medical profession. The case for urgency has not been made by the government.

This bill deals with issues that are the subject of very strong opinions by people not just within this parliament but within the community generally. It is fair and reasonable that the people who have the responsibility to make the decision about this bill have the normal period to consider those issues fully. There has been no case made for the suspension of that normal period. There has been no reasonable case made that as members we should not have that normal period to consider these issues fully. Because of that, the opposition will be opposing the motion moved by the Leader of the House.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10.24 am): There is no doubt that this is a complex and highly emotive issue. The government members are right in their proposition, which we generally share, that there needs to be a legislative solution to deal with this issue which has arisen in the past couple of weeks. Certainly there needs to be clarity in the law, but that clarity needs to be properly established and there needs to be proper consultation. We also have to make sure that, in the course of our legislative deliberations, we get it absolutely right.

By way of demonstration of that point, for the past two weeks the government has had the resources of government, including the significant resources within the departments, working on this legislation. To give some idea of the complexity of it, that work was still being done as late as yesterday before the bill was introduced into the parliament. Therefore, the government has an advantage in having those arms available to it in order to draft the legislation. Having said that, of course there are many examples in this place and outside where legislation that has been prepared in haste can have unforeseen consequences, especially if it has not been properly tested through the scrutiny that can be brought into this place by people who have been properly briefed, who have talked to a range of interest groups, who have taken their own legal advice and who have been able to study the legislation.

This bill was introduced last night at just before quarter to eight. By the time we debate it today, it will be about 19 hours since it was introduced into the parliament. That is hardly the 14 days that would normally pass before the parliament debates a bill, particularly a bill such as this. I would argue that another 24 hours might significantly fill the gap for people who desire to properly consult on this issue.

Opposition members: Hear, hear!

Mr SPRINGBORG: There needs to be broad consultation. This is a highly complex and emotive issue. I have absolutely no problem whatsoever with the principle espoused by the government in trying to address this issue and the legislative parameters that it has laid down. However, that does not necessarily mean that they are completely perfect. In his contribution, the Attorney-General mentioned that this bill is needed to clarify not only matters to do with the termination of pregnancy but also other medical issues. The latter is not under question and does not need to be rushed. However, we certainly need a little bit more time with regards to the former.

The other thing that concerns me is that we have not had access to the government's legal advice. I know that it is not normal for the government to provide access to that legal advice in this place. However, there are precedents where that has happened, particularly with matters where the government has argued the case of urgency. Most recently that has happened in this place with regards to off-the-plan sales for units.

In conclusion, I refer to the emotional nature of this issue and the fact that within this parliament there are probably not just three sides to this debate but a multiplicity of opinions across the spectrum. On such an issue there could be 50 different views. Therefore, we need to address the issue of scepticism and concern, and we need to make sure that we get this absolutely right within a legislative framework. I rise to oppose the proposition that the bill needs to be debated urgently, even though I understand the issue needs to have a solution in the not-too-distant future. However, the government has not made the case for urgency and a little delay would make for a better informed and better consulted debate in this place.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (10.28 am): I rise to oppose the urgency motion. I think every single one of us in this chamber respects and values the role of doctors; every single one of us respects and understands the role of mothers; every single one of us respects and understands the importance of children. The Attorney-General stated this is an important issue and should be dealt with accordingly. I believe that it is appropriate that each of us be given an opportunity to fully understand the implications of the bill across the broad medical spectrum and be able to offer an informed opinion. This urgency motion will not offer that opportunity and I oppose it.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (10.29 am): I rise to speak in support of the urgency motion. I take members to page 3 of the *Australian*. By way of urgency I will read the first paragraph. It states—

Pregnant, with her unborn baby dying in her belly, Shay yesterday joined the sad procession of Queensland women to cross the state border to access medical abortion services that have been withdrawn due to an impasse between the Bligh government and doctors.

The plight of the 24-year-old expectant mother has given the standoff an intensely personal focus, but yesterday enough was enough. Shay's husband, Brad, her parents and those of the young woman, drove with her to Lismore—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I would ask the honourable member to come to the substantive motion that is before the House.

Mr WELLINGTON: Mr Speaker, I believe there is an urgency. Queenslanders have a right to have their matters dealt with in Queensland. They should not need to travel interstate. We have the capacity to respond to this need. There is a need now. We have the capacity to debate a motion and make a decision. I support the motion.

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—LNP) (10.30 am): There is an unprecedented and dire crisis of confidence in this government. The government has lost the trust of the majority of Queenslanders and, given the serious nature of the bill, this urgency motion is doing nothing to restore that confidence. Nor is the fact that this government also refuses to release to us the legal advice attached to this bill. If this urgency motion were delayed by only 24 hours and we were able to read that legal advice, I and those on this side of the parliament would be in a better informed position to support this motion.

But the government has deliberately manipulated the timing of the introduction of this bill to minimise the amount of time that those on this side of the parliament, the people of Queensland and the people of Burnett have to consult over and scrutinise this most important piece of legislation. The government has prior form for this sort of behaviour which has corrupted the Queensland political system. Since August 2005 more than 25 bills have been declared urgent for no good reason. This urgency motion should at least be put to the parliament tomorrow. I will not be supporting the urgency motion today.

Hon. JC SPENCE (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.31 am): The motion that I moved today is asking that this bill be debated this week. I am just responding to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. We are not necessarily proposing that it be debated today. We are happy to continue to talk with the opposition and the Independents about the timing of the debate. We are prepared to accommodate some people's request for it to be debated tomorrow, and we will continue to talk to them during the day.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hendra Virus

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—LNP) (10.32 am): I give notice that I will move—

That the government move to immediately protect the health of Queenslanders and the financial viability of Queensland farmers from the impact of the Hendra virus and flying foxes.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

School Group Tours

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before I call on question time, I want to acknowledge that today we will be visited by the Boondall State School in the electorate of Nudgee, Maryborough West State School in the electorate of Maryborough, Heights College in the electorate of Rockhampton and Talwood State School in the electorate of Southern Downs. Also, we will be visited by the Banksia Beach State School, Bribie Island State School, Beachmere State School and Caboolture East State School in the electorate of Pumicestone. In view of the time, I advise that question time will cease at 11.34 am.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Credit Rating

Mr LANGBROEK (10.34 am): My first question without notice is to the Premier. Last night, Standard & Poor's confirmed the Victorian government's AAA credit rating, highlighting their debt to gross state product ratio of approximately five per cent in 2013, whereas Queensland's ratio of debt to GSP is likely to be 35 per cent. In light of the damage that this government's debt has done to Queensland, what is more important to the Premier—getting on with the job here in Queensland or running off on a gratuitously political stunt and going on *MasterChef*?

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Just resume your seat until I have order, Premier. Order! The honourable the Premier.

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. I think it is actually instructive to have a look at what Standard & Poor's is saying not only about Victoria but also about Queensland. What it notes in the most recent affirmation of the ratings is that it is Queensland's proposal to go ahead with some asset sales that makes it possible for us to restore a AAA rating, and I draw that to the attention of those opposite.

It is no surprise that Victoria would be in a different financial position. Victoria owns no government owned corporations—none.

Mr Lucas: Sold them all and paid off debt.

Ms BLIGH: Sold them all. So they own nothing. They do not incur debt when they want to expand the electricity network. They do not incur debt when they want to—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable the Premier.

Ms BLIGH: When the electricity network is to be expanded, the state does not incur debt. When the railway needs to be expanded, when they need new rolling stock, all of that debt is incurred in the private sector. So to compare Victoria and Queensland in that regard is absolutely to compare chalk and cheese. That has always been the case. I note that the member for Moggill had to get the library to confirm that for him last week. It is a matter of record in the Commonwealth budget papers, which he well knows because he has drawn them to the attention of the House before.

Mr Speaker, I am very happy to talk about *MasterChef*. I think it is important to recognise that part of Queensland's prosperity now and part of Queensland's prosperity going forward is the health and wellbeing of our agricultural sector. What we have in our agricultural sector are people right across Queensland—both large players and small businesses—that are taking Queensland produce, selling it to the rest of the country and selling it to the world. I put out a call this morning for Queenslanders to let me know their recipe ideas. I am happy to advise the member opposite—

Mr Lucas: My curried sausages.

Ms BLIGH:—that I have been inundated by people who are making products out of Queensland produce. They have all been offering their suggestions and I welcome every single suggestion—although I would say that if I used them all together it would create a culinary disaster. And I will not be taking the Deputy Premier's suggestion of curried sausages; I think using Keen's curry powder is his speciality.

This is a serious opportunity for us to take Queensland produce into the kitchens of all of those Australians who love this program. It is an opportunity that comes without any cost to the taxpayer and I am going to jump at it.

Credit Rating

Mr LANGBROEK: My second question without notice is also to the Premier. Some 40,600 Queenslanders have lost their full-time jobs over the last year compared to only 20,000 Victorians over the same time frame. Will the Premier explain why Victoria can still have a AAA credit rating, will not be running massive deficit budgets like this government and has fewer people losing their jobs? If Victoria can get it right, why can't Queensland?

Ms BLIGH: If the member for Surfers Paradise wants to live in Victoria, that is a matter for him. But I can tell him that I would not trade Queensland for Victoria for one minute. Let us talk about the difference. It might have escaped the notice of the member for Surfers Paradise, but Victoria is by and large a city state, providing services to an area about the size of a postage stamp. There is one member of this House, the member for Mount Isa, whose electorate is bigger than the state of Victoria, as I understand it.

Mr Lucas: It is the size of France.

Ms BLIGH: It is the size of France. There are a number of members on both sides of the House whose own electorates are bigger than the state of Victoria. The cost to the Queensland taxpayer of providing an equal level of service to people wherever they live in one of the largest jurisdictions in the world obviously is higher than for Victoria. We subsidise, for example, the cost of electricity into rural and regional Queensland at some $600 million a year. If we did not then people in those rural and regional electorates that are represented by many members in this House, and many on the other side, would be paying an unacceptably high rate just to get a basic service like electricity.

Queensland is spending on infrastructure per capita almost three times what Victoria is spending. That is because we are a growing population and it is because we are servicing parts of Australia that are more expensive to service.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms BLIGH: I take it from the interjections opposite that if it is more expensive to service people in rural Queensland then they think we should not do it. The member for Clayfield might want that, but the people on this side of the House believe that Queenslanders, wherever they live, deserve infrastructure—wherever they live.

Mr Nicholls: Infrastructure freeze.

Ms BLIGH: I take the interjection from the member for Clayfield, who seems to be having a time warp moment. He talks about an infrastructure freeze. There has only been one of those, and we all know the architect of it: it was one of his Liberal predecessors—a Liberal predecessor. This state has outspent every state of Australia in infrastructure for the last 12 years, and we will keep doing it. We will keep building what Queenslanders need. What those over there do not have is the backbone to develop their own policies and come up with the sorts of decisions that are needed to keep Queensland growing. We will build Queensland. We will create jobs. On the question of unemployment, Queensland has a lower rate of unemployment than Victoria.

Great Barrier Reef

Mr WETTENHALL: My question is to the Premier. Today the Premier is to sign an agreement with the Commonwealth on reef protection. Will the Premier advise how the agreement will further protect our cherished international icon?

Mr SPEAKER: Premier, in answering the question, I ask that you please not refer to the provisions of the bill that is currently before the House.

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for his question. He is lucky enough to represent one of those electorates which sits on the border of the Great Barrier Reef so he along with many others understands its incredible natural values to us as a people and its incredible economic value to the constituents he represents.

That is why one of the first things I did when I became Premier was to approach the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd. He had gone to the election with a commitment to invest significant new funds in a reef rescue plan. The reef does need rescuing, despite the best efforts of the previous Prime Minister, John Howard, and the previous Premier, Peter Beattie, who signed an agreement in 2003. That agreement was historic in that it represented the best efforts of both the state government and federal government, across political lines, to put together their resources and improve our performance in relation to the quality of the run-off that was going on to our reef.

But we need to be honest and accept that five years into that 10-year agreement it is not achieving what we had hoped when originally signed. That is why the updated plan that I will be signing today with Peter Garrett, the federal minister, along with my colleague the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability will considerably challenge both state and federal governments to improve our performance. Together in this agreement we will be committing to halving the run-off of harmful nutrients and pesticides by 2013. This is a very big aim. It is a very significant target but one which we should aim to achieve.

We will also be looking to ensure that at least 80 per cent of agricultural enterprises and 50 per cent of grazing enterprises have adopted land management practices that will reduce run-off. A large part of that will occur because the federal government funds—I am speaking here about federal government funds—

Mr ELMES: Mr Speaker, the Premier is quoting statistics that are coming straight out of the bill that is before the House.

Mr SPEAKER: I will give a ruling on this. I asked that the Premier not refer to the provisions in the bill. There is a bill before the House but as I understand the Premier's answer she is referring to a treaty that she is signing today with the federal minister. Accordingly, I find the Premier's answer in order and not in defiance of the standing orders.

Ms BLIGH: I think it is important for those in this House who care about this issue to understand that the Commonwealth and the state with this agreement have actually, after a lot of negotiation, achieved an agreement that the Commonwealth funds, the $200 million, will be available to those farmers who are seeking to access those funds for the purpose of acting in accordance with any regulatory reforms. That is a significant step forward and I think one that will be welcomed by many producers.

So I welcome the Commonwealth's commitment to this important initiative. I would ask that members familiarise themselves with this agreement. Five years is a short period of time, but if we do not act with urgency we run a very serious risk that our reef will be considerably damaged beyond repair, and that is something I think none of us want to see happen on our watch.

Credit Rating

Mr SPRINGBORG: My question without notice is to the Premier. I refer to the Premier's Q2 document which she claimed was designed to protect our once cherished AAA credit rating. I refer to the Premier's one-time commitment not to introduce a fuel tax and I refer to the Premier's one-time commitment not to privatise our assets. Can the Premier confirm that her signature dish on *MasterChef* will be to cook up more and more porky pies?

Ms BLIGH: Let us talk about commitments. Let us talk about the commitment that the member for Southern Downs made to the people of Queensland that he would stand aside from politics and no longer bother them. That was a commitment he found he was unable to keep. Within weeks of making it, here he is again. No matter how many times they say, 'We've had enough,' no matter how many times the people of Queensland say, 'Go away,' all they get is more reheated leftovers from the member for Southern Downs.

Let us talk about the commitment the member for Southern Downs made to support his new leader with loyalty. Let us have a really close look at what happened here yesterday. What we saw here yesterday was another set-up of the member for Surfers Paradise by the member for Southern Downs. There is no other possible explanation for the extraordinary attack that was made here yesterday not only on the Australian Workers Heritage Centre but on members of the board of the centre—including the member for Gregory. The Leader of the Opposition in his question to me yesterday accused the Workers Heritage Centre of 'money laundering', taking a state government grant and money laundering it into Labor Holdings. If the Leader of the Opposition honestly believed that, he had no choice but to stand aside his shadow minister for police, because of course the shadow minister for police is a member of the board and party to all of those loan arrangements and grant funding.

We know that the Leader of the Opposition now does not believe those things. He was given the question as part of a set-up. Let us be absolutely clear. When the member for Southern Downs talks about loyalty and talks about commitment, we all know that when it comes to the member for Southern Downs you are the weakest link.

Australian Workers Heritage Centre

Mr HOOLIHAN: My question without notice is also to the Premier. Can the Premier outline for the House the importance of the Australian Workers Heritage Centre to Western Queensland regional tourism?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for the question. I am very pleased to see members of my team supporting this great tourism icon of Western Queensland. I am told by the CEO out there, Bob Gleeson, that a study of regional tourism by Tourism Australia said that the visitor spend in Barcaldine is approximately $80 per visitor but that it rises to $170 per person if the visitor goes to the Workers Heritage Centre—so the spend is just over double if they go to the Workers Heritage Centre. That is a very big investment for the people of Western Queensland.

Tourism is doing it tough at the moment. It is tough enough wherever you are, but when you are in a more isolated part of the state you are feeling it more. So I do want to recognise today what a very popular and iconic facility this is for Western Queensland. The fact that yesterday the opposition chose to attack this icon of outback tourism is shameful. But I also need to draw to the attention of the House that, in order to make the attack, they went out yesterday to the media with another doctored document.

Mr Wallace: Godwin Grech is back.

Ms BLIGH: Godwin Grech was at it again yesterday. They put out a document that first of all listed what they claimed were 'donations' from the Workers Heritage Centre to Labor Holdings. Of course we know—and they were advised before they put this out—that they were not donations; they were in fact repayments of a commercial loan arrangement. Much more concerningly, what they tried to do was to say that the heritage centre was using state grants to repay a loan to Labor Holdings. This would have amounted to misappropriation and money laundering, as suggested—a very serious allegation.

In order to make that allegation, they had to draw together two things—a state grant around about the same time as the money was repaid to Labor Holdings. So they put out a document that said a state grant of $1.7 million was made in 2007-08. What are the facts? It was actually heritage trails funding—largely Commonwealth funding—and it was made in 1999, not in 2007-08. Sorry, it was first announced in 1999. It was fully acquitted to the state and the Commonwealth in 2003. So they doctored the document to suit the facts that they were trying to establish.

We now know that none of that is true. Not one piece of it is true. They further went on to say that they got money to build the Tree of Knowledge memorial. If they had asked the member for Gregory, they would know that it was the local council which got that money, not the Workers Heritage Centre. It is a concoction of fabrications to support a case where none existed at the expense of the reputation of the Workers Heritage Centre and, frankly, the reputation of the member for Gregory.

A1GP

Mr DEMPSEY: My question is to the Minister for Sport. Is the minister aware of recent reports that the A1GP organisation is in dire financial trouble, with racing equipment being threatened for auction to meet unpaid bills? Has the minister investigated these claims? Will the minister guarantee that the A1GP event on the Gold Coast will proceed as planned?

Mr REEVES: I thank the honourable member for the question. The 2009 SuperGP is a whole new era for the four-day festival of motor sport on the Gold Coast. With a change in name, it is a great time to introduce some other changes to enhance the race program and facilities for the participants and patrons, and that is exactly what the event promoter has done. For the first time ever, the open-wheel racing category, the A1GP racing cars, will be on the track on Thursday entertaining the crowd with a practice session. The weekend crowd will be treated to a new line-up of the A1GP and the V8 supercar racing. The A1GP will spin around the track in a 25-minute continuous sprint race on Saturday, leading up to a feature 70-minute race on Sunday.

The V8 supercars will also adopt a new format with two qualifying sessions on Friday and return in the highly popular top 10 shoot-out on Saturday morning, followed by two 200-kilometre series races over the weekend. It is hard to imagine more entertainment, but the support categories of the minis, Aussie racers and formula Fords will also thrill the fans and provide opportunities for the up-and-coming drivers to compete on this internationally renowned circuit.

Despite the tough economic times, the promoter has also introduced new infrastructure to improve the facilities. With the movement of the ever-popular V8 supercars to the front of the pit lane, they will now be supported by new temporary pit facilities incorporating new corporate infrastructure. Community support for the event is clear, with an abundance of volunteers lining up to be involved with a target of 1,500 volunteers already nearly achieved.

The benefits of the event are undeniable, with the annual event attracting an estimated $60 million in economic benefit and creating an estimated 551 full-time equivalent jobs. In addition, over 70 contracted suppliers from Queensland will contribute to delivering this event from here to 22 October, when the excitement begins. Several companies have grown and prospered with this longstanding involvement in the event, which involves a massive amount of preparation and planning to deliver the end product. The preparations are on target for another action packed four days on the Gold Coast when the new look SuperGP rolls into town from 22 to 25 October, and we look forward to that event.

Mr Lawlor: You'll all be there.

Mr REEVES: I am sure they will all be there as well.

Dental Health Services

Ms MALE: My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health. Can the Deputy Premier inform the House of the importance of better dental health care as a key plank in ensuring Queenslanders will be Australia's healthiest people?

Mr LUCAS: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Stevens: Sixty seconds!

Mr LUCAS: I tell you what, it will be longer in the chair than he lasted.

National reform of health care provides an opportunity to improve the quality and efficiency of healthcare services across a number of areas. Queensland provides the most comprehensive public oral health services in Australia, with 1.9 million people—or 48 per cent of our population—eligible. The demand for public oral health services is increasing due to population growth, an ageing population and greater numbers of people retaining their natural teeth. We are establishing rural dental travel teams to provide regular visits to rural towns that have experienced long waiting lists due to lack of available staff; expansion of Indigenous oral health travel teams to provide oral health care to Indigenous communities; establishment of an Indigenous oral health program coordinator to coordinate service delivery and improve oral health services in Indigenous communities; more public sector dentists and provision for increased hours of service; and increasing graduates for Queensland, with dental graduate numbers from Queensland universities doubling in 2008 and a new dental program commencing at James Cook University this year.

Under the Howard government we had $4.7 million over four years to 2008 for the scheme they pulled out in chronic dental health. In contrast, the Rudd government is promising $52.8 million over three years, except the coalition opposed it in the Senate. I urge my colleagues opposite to get on to their federal counterparts. It is even more outrageous given that the Leader of the Opposition is himself a dentist. On to matters dental, yesterday we saw train wreck No. 4,563—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr LUCAS: Yesterday we saw train wreck No. 4,563 from the opposition. We had the farce of the Workers Heritage Centre questioning, with doctored documents flying around. Last time we had the Leader of the Opposition and the billboard fiasco. He blamed it on his staff. But still it happens again. We have his deputy leader, the member for Clayfield and his staff knowing who went to the $20,000-a-head dinner, but he will not tell us. Who wrote yesterday's questions? The deputy leader sits in the tactics committee. He was not there. Who wrote the questions? You got sold a pup time and time again. Who spoke to the member for Gregory about it? Did you check it with him first? Again, you have lost their support and now you have lost his support.

The Leader of the Opposition is like Chauncey Gardiner from *Being There*. He is just sitting there and the world is passing him by. Meanwhile, they are all setting him up. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition sat there and attacked—

Opposition members: Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four—

Mr LUCAS: Children; again we see they are capable of counting backwards, but one thing they cannot do is count on policy.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I would have thought that sort of behaviour is unbecoming. I ask you to think about the people in the public gallery who observed that. I do not mind robust debate but, when it gets to that level of football banter, I would ask the House to remember the people who put you there and to behave accordingly.

Caningeraba State School, Asbestos

Mrs STUCKEY: My question without notice is to the Minister for Public Works and Information and Communication Technology. How can the minister continue to claim that he treats asbestos seriously when he has failed to report back to this House the result of the full and proper inquiry he requested by the department of workplace health and safety into the improper handling of asbestos at Caningeraba State School almost three months ago?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I will choose my words very, very carefully because we know that they can be misconstrued. I will be very simple. When I receive the report I will bring it to the parliament.

Mr Lucas: I think that's a threat.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I ask for your ruling, Mr Speaker, because the honourable member thinks that is a threat. I do not intend it as a threat.

Mr SPEAKER: I think I disposed of the matter yesterday.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I treat asbestos handling very seriously. As I have told this parliament before, I have actually worked in the industry. My late father died with this illness. The suggestion that I would put any worker at risk of this dreadful disease is most unbecoming of the honourable member.

The fact is that the allegations—and they are allegations—are being tested by another department, not by me. It is being done away from me. I made that very clear at the time. That position still remains. I will make that quite open. There have been a number of FOI requests as well and they are being dealt with also. There will be no stone left unturned when it comes to asbestos or anything else that may injure workers. No stone will remain unturned whatsoever.

North-West Queensland, Energy Infrastructure

Mrs KIERNAN: My question is to the Treasurer and Minister for Employment and Economic Development. Could the Treasurer outline to parliament any recent announcements that will influence the development of energy infrastructure in the north-west of Queensland?

Mr FRASER: I thank the member for Mount Isa for her question and for her advocacy for the north-west which saw the Queensland Resources Council and I go to Mount Isa last week to release the Sims report which charts a way forward for powering the future of the north-west. There are exciting opportunities for baseload generation. It will connect, via high-voltage transmission lines, the powerful north-west into the rest of the state and indeed into the national electricity market and perhaps capture the opportunity for renewable energy out of the north-west also.

It is that opportunity that saw the federal Treasurer, Wayne Swan, accompany me on that visit to Mount Isa to join with the Resources Council to chart a course for the future of powering the north-west. It is not just vital for Mount Isa, it is not just vital for the north-west, it is not just vital for the state's economy but, indeed, vital for the nation's economy that we find a way to power the development of the vast part of our state.

We also saw at play here yesterday the power networks of the Liberal and National parties. What we saw yesterday was the intricate axis of power that resides amongst the Liberal and National parties on the other side. At first blush it looked to be epic incompetence—the sort of epic incompetence that we have come to expect from the Leader of the Opposition. He is Malcolm Turnbull-like in his lack of judgement. He is Malcolm Turnbull-like in his impetuousness to stroll in here, saunter in, pull out the pin of the grenade and try hurling it across the other side of the chamber. But old custard arm dropped it at his feet. It blew up in his face. The shrapnel hit the member for Gregory and took out half the others on the front bench.

At first blush we think that this is a foul-up. But in fact the only explanation can be that it was a professional foul. Gary Hardgrave said this morning on 4BC that the word is that it was a set-up from within—that this was a professional foul.

It is no mistake that the member for the Gregory was absent yesterday when this stunt was pulled in. What we saw yesterday was a classic set-up. The mentor became the hunter. The Leader of the Opposition should look left—et tu, Bruté. What we saw was the deputy leader setting up the Leader of the Opposition. The questions today are not for this side of the House; they are for the Leader of the Opposition. Who gave you the information? Who did you check it with? Did you check it with the shadow minister for police?

Mr SPEAKER: Direct your comments through the chair.

Mr FRASER: Mr Speaker, did the Leader of the Opposition check it with his new chief of staff, because last time the Leader of the Opposition blamed his staff members quite unfairly for his own lack of judgement. It is probably the case that the Leader of the Opposition can blame his chief of staff for this one. We know where this one came from. It was hook, line and sinker sunk from within. What we saw yesterday draws into question the ability of this person to lead the opposition. He should resign.

(Time expired)

Police Service, Uniforms

Mr JOHNSON: My question is directed to the honourable Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services. Given that the Queensland Police Service has recently revised the QPS insignia and epaulettes, will the minister advise the House what the cost of the change was and why this cosmetic change was more important than basic safety equipment like Kevlar gloves, Leatherman tools or fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters?

Mr ROBERTS: I thank the member for the question. Things like what is on an epaulette, what colour the uniform is, whether people wear their caps when they are on duty and all those matters are operational matters which are properly within the confines and responsibility of the Police Commissioner. So me having to have that sort of knowledge and respond to those sorts of questions I think is quite pathetic.

I might take this opportunity to talk about a couple of issues raised by the member in terms of resourcing for the Queensland Police Service. That is effectively underpinning the nature of the question. It has a record budget of $1.7 billion. From recollection, that is about an eight per cent increase over last year. That provides for an additional 600 police over the life of this term—203 this year. There are capital works programs and others.

The member also touched on the issue of aircraft and helicopters. As the member would be aware, the commissioner has clearly indicated that the major priority for the Queensland Police Service is additional fixed-wing aircraft.

A government member: And we're delivering.

Mr ROBERTS: And we are delivering. An additional aircraft will be placed in the Torres Strait. The member is aware that out in his region there is a need for additional aircraft. These are things that will be progressed over time. The government is providing that level of support.

The Police Commissioner has also said the provision of a helicopter is not the highest priority. The opposition tends to have a fixation with helicopters for the Police Service. We do in fact have an arrangement in place for the Queensland Police Service to access helicopters as required. My recollection of the last couple of years is that they task Emergency Management Queensland and some community helicopter providers for about 80 tasks a year. They are available when they need them. As I have indicated, the commissioner has clearly said that the priority is for additional fixed-wing aircraft.

Coming back to the question—the member tends to raise in this House matters which are, in a sense, purely operational. We do have a system in Queensland now where the police act independently of government in terms of their operational needs. In the days of the National Party there was direct interference in all manner of issues in terms of the Police Service. I am sure that if the National Party were in power now it would be telling them what colour uniforms they should be wearing, what epaulettes they should be wearing and so on. This government respects the independence of the Police Commissioner. I as minister ensure that he is able to, as he should, run the Police Service independent of the political interference of politicians and ministers.

Cleaners in Government Offices

Mrs SULLIVAN: My question without notice is to the Minister for Public Works and Information and Communication Technology. Could the minister please advise the House on the status of negotiations with the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union regarding pay and employment conditions for cleaners in government offices?

Mr SCHWARTEN: I thank the honourable member for her question. It is certainly not the sort of question I would ever get from the opposition, which has no interest whatsoever in workers' welfare. Can I say at the outset that one of the things we did in cleaning up the corrupt National Party past was to get a decent procurement policy in Queensland. That has been refined under this government to allow for non-price criteria.

As a result of that being implemented some years ago in the construction industry, people now have confidence in a government that is honest and straightforward and deals with people with integrity. We can continue to have non-price criteria right across government. So it is today that I can announce that in future our contracts with cleaners, the lowest paid and most downtrodden workers arguably in the country, will have non-price criteria of 30 per cent. What that will mean is with things like workplace health and safety and wages it will not be a race for the bottom, as it has been open to in the past. That is the difference between this side of the House and the other side of rabble. The reality is that out of that—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I do not know why those opposite are interjecting on an issue about workers' conditions and workplace health and safety, because their own workplace health and safety is not much chop. Yesterday we had the deputy leader hand over a gun to the leader, who shot himself in both feet

and then turned around and wounded the member for Gregory on the way through. Tighter gun laws are something that they always opposed. Well, I think they ought to really consider that over there. The smoking gun is still over there. They look about as happy as an undertaker's picnic. I know what is going on.

Mr Springborg: Old 'Slugger' Schwarten at it again!

Mr SCHWARTEN: That is me, and proud of it—unlike you!

Mr Fraser: Old 'Backstabbing' Springborg at it again!

Mr SCHWARTEN: I was just about to say—

Mr Fraser: 'Oh, he's got my full support'—stab away!

Mr SCHWARTEN: Yes—stab, stab, stab. 'Brutus' has RSI from backstabbing, as I said the other day. That is him. He is not game to go up the front. I always front people. I always eyeball people—not him! He says, 'I'm with ya, brother! I'm on your side. You've got my full confidence'—stab! I will take all of the interjections in the world when it comes down to having some guts, mate. I will tell you that! You do not have the ticker—

Ms Bligh: Ask the member for Callide!

Mr SCHWARTEN: Ask the member for Callide what he did to him: 'I'm on his side, too'—stab! The member for Toowoomba South is another one—stab! He got the cane knife between the shoulder blades, and history is repeating itself. You can smile, old mate, as much as you like.

(Time expired)

Ann Street Onramp, Roadworks

Ms SIMPSON: My question is to the Minister for Main Roads. With regard to the work at the entrance to the Ann Street ramp, where a 40-kilometre limit is still in place and a speed hump has been made semipermanent with a steel plate and bitumen, could the minister confirm whether any of this work relates to the damaged bearings?

Mr WALLACE: I want to point out to the member for Maroochydore that in the CBD there is a 40-kilometre-an-hour speed limit imposed by the Lord Mayor, so people travelling on that ramp should be going 40 kilometres an hour. I would suggest to the member for Maroochydore that she obeys the speed limit when she drives through the city as it is now 40 kilometres an hour for safety reasons.

Mr Robertson: Has been for months.

Mr WALLACE: Has been for months; exactly right. Indeed, a number of times I have seen members of the constabulary down the road here pulling people up for going over that 40-kilometre-an-hour limit, as they should. People need to obey speed limits, and I say to the member for Maroochydore: you should be watching those speed limits as you travel through the city.

Mr SPEAKER: The minister will direct his comments through the chair, thank you.

Mr WALLACE: I thank you for your guidance, Mr Speaker. It is incumbent upon every member of this House as they drive on the roads of Queensland—whether they be here in Brisbane using that Ann Street ramp, using the CBD or using the highways right across the state—to stick to speed limits. It is very important. Indeed, we have had too many deaths on our roads this year. When one considers that about 25 per cent of the deaths on our roads are caused by people speeding one realises that it is incumbent upon not only the member for Maroochydore but also everyone in this place to obey speed limits. It is 40 kilometres an hour—

Ms SIMPSON: I rise to a point of order. The minister is not answering the question, which relates to the steel plate and the work on the bearings.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order under the standing orders.

Mr WALLACE: The other reason that people need to obey speed limits is that I have good men and women across this state building roads, and they are doing some work on that section of the road. I make no apologies for protecting their safety. I make no apologies for protecting the safety of men and women in this state.

Mr Nicholls interjected.

Mr WALLACE: I know that the honourable member for Clayfield does not respect the safety of men and women building roads across Queensland.

Mr Nicholls: You don't respect us by answering the question.

Ms Simpson: He's not answering the question!

Mr WALLACE: It is a 40-kilometre-an-hour limit in the CBD, member for Maroochydore, and they hate it.

Ms Simpson: The steel plate.

Mr Nicholls: Still can't answer the question.

Mr WALLACE: They hate the fact that I will stand up here and I will defend the safety of workers right across this state. I make no apologies for it.

An opposition member: No idea!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! A question has been asked and the opposition feels that it is entitled to an answer, so it will help with the order of the House if you can direct yourself to that.

Mr WALLACE: The honourable member for Maroochydore asked a question about a 40-kilometre-an-hour limit on the Ann Street ramp, and the limit in the CBD is 40 kilometres an hour, as it should be. I say to the member for Maroochydore and every member of this place, including the member for Clayfield: watch your speed and make sure you do not speed.

Gateway Upgrade Project

Ms FARMER: My question without notice is to the Minister for Main Roads. Given the Premier's recent 'building for jobs' tour, which began in the wonderful electorate of Bulimba, the centrepiece of the Queensland government's record infrastructure building program, can the minister update the House on the progress of the Gateway Upgrade Project, particularly the Gateway Bridge duplication?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Bulimba for her question. She is a great champion of that project and she knows just how important that project is for the people of South-East Queensland and the people of Queensland. I am pleased to advise the House that the Gateway Upgrade Project, or GUP—including 12 kilometres of motorway upgrades south of the Brisbane River through to Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road, construction of a second Gateway Bridge and seven kilometres of a new motorway—is being delivered ahead of schedule and under budget. Importantly, this project will help sustain approximately 6,000 direct and indirect jobs over the life of the project and reduce travel times for motorists. It will also have a great impact on our environment. This corridor is critical for the efficient movement of freight into and out of the Australia TradeCoast area, including Brisbane Airport and the Port of Brisbane, as well as inter-regional passenger and freight traffic.

To deliver benefits to motorists sooner, the project is divided into five contract delivery dates, known as separable portions. Two of these separable portions are already complete. In addition, the bridge approach on the southern side of the river is now complete following 13 months of construction, with the final 70-tonne concrete segment being lifted into place on Saturday, 22 August. The use of match cast methodology for this approach has advanced the overall project three months ahead of schedule, which is a great achievement for those men and women building this wonderful project.

It has taken five months to install the 252 precast concrete segments to form the bridge deck, aided by a 600-tonne crawler crane and a team of 25 workers. This operation replicated the 10-span northern approach, where 496 precast concrete segments were completed in February. With the southern approach now completed, the prominent shape of the new bridge will be clearly seen from both sides of the Brisbane River. The focus of the GUP now switches to the 260-metre main river span, where the gap between sections over the river is now at a mere 58 metres. This section of bridge deck has been constructed using an in situ concrete pour to cast each segment in a balanced cantilever method which involves constructing the bridge deck from both sides of each pier to join the southern and northern approaches.

This 260-metre span and two 130-metre side spans are due for completion by the end of this year. When completed, the second bridge will connect with the new seven-kilometre section of Gateway Motorway north of the Brisbane River which I opened in July 2009. What a great project for Queensland, what a great project for Brisbane and what a great project employing 6,000 Queenslanders—projects that the opposition would see fall over. We have made the tough decisions to keep our building program going right across the state, and this is a classic example of the tough decisions that this government makes to benefit Queenslanders.

Social Housing, Vacancy Rates

Mrs MENKENS: My question is to the Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women. Can the minister explain why, in a time of great housing need, a newly built nine-unit housing complex in Belfast Street, Yeronga, complete with landscaping and gardens, has been left uninhabited for three months? Can she tell the House how many other housing department units and houses are currently vacant?

Ms STRUTHERS: I welcome the question from the member for Burdekin. Housing is a passion of mine. As members know, in this House I have asked on many occasions: how many social housing units are we building over the next year or two, members?

Government members: A thousand.

Ms STRUTHERS: Some 4,000-plus.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms STRUTHERS: This is the biggest ever investment in social housing this state has ever seen. We are building 4,000-plus social housing units right across the state, including in the electorate of the member for Burdekin. All of our electorates around the state will see an investment in housing.

I can stand here and say to all members that that is the biggest investment in social housing that this state has ever seen. What did we see under the former Howard government? Did it have a minister for housing? Did it have a housing program like we have with the federal government now? Not at all.

I have just been to the homelessness conference hosted by QCOSS—a state-wide conference. What did people say to me while we were mingling outside? They said, 'This is the biggest investment in housing and homelessness that this state has ever seen. We were starved of capital funds under the Howard government.' They said, 'We are very, very pleased to work with this government to deal with issues related to homelessness and housing stress.' They were very, very pleased to know of our policy initiatives and to know of our investment in social housing. There will be units right across the state.

In relation to the Belfast Street units at Yeronga, I do not know the detail of any of that. I am very pleased to take on notice the issue about the Belfast Street accommodation. But let me say that this department of housing, this Department of Communities, is building units right across the state. I have been around the state witnessing and opening these developments.

Let me say to you, the one thing we need from you is support—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable minister will direct her comments through the chair.

Ms STRUTHERS: What I get as I travel around the state, particularly from some of their conservative council friends, is the nimby syndrome. Let me tell members about the nimby syndrome. Do members know what nimby is? Not in my backyard. Do members know why some of our housing projects are being held up? Because of the nimby syndrome. People are saying, 'Not in my backyard.' That is what is holding up some of our housing. Let me tell the members opposite that we need their support. Some of them are out there fuelling the nimby syndrome. This is the biggest investment in housing that this state has ever seen. I have a department that is out there rolling up its sleeves and rolling out housing right across the state.

Mental Health Services

Mr WELLS: My question is to the honourable Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs. I refer to the scourge of mental illness, which blights the lives of so many people in our community and their families. I ask the honourable lady: will she advise the House of progress in the community mental health sector and what plans other states have in this area?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would like to thank the member for Murrumba very much for the question. Last week the member for Caloundra put out a press release saying that Queensland is not getting value for money when it comes to community mental health funding. That is simply not the case. On the subject of community mental health, there has been a great deal of progress, when coming from an historically low funding point, in providing services across the most decentralised state in Australia. All of those factors add to the cost of expenditure and the Bligh government will continue to improve service delivery in this very important area.

Services in other states, such as Western Australia, are being cut. Recently, the Barnett government cut a very important program that was aimed at preventing youth suicide, in particular, young students who experience mental health problems. But what are we doing in Queensland? We are extending services. Under the new $6.5 million initiative, the young people in residential community care, the Bligh government is providing safe and supportive community based care.

This program is focused on early intervention for young people aged between 15 and 25 years who are experiencing the early signs and symptoms of mental illness. The accommodation will provide a non-threatening but supportive and safe alternative to in-patient hospital services, thus providing young people in crisis with an appropriate response to their needs.

Earlier this year I attended the Gold Coast, where I announced $916,000 to FSG. This is the Mosaic Program. I had the opportunity to meet and speak with the clients. The clients told me that now they get assistance in going to their medical appointments once a week. That is preventing them from entering the hospital system. That means, too, that this program is helping them find employment, which is a plus. In some cases, it has meant that these people have been able to be reunited with their families. So they are getting on with their lives. This program prevents them from ending up in the hospital system.

In addition, the Queensland government is committed to the development of the Queensland Plan for the Mental Health Community Sector 2009-2017. This plan will act as a blueprint for a recovery orientated system of care by the non-government sector and guided stage development and

implementation. I am pleased to advise that the non-government community mental health sector has played a key role in shaping this plan. I have attended numerous sessions throughout Queensland, as have other members of the caucus.

Earlier this year, the Department of Communities undertook a series of state-wide consultations. It is anticipated that a further round of targeted consultations on the draft plan will occur this month, with the aim of publication towards the end of 2009. The feedback from all consultations will form the heart of the plan. Thus it will truly be a plan by the community for the community. Under the Bligh government, we will continue to expand programs in the community mental health sector and not cut programs, which is what is happening in other states.

(Time expired)

Sunshine Coast, Intensive Care Paramedics

Mr WELLINGTON: My question is to the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services. Will the minister advise if the Sunshine Coast region currently has 24-hour, seven-day-a-week intensive care paramedic coverage? If not, will the minister support funding in next year's budget for this service?

Mr ROBERTS: I thank the member for the question and also for the very positive and proactive support that he provides for the Ambulance Service in the Sunshine Coast area. I can advise the member that, in fact, there are currently around 27 intensive care paramedics located in the Sunshine Coast region and that they provide 24-hour coverage, I am advised, across three 24-hour shifts.

Before I talk a little bit more about the provision of the services by these highly skilled intensive care paramedics, I will outline for the member's interest that the Sunshine Coast area has 285 highly trained ambulance operatives available to support his local community. Over the past two years, the number of ambulance officers has increased by 87. In terms of additional and new vehicles to the north coast region, over the past two years there have been 28 new vehicles supplied to that area.

Intensive care paramedics are really at the high end of the level of service provided by the Queensland Ambulance Service. It is a qualification that any advanced care paramedics can apply for. It is a very intensive 12-month training program, which requires the highest calibre of applicants. As I have indicated, any advanced care paramedic can apply. The fact they are of the highest calibre means that many of these people end up being appointed to higher duties or relieve in higher duties arrangements in regions. That does not mean that those intensive care paramedics are not available for support and to perform their role as an intensive care paramedic. Indeed, the model of service provided by the Ambulance Service across Queensland factors in that intensive care paramedics, because they are the best in terms of their clinical skills, will be appointed to these higher positions but arrangements are made to ensure that they are available to support the crews on roster as well.

As I have indicated, the Sunshine Coast area has a sufficient number of intensive care paramedics to provide that 24-hour coverage. There are around 27 of them available. That includes staff rostered on duty and also those who fit into those higher duty arrangements to provide support as well. I am advised that the north coast region is currently examining options to create further ICP coverage in that area as more qualified staff become available.

For the member's information, I point out that the Sunshine Coast area is provided with 24-hour coverage from 15 ambulance stations in the area: Caloundra, Beerwah, Kawana, Maleny, Nambour, Cooroy, Pomona, Maroochydore, the Cooloola Coast, Gympie, Noosa, Tewantin, Coolum, Buderim and the Maroochydore Airport.

Sport Infrastructure

Ms JOHNSTONE: My question is for the Minister for Child Safety and the Minister for Sport. Can the minister please explain how the Bligh government is protecting jobs by continuing to build sport infrastructure?

Mr REEVES: I thank the member for Townsville for her question. The Bligh government's record $18 billion building program is protecting more than 127,000 Queensland jobs. In these tough times our continued investment in sporting infrastructure is not only protecting more than 1,000 jobs but also strengthening Queensland's position as one of the nation's premier sporting destinations.

The Bligh government is contributing $60 million to support the $126 million redevelopment of the Carrara Stadium on the Gold Coast. This project alone will generate more than 350 jobs during construction and contribute nearly $340 million to the economy over the next 10 years.

Across the state $53 million has been allocated for the improvement of sport and recreation facilities, generating and protecting hundreds of jobs. In the state's north, more than 250 local jobs are being protected by projects such as the $1.5 million upgrade of the Mackay Cricket Association's facilities; $10 million towards the construction of stage 1 of the redevelopment of the Murray Sports

Complex at Annandale; and more than $3 million to upgrade the northern stand, catering and concourse extensions at Dairy Farmers Stadium in Townsville. Continuing to build infrastructure in these tough times is protecting Queensland jobs while also encouraging Queenslanders to live healthier and more active lifestyles. This type of job creation and protection is putting food on the table and keeping Queensland families strong.

If the Liberal Western Australian government had followed our lead and continued to build sport infrastructure, its bids for the 2018 or 2022 Commonwealth Games would still be alive. Early last month the Western Australian government quietly binned plans to bid for the games. Its plans were abandoned because Western Australia does not have or has not planned the infrastructure to support these games, which would have contributed millions of dollars to the local economy. Guess which is the only Australian state still in the running to host these games because it has in place or is building the infrastructure needed to host them? Queensland!

Earlier this year the annual report of the Australian Commonwealth Games Association stated that Queensland was the only Australian state still in the running. What a bitter blow for the Western Australian tourism industry and sports fans but potentially a massive boost to Queensland. While the country's only Liberal state government is bludging, the Bligh government is building. Our record building program is the reason our economy is still performing better than the national average. It is the building program that will ensure that Queensland's reputation as one of the world's leading sporting destinations continues to grow.

Queensland Economy

Mr NICHOLLS: My question is to the Treasurer. Is the Treasurer aware that Cement Australia will mothball its Rockhampton operations, jeopardising 31 jobs, and has said that the closure is due in part to significant increases in state taxes? Will the Treasurer explain how many more Queensland jobs are at risk because of increased state taxes and charges as this government desperately tries to prop up its failing bottom line?

Mr FRASER: I thank the shadow Treasurer for the question. I am aware of the circumstance in Rockhampton and, indeed, I am aware of the statements made by the company in that regard. In response, Queensland's tax competitiveness for business investment is, in fact, a significant reason for businesses coming here and maintaining their operations in Queensland. We have the lowest rate of payroll tax in the nation and we have the highest threshold on mainland Australia.

As the budget papers make clear, for 2009-10 Queenslanders will pay less tax per person than the national rate. What the budget papers also make clear is that, measured another way—through the independent Commonwealth Grants Commission—Queenslanders pay less tax than the residents of other states. Measured another way—through the percentage of the economy that is taxed—Queenslanders pay less tax than most other states, including New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, and, indeed, far below the average of the other states. In Queensland we have a competitive tax regime that has always been about attracting business in the first place and maintaining that investment.

As the House has heard previously, the Institute of Public Affairs—that well-known Labor Party fan club—put on the record in a report released at Christmas time last year that Queensland's business tax environment is one of the most competitive across a whole range of industries amongst the states of Australia. It is the reason businesses are voting with their feet to come to Queensland. It is the reason business investment in real terms has tripled over the last eight years in Queensland. It is because of those continued policy settings that seek to attract business here, stimulated by the commitment to fund the building program to keep the public spend going in the absence of private investment, that we see the Queensland economy continuing to maintain its head above water as it did when the release of the March state accounts confirmed that Queensland continues to grow and defy the trend. We remain committed to that competitive tax regime.

(Time expired)

Mr SPEAKER: The time for question time has ended.

MINISTERIAL PAPER

Building the Education Revolution, PricewaterhouseCoopers Report

Hon. GJ WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Education and Training) (11.34 am): I am delighted to present to the parliament the report by PricewaterhouseCoopers on the Department of Education and Training's administration of the Building and Education Revolution program within state schools. I advise the House that this report is going online on the department's website as we speak.

Tabled paper: Department of Education and Training report titled 'Building the Education Revolution Program: A review of the systems and processes put in place by the Department of Education and Training to plan, coordinate and deliver the Building the Education Revolution Program in state schools in Queensland', 1 September 2009 [814].

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Agriculture Industry

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.35 am): Yesterday when the Premier stood up in her first ministerial statement and referred to the agricultural and primary industries sector we were all perplexed until we found out today that it is all about going on *MasterChef*. Let us look at what the government has done. There has been no acknowledgement of the agricultural and primary industry sector that has kept this state out of recession. It is worth $13 billion.

Normally, all the government does for primary industries is belt them. Last year it cut 7.4 per cent out of the budget for Primary Industries, down to $335 million. Funding for services was cut by 23 per cent. When it brings in vegetation management legislation it belts the primary producers. There is no stamp duty because no-one can buy properties because they do not know what is going to happen with those properties as a result of the regrowth moratorium in the Vegetation Management (Regrowth Clearing Moratorium) Act.

Of course, we also have the Great Barrier Reef Protection Amendment Bill, which I will not refer to but which we know will have severe implications for people involved in primary industries. Then, of course, we have wild rivers legislation, which I mentioned yesterday and which is affecting so many people. The remote area planning and development boards are being overwhelmed.

Mr O'Brien interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Order! Member for Cook.

Mr LANGBROEK: There is concern about the Wild Rivers Act with the remote area planning and development boards. And, of course, we have those issues with the budget. The Premier wants to go on *MasterChef* and suddenly she is interested in primary industries. The LNP is interested in rural and regional Queensland and primary industries all the time, not just when we might get a chance to go on television. That is our commitment to all of the state, including rural and regional Queensland.

Sandgate Electorate; Waterways

Ms DARLING (Sandgate—ALP) (11.37 am): The waterways around the Sandgate electorate are well loved and well used by residents and visitors alike. The announcement by the Treasurer of the sensible decision to exclude the Shorncliffe boat harbour area from the future sale of the Port of Brisbane Corporation was welcomed by my local community.

Last Saturday I enjoyed the company of members of the local sailing community as we celebrated the start of the sailing season and the blessing of the fleet. I acknowledge the tremendous leadership of Philip Lazzarini, Commodore of the Queensland Cruising Yacht Club. I look forward to working with Philip and the QCYC as well as the trawler operators, officers and cadets of the TS Paluma and the local community to secure a workable solution of tenure and management for the Cabbage Tree Creek tenants.

QCYC also hosts Sailability, an organisation whose volunteers take people with disabilities out on the water in specially designed craft. Earlier this year I helped launch another three of its boats, purchased with a Gambling Community Benefit Fund grant. The decision to remove the boat harbours from the sale of the containerised trading port shows that this government is listening to the views of the local community while maintaining its commitment to roll out the Renewing Queensland Plan. The Renewing Queensland Plan recognises that tough decisions need to be made to maintain our state's focus on jobs and economic recovery and deliver our $18.2 billion infrastructure program.

Premier Anna Bligh's announcement last week of a $5 million tourism campaign will also help protect Queensland's 119,000 tourism jobs. Moreton Bay is on the doorstep of the Sandgate electorate and is a growing focus of tourism activity. I believe that there is great tourism potential for businesses in my electorate. Local organisations are devising innovative ways to showcase the natural beauty of the area. I am proud to have played a part in ensuring that the Shorncliffe boat harbour is secure for the future enjoyment of yachties, canoeists, fishers and leisure craft.

Community Ambulance Levy

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—LNP) (11.39 am): Over two weeks ago I was contacted by an elderly lady, Mrs Lavinia Way, who owns a holiday property at Tugun on the Gold Coast and as such has paid the community ambulance levy since its inception in 2003. Imagine her shock to discover, upon needing to call an ambulance for her 85-year-old husband on 4 August, that they were not covered. Lavinia discovered that in order to use this service for free, despite paying for it since 2003, one must be a resident of Queensland for more than six months of the year. If that is the case, then people with holiday homes should be exempt from paying this cover.

Mrs Way says no government can introduce a compulsory fee then deny the service that this fee pays for without being accused of fraud. Even the call centre operators at Smart Service Queensland agreed with her that levying people with no rights to the service is wrong, but they have since been told not to pass on their own points of view. Mrs Way deserves an apology and she wants a refund of the fees that she has paid.

What is the government doing with all of this revenue? How many other innocent people have been slugged with this fee? Will the minister stop this immoral behaviour? To put an elderly couple, one of whom is seriously ill, under this unnecessary stress is absolutely disgraceful. Mrs Way has nothing but praise for the ambulance officers who attended her husband, who is now recovering in Melbourne, but she has enormous scorn for this government and she would like to see some justice. To date, she has had no success in receiving a response from the government.

It is an utter disgrace for people in this state to be forced to pay an ambulance levy year after year and then, when they need to access the service, to be told that it is going to cost them money. But why should we be surprised when we consider the culture that the government has allowed to prosper in Queensland ambulance services?

Q150 Steam Train

Mr WENDT (Ipswich West—ALP) (11.41 am): As we all know, 2009 has been a year when all Queenslanders in all corners of the state have had the opportunity to celebrate the achievements and take stock of the challenges that have helped shape Queensland over the past 150 years. This year has seen us have the opportunity to celebrate our people, our places and our stories. This could not have been better displayed than by the participation of the Q150 steam train.

For those who do not know, the Q150 train began the first sector of its five-month journey around Queensland on 14 April, when the Premier flagged it off from Roma Street Station. Since then, over the past five months this steam train has travelled to more than 30 locations around the state, visiting places as far north as Cairns and Mareeba, as far west as Quilpie and as far south as Wallangarra. In these times when we are constantly being reminded of climate change, I can advise that trees have been planted, with more scheduled for planting this year, to offset the entire carbon footprint of the Q150 steam train itself. In relation to the journey itself, I can report that at each location the Q150 steam train and its passengers have enjoyed rock-star-like welcomes. In fact, thousands have travelled aboard the Q150 steam train and have the film, stills and stories to prove it.

As such, I think it would be remiss of me if I did not take the opportunity at this juncture to recognise some of the supporters and sponsors of the Q150 steam train, because without their help this event would not have been possible. With that in mind I would like to acknowledge Santos and the University of Queensland, ably supported by media partners Ten Network, Macquarie Southern Cross Media, APN Newspapers, Quest Community Newspapers and, of course, radio station Triple M.

As one might have guessed, the Q150 steam train has now completed its journey. Last Sunday afternoon it rolled into the old Ipswich Railway Workshops, now of course the Workshops Rail Museum. I had the pleasure of representing the Premier on board the train for this last portion of the journey. With local mayor, Paul Pisasale, we arrived at the workshops to be greeted by hundreds of train enthusiasts and previous workshops employees. However, members should not be too sad, because the end of the Q150 steam train journey is also the harbinger of another great birthday celebration next year—by that I mean the 150th birthday of Ipswich becoming a city.

NAPLAN Tests

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—LNP) (11.43 am): Eliza Doolittle is alive and well in Queensland. The Queensland government has produced a lengthy document of excuses as to why Queensland school students performed the worst in the country in the NAPLAN tests. Instead of facing up to its responsibility to lift the standard, it has come up with amazing excuses. Apparently, the word 'furtherest' is part of the Queensland dialect and Queensland students should have been marked correct in grammar for using the word 'furtherest', because it is part of the low-socioeconomic dialect used in Queensland. What a load of bunkum! This is simply an excuse for their failure to teach children in these communities how to speak and use grammar correctly.

There is a whole raft of other excuses. The government has blamed the nature of the test for the fact that Queensland students fell behind in almost every category in almost every age group. They said that they were robbed, that the Queensland people who looked at the results did not think the Queensland results were of a lesser standard than those from the rest of Australia, even though they were marked that way. It is the 'we were robbed' excuse.

What they do admit is what they really ought to be facing up to: the average performances are not encouraging and the results in Queensland, across all criteria, fall behind virtually every other group of students in the country. You cannot make excuses for failure. You have to set policy that lifts the literacy and numeracy of Queensland students to the best, not the worst.

Cairns MusicaLife

Mr WETTENHALL (Barron River—ALP) (11.45 am): On 15 August this year I had the great pleasure of attending a concert at the Cairns Civic Theatre. It was a concert of a kind never before staged in Cairns. Three hundred and eighty students from 27 schools in the Far North, from Tully to the Torres Strait, took part in Cairns MusicaLife, a celebration of community in concert. What made the event so special was the opportunity it provided for talented musicians of all ages from schools throughout the region to collaborate to form three ensembles of excellence: orchestra, concert band and choir. For many students, it was the first time they had played or sung in an ensemble of this size and for others it was the first opportunity they had ever had to play or sing in an orchestra or massed choir.

In rehearsals for the concert, students had access to workshops with professional conductors and music teachers. Many of the works on the program were written or arranged by Queensland or Australian composers, including Sean O'Boyle, Tommy Tycho, David Jones, Brian West, Bruce Rowland, David Lawrence, Ian Jefferson and Keith Sharp. I would like to thank all those music teachers who put the concert together, much of it in their own time, and especially artistic directors Fiona Dunn from Bentley Park College, Lizanne Smith from Cairns State High School and Kevin Scott from Caravonica State School. I would also like to thank special guest conductors Sean O'Boyle and Sandra Milliken.

The event was made possible by a grant under the Q150 program and I could not think of a better way to celebrate Queensland's 150th birthday. I table the musical program, together with a list of participating students and schools.

Tabled paper: Q150 Program, list of participating schools and list of participating students [815].

I congratulate all participants in Cairns MusicaLife for producing an inspirational concert of exceptionally high standards. I know every student will always remember the night and I sincerely hope that it can become a regular event in the community cultural calendar.

Parkhurst, Ms J; Fraser Island

Mr ELMES (Noosa—LNP) (11.47 am): I have only been in this place for three years but, like all of us, I came here with a set of basic beliefs that are at the heart of what I am as a human being. Having said that, on Tuesday 25 August Jennifer Parkhurst, a Fraser Island protector and photographer, was awoken at 7 am at her home in Rainbow Beach and met at her front door by a Queensland police officer and five officers from DERM who had a search warrant for her residence issued under the Recreation Areas Management Act 2006.

If Jennifer was a terrorist I would support the action taken, but she is not. She has dedicated her life to the wellbeing of Fraser Island, and its dingoes in particular. I want all members, and particularly female members opposite, to imagine their reaction at being woken up, unable to have a shower or even brush their hair, and then having their two-bedroom unit invaded by modern-day storm-troopers for six hours. The police officer spent most of the time outside, while department officers—public servants—removed hard drives, fingered through personal photos and videos, searched through every cabinet and bookshelf, under beds and floor rugs, and through every private and intimate part of her home.

I do not know what has become of the Labor Party that once stood up for human rights. I certainly do not know what has become of the members opposite, particularly the female members and the minister, who once would have marched through the streets in protest against what is a gross abuse of Jennifer Parkhurst's civil liberties.

Legislation that allows for legalised home invasions on trivial charges must be changed, as must the culture of rangers on Fraser Island. Information coming to me on a daily basis highlights a long series of bad planning decisions and mismanagement on the island. The time has come for this Labor government to protect the rights of its citizens and hold a full inquiry into the management of Fraser Island.

Peninsula Development Road

Mr O'BRIEN (Cook—ALP) (11.49 am): If I achieve nothing else in my time in this parliament, it will be to improve vehicular access into Cape York Peninsula. I know that members await my updates on the Peninsula Development Road with much enthusiasm. I am pleased to advise them today that on Monday I travelled to Crocodile Station near Lakeland to open the new 27-kilometre section of road that has recently been sealed.

The project will benefit all road users by improving the road surface, flood immunity and accessibility to local industries, such as tourism and cattle, and community services. The progressive sealing of the Peninsula Development Road will also benefit other industries such as mining, improve safety and limit dust suffocation.

It was a $21 million project from Lily Creek to Crocodile Gap. It was jointly funded by the state and Commonwealth government—the state government contributed $11 million; the Commonwealth government supplied $10 million. It is great to have some cooperation at last between the two levels of government on this road. It is really starting to produce some results. The project was originally only going to be a 25-kilometre section but the contractors, CEC, did such a great job and found some efficiencies in the project that they were able to deliver an additional two kilometres.

Upcoming projects include sealing of a four-kilometre section, constructing a bridge at Carols Crossing over the Laura River and sealing a one-kilometre section and constructing a bridge at Ruths Creek. There has also been some enormous work done this year on other parts of the road, including on the Indigenous access roads that lead to most of the communities that line the Cape York Peninsula. It really is great to see so many improvements being made to the road. It is opening up the cape for visitors and for the many people who are starting to see the wonder of this fantastic area.

(Time expired)

Integrity and Accountability in Queensland Green Paper

Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (11.51 am): I rise to address the House this morning with great disappointment. On Wednesday, 26 August 2009 the Attorney-General held a forum at the Innovation Centre at the University of the Sunshine Coast to discuss the *Integrity and accountability in Queensland* green paper released by the Bligh government. The Bligh government has boasted about being 'open and accountable', but this government does not even come close. This government is all about cover-up and propaganda.

Imagine my surprise when the local media rang me the day before the forum asking whether I was going to be contributing to the open forum, to which I answered that I had no idea about the forum. When I became aware of the open forum, I telephoned the Attorney's office and was advised that invitations had been sent out to local businesses and other stakeholders. I note that an invitation did arrive at the Independent member for Nicklin's office but not to opposition members on the Sunshine Coast.

The Premier stated in the Premier's foreword in the discussion paper that she wants 'all Queenslanders to feel they have access to, and are part of, a healthy democracy in this state'. The Premier previously addressed this House saying that she is 'absolutely confident that there are people' in Queensland 'who will be interested in putting forward their ideas'. She knows that 'this is an issue that Queenslanders have strong views on and it is time ... for a broad-ranging discussion'.

I put it to the House that if the Premier wants open and broad-ranging discussion then wouldn't the government have an open and accountable forum? Wouldn't all members of political persuasions be invited because isn't that what we are elected for in this place—to represent our community? To have the disrespect to not even invite LNP members to an open public forum is nothing but dishonest, nothing but incompetent and completely unaccountable.

(Time expired)

Bridge to Brisbane

Ms GRACE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (11.53 am): Finding my 30 was made easier last Sunday when I entered the 13th annual *Sunday Mail* Suncorp Bridge to Brisbane event. It was a fantastic day, with over 45,000 people taking part this year—a record and triple the number of participants just six years ago. Everyone participating in this event played their part in the government's Toward Q2 ambition of making Queenslanders Australia's healthiest people by getting active and healthy.

Recognised as the largest community sporting event in Queensland, with its popularity growing each year, the Queensland government is proud to be a major sponsor of such a great Queensland get active campaign. For the second year running, the government entered a whole-of-government team—'Find Your 30' team—with over 1,200 staff, families and friends who found their 30, led by the Premier and Deputy Premier, who both competed in the 10-kilometre race.

It is a fantastic opportunity to promote the Queensland government's healthy lifestyle message of finding 30 minutes of physical activity a day, along with making healthier food choices such as a healthy breakfast that awaited entrants at the Find Your 30 marquee at the RNA. I was amazed by the sea of people who just kept coming—all enjoying themselves. The event meant something different for each participant—a race, a morning jog, a run, a walk or just having fun dressing up and exercising.

Funds from this year's Bridge to Brisbane will go towards the Heart Foundation's campaign to save lives, and in its 12-year history the Bridge to Brisbane has raised more than $2.4 million for charity. The Bridge to Brisbane was a great opportunity for family and friends to enjoy a Sunday morning in the name of healthy living, fun and charity. For many, it is a challenge to achieve personal goals, but for me it was a most enjoyable way to exercise and be active, and I cannot wait for next year to again be part of this iconic Queensland well-organised event. I encourage all members of parliament to enter next year. It is a great opportunity to get active, get out there and enjoy the day, as many thousands did.

Agricultural Colleges

Mr HOPPER (Condamine—LNP) (11.55 am): Recently the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries announced a revamp of our agricultural colleges. Last week I travelled to Far North Queensland with the member for Hinchinbrook and the member for Burdekin. I visited the Tully and Ingham area, where I saw the damage that the flying foxes are doing to fruit crops. I checked out the banana plantations and other industries such as the sugar industry. It was a great trip. We went to Burdekin and Bowen after that.

On 13 August I contacted Minister Mulherin's office and requested permission to visit the DPI at Bowen and to visit the Burdekin Agricultural College. I think it is imperative that shadow ministers get across their portfolio areas and look at such facilities. After not hearing back from the minister's office, we again contacted his office on 20 August and sent a lot more emails following that. The minister's office did reply. We received an email from the minister's office. He welcomed me to the agricultural college and gave me a couple of dates. However, on the bottom of the email the minister stated that he needs at least one month's notice before we can get permission to visit one of those facilities. I think this is absolutely disgusting.

Mr O'Brien: They're very busy people.

Mr HOPPER: Member for Cook, you might squawk over there. He is part of a government whose Premier, as we heard the member for Kawana just state, wants a broad approach—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Order! Member for Condamine, if you are speaking about the member for Cook he is not 'he'. You will refer to members by their correct title, thank you.

Mr HOPPER: The Premier is speaking about a broad and open government. It is not a broad and open government when a shadow minister cannot even visit facilities in his own portfolio.

M1 Upgrade, Springwood to Daisy Hill

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (11.57 am): It gives me pleasure to rise and inform the House of the progress of the planned upgrade of the M1. The state government is moving forward with the planned upgrade of the M1 in accordance with how it was always designed—that is, to be upgraded in stages. The project was always designed for priority sections to be done first. Since the first day I have spoken about the upgrade of the M1, I have always said that the Winnetts Road and Loganlea Road overpass at Daisy Hill should be our first priority. Approximately 40,000 cars use the Loganlea interchange daily. This has a huge impact on traffic congestion, including local congestion on service roads, and I am pleased that it has been designated a key project to be completed first.

While planning and minor works have begun, major construction is scheduled to begin on this priority section in October this year. While I am disappointed that the major construction did not start earlier this year, what I want to make very clear is that the state government is committed to this upgrade that will provide a safer, more efficient and sustainable transport solution for our local area.

The staged upgrade will deliver maximum benefits to motorists with the funding available. This includes the upgrade of the Loganlea Road interchange and increasing the flow of the motorway by rationalising the existing on and off ramps. Key features include replacing the Loganlea Road bridge with a new five-lane overpass, including four through lanes and one turning lane, and upgrading of the Loganlea Road interchange with signalised intersections.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads has a project office on the corner of Winnetts Road and John Paul Drive at Daisy Hill, and I encourage any residents with questions on this project to call in and meet with the project team. The stretch of the M1 between the Gateway Motorway and the Logan Motorway is over 16 kilometres long. To have roadworks done concurrently on the whole of this 16 kilometres would be a nightmare for commuters and also a safety concern. A staged plan will minimise the inconvenience to commuters, and I do not know anyone who would want to be held up in traffic due to 16 kilometres of roadworks. Upgrading the M1 in priority sections makes a lot of sense just, as spreading out the funding over future budgets and having regard to traffic growth make a lot of sense too.

(Time expired)

Horticulture Industry Award

Mr POWELL (Glass House—LNP) (11.59 am): Sunshine Coast hinterland fruit and vegetable growers and horticulturalists across the state and country have received new hope in the face of potentially disastrous and devastating wage rises. As I have raised in this House before, the new horticulture industry award proposed by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, the AIRC, as part of its award modernisation process had the potential to destroy the industry. In my electorate, growers shared their concerns that having to pay weekend rates of up to $43 per hour for pickers and packers would send them to the wall, bringing a key economic driver to its knees and placing many of my constituents and other seasonal pickers on the unemployment list.

Through constant lobbying by the Queensland Farmers Federation, Growcom, state and federal members and growers themselves, the federal government has now written to the AIRC to revise its advice. I am not sure whether the Attorney-General or the minister in charge of the department of primary industries were part of that lobbying effort.

The government has recognised the flexible and seasonal nature of the horticultural industry. It has also acknowledged the need for more intensive working periods at harvest time and the impacts of weather on working hours. Specifically, the advice to the AIRC was that it enable employers in the horticulture industry to continue to pay piece rates of pay to casual employees who pick produce as opposed to a minimum rate of pay supplemented by an incentive based payment, that it respect the perishable nature of the produce grown when setting hours of work provisions and that it provide for roster arrangements and working hours that take into consideration the seasonal demands and weather.

We are not there yet, but we are heading in the right direction. I and the growers in my electorate now await the AIRC's decision. We hope it, too, realises the economic importance of this industry and the employment opportunities it delivers.

Kallangur Electorate, Social Housing

Ms O'NEILL (Kallangur—ALP) (12.01 pm): Kallangur recently received very welcome funding of $705,000 for maintenance and repairs to social housing properties in the electorate—part of the federal economic stimulus plans. We expect to have another 49 social housing dwellings built with funding under the Nation Building—Economic Stimulus Plan social housing initiatives. This is a much appreciated increase in social housing which will provide secure, affordable housing for needy families in the Kallangur area.

The North Moreton Housing Network is looking at ways of funding affordable housing in the Kallangur electorate and held a forum, 'Joining the Dots', on 24 August to bring together housing providers, department of housing officers, councillors and council staff to find creative ways of building or purchasing more affordable housing for the electorate.

The Department of Communities funds the Near North Housing Service to provide a range of tenant advice and advocacy services to tenants in social housing and private rental and focus on helping people to sustain their tenancies in the rental market. The Near North Housing Service and the Pine Rivers Neighbourhood Centre, together with the Queensland Shelter, take an active role in facilitating discussions with housing agencies with a view to assisting them to identify housing needs. They have also supported the need for more affordable housing to be provided in the Kallangur area and my electorate as a whole.

I am encouraged to see that the Department of Communities recognises the need for more social and affordable housing and is identifying ways of ensuring that more housing is available to the most needy within our community. I am pleased to see there are some social housing properties within the Kallangur electorate that are managed for not-for-profit community organisations as well as department owned social housing, and I look forward to more joint ventures to provide even more affordable housing in my electorate. Hopefully, the new initiative announced by the federal government and our government will see a reduction in homelessness and more affordable housing being provided under the National Affordable Housing Agreement and the National Rental Affordability Scheme. I look forward to seeing an increase in affordable housing available to my constituents.

Gladstone Electorate, Oncology Services

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (12.03 pm): Earlier this year, advertising occurred to secure the services of an oncologist for Gladstone Base Hospital. The position remains unfilled and a cancer survivor wrote to me on Monday saying—

> It would appear that the exec of GH is saying that no new patients are to be referred to Drs Atkinson and Mannering and that it may come down to the point where existing patients will be made to pay for any treatment ordered by these doctors and will not be able to access the public system. These doctors apparently tendered for the right (?) to treat public patients in Gladstone. This is a money story I think. Now it appears that Rockhampton Hospital is failing to communicate adequately with the Gladstone staff and patients are being told that they have to have their chemo in Rocky and this is all turning into a huge mess. PTS is paying to send these patients to Rocky when we have the necessary people here to do the work!

I find these stories horrendous. I know of a young woman with 4 children who was referred to Rocky—was given a death sentence and told to come back for treatment in Rockhampton. She queried why she could not have the treatment in Gladstone and was told the Dr would be overseeing her treatment. She was put onto Dr Mannerings clinic list (and caused the nurses involved to be rapped over the knuckles) and he gave her hope and the treatment would be done in Gladstone. This is huge for a young mum fighting for her life—and not having to make the 250km round journey to Rocky! I am hoping she will be prepared to go a little public with this.

So in the meantime, can we try and find out what ever happened to the advertisement? for an oncologist for this region? Can we also know what happened to the forum to which we were going to be invited so that we could give some realistic feedback?

We now have to deal with—

a new health minister—

and it seems that we will have to do the entire thing all over again! Is this what we need to do?

…

The two doctors who do the Rocky clinic have also just opened a private practise in Rocky—and it appears that they dont want any more public patients either!!!

(Time expired)

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Order! That concludes the time for private members' statements.

JUVENILE JUSTICE AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

JUVENILE JUSTICE (SENTENCING PRINCIPLES) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

Juvenile Justice and Other Acts Amendment Bill resumed from 1 September (see p. 1997), on motion of Ms Struthers, and Juvenile Justice (Sentencing Principles) Amendment Bill resumed from 1 September (see p. 1997), on motion of Mr Springborg—

That the bills be now read a second time.

Dr ROBINSON (Cleveland—LNP) (12.06 pm): I rise to speak to the cognate debate on the juvenile justice bills. While I support the general thrust of the government's juvenile justice bill, I do not think it goes far enough in addressing youth crime. I support the opposition's amendments that seek to improve the act. There is no doubt that youth violence is on the rise and has been for some time, despite government claims to the contrary. Only the government with its head in the sand believes things are improving. It is also clear that this Labor government has failed to adequately address youth crime in Queensland. Much more must be done by the government—for example, in terms of youth crime prevention and appropriate sentencing.

The youth crime rate in Queensland has grown steadily over the last decade or so. The number of young people charged by police with an offence grew markedly—from over 30,000 in 2005-06 to in excess of 36,700 in 2006-07. The number of young offenders processed through the Children's Court rose by 2.6 per cent in 2006-07. Further, the period 2006-07 witnessed a fivefold increase in homicide and related offences.

Despite the best efforts of our valiant and hardworking police officers, the police report that violence levels among young people continue to climb. The police at times express frustration at the way in which the system is failing young offenders. My own experience in trying to help offenders to assimilate into the community after spending time in detention has shown me that they get little or no support. It has been more a matter of luck than good planning that has caused offenders to make a successful new start.

I wish to focus my remaining comments on youth violence and juvenile justice through events and incidents in the Redlands. In 2007 a youth violence forum took place. Community leaders from Cleveland gathered to consider the issue of youth violence and find ways to address the increasing incidence of violence amongst young people. A good number of community leaders and others from a variety of professions and backgrounds contributed to the discussion regarding the issue of youth violence. The forum confirmed that a holistic approach was required to reduce youth violence. Some key areas were identified: crime prevention, the influence of positive parents, the significance of the place of young people in society, responsible attitudes towards alcohol and drugs, among other reasons.

The most pivotal event regarding youth violence in Redland City was the death of Matthew Stanley in 2006 at age 15 and the resultant formation of the Matthew Stanley Foundation by his father, Paul Stanley, and I dedicate this speech to the memory of the late Matthew Stanley. Matthew Stanley was bashed to death by a drunken 16-year-old at a teenage birthday party in Alexandra Hills. The attacker was convicted of manslaughter in November 2007 and was committed to juvenile detention.

On a personal note, Matthew's death had a great impact on me. Any parent of teenagers knows the sinking feeling of waiting up for them to come home, often late at night after weekend parties. I remember the news report of Matthew's death and the deep feelings of sadness that it set off inside of me. Matthew's death has been talked about many times in our family home.

To add to the tragedy that the family felt, under the current system the young person who committed the crime was released from detention earlier this year. Paul Stanley was dismayed that his family was not included in the detention release plans for his son's killer. Further, he feared that his son's attacker might live nearby Matthew's family and friends after his release. Despite Paul having applied to the Queensland government's victims register, which should have alerted the family to the offender's status, Mr Stanley felt that he had been kept out of the loop by the judicial system. It was only a chance discussion with the investigating officer in charge of Matthew's case in which Paul asked when the offender was getting out that revealed the facts. Mr Stanley said, 'I could have walked out of a shop at Alexandra Hills and bumped into him, and to me that's wrong.'

What is clear from the Matthew Stanley case is that the system did not sufficiently take into account the concerns or feelings of the victim's family. In Paul's view, it gave his son's killer a too-comfortable return to the community. Communities and youth minister, Lindy Nelson-Carr, admitted that the victims register system reserved for specific juvenile cases had failed the Stanleys and that people were slipping through the system.

I would like to go on the record as acknowledging the great work of Paul Stanley to educate young people about youth violence. The Matthew Stanley Foundation is actively educating young people across Australia about the dangers of youth violence. In summary, while I support the overall intent of the government's bill, I am disappointed that it does not go far enough.

Ms DAVIS (Aspley—LNP) (12.11 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the cognate debate combining the Juvenile Justice and Other Acts Amendment Bill and the Juvenile Justice (Sentencing Principles) Amendment Bill. The objective of the Juvenile Justice and Other Acts Amendment Bill is to improve the capacity of Queensland's youth justice system to respond to current demands and challenges in the pursuit of a best practice model. Whilst 'best practice' is a term often lazily applied to government objectives, we must all recognise that it is in many aspects of youth related community services that we are likely to gain the greatest long-term benefits for Queensland's society by getting it right.

I would note there appears that there is little, if any, commitment on the part of the government to evidence based policy generation in the area of addressing juvenile crime. The government's approach, revealed by the minister's second reading speech and the explanatory notes, appears to be little more than a get tough on crime policy with initiatives that will do little, if anything, to meaningfully address the problem of reducing juvenile crime.

There is no demonstrable proof offered that any of the initiatives will reduce youth crime, as the solutions offered by the government's amendments do not tackle the root causes. It is important, however, that continuing reviews of relevant acts be pursued. A review announced in May 2007, which is the third of a series of five-yearly reviews, should surely have been able to put such relatively brief outcomes before the parliament in something less than two years. This is confirmation that this government has done little to actively address the real issue of reducing juvenile crime. Nonetheless, as I have said, it is important that we do pursue continuing improvements to the administration of youth justice.

One of the most common concerns expressed to me within the Aspley electorate in relation to youth justice issues is the brazen attitude of some of our youth towards the legal system—that is, some young people see themselves as above the law. In that context, one of the proposed amendments does give police stronger powers to arrest and take to court young people who do not comply with the youth justice conferencing requirement, who contravene an agreement or who fail to attend a drug assessment session. The bill provides an amendment in several sections that allows for a warrant to be issued when youths fail to attend a scheduled court appointment, correcting an apparent loophole within the current legislative arrangements that could be exploited by those juveniles with the brazen attitudes I noted as of concern to the wider community. However, there is more to be done here by removal of the obligation upon police to use detention only as a last resort.

It is on this point that the Juvenile Justice (Sentencing Principles) Amendment Bill seeks to remove this impediment to sentencing courts when dealing with juvenile offenders and inserts a new provision that enables courts to consider detention as a sentencing option for juvenile offenders, if appropriate, for the crime that has been committed. I support this amendment as proposed by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

There have been many calls from the community to name and shame juvenile offenders, and to date legislation has precluded juvenile offenders from being identified. I agree with the amendment that empowers the court in relation to the publication of identifying information of the offender if the court considers it to be in the interests of justice to do so, noting that one of the matters the courts must have regard to is the need to protect our community. I have noted in research reports on the outcomes of the

community consultation that was part of the review that there was a wide divergence of opinion amongst those who responded on this particular issue, there being members of the community both for and against the changes. However, I am more of a mind to support this change as it is proposed, as I believe the protection of the community's interests—the wider public interest test—should come before the interests of the individual, particularly where that individual is a convicted offender, juvenile or not.

I also note that the bill proposes, as I believe is appropriate, that wide powers of discretion to name be left with the court through the proposed consideration of 'any other relevant matter'. This sentiment seems to have the support of Queensland's Chief Justice Paul de Jersey, who in a 2006 *Sunday Mail* article suggested that courts should have the power to name juveniles who repeatedly break into homes, steal cars or spray graffiti. Justice de Jersey told the *Sunday Mail* that courts should be allowed to name persistent offenders as a powerful deterrent to young people. I am sure that the current virtual guarantee of anonymity is a protection willingly welcomed by the more brazen youth to whom I have referred earlier, and the mere threat of its removal may give them cause to think twice before reoffending.

The bill also provides for courts to be given specific powers to place curfews on juvenile offenders to reduce the chances of their reoffending and to ensure that they are properly supervised. Although it is a bold call to claim that curfews will ensure that offenders will be properly supervised, I think it provides, on the face of it, firstly, a mechanism to take young offenders off the street at a time when the inherent level of community supervision and awareness is lower, and as such they are most likely to be tempted to reoffend. Secondly, the curfew allows a specific place to be nominated which will allow enforcement of such a provision to be more readily carried out by the police.

I would like to place on record that in the electorate of Aspley our young people largely do the right thing. In the main, they are law-abiding citizens, reflect well on their parents and are a vibrant part of our local community. Of course this is true of the vast majority of all Queensland youth. However, across Queensland there are examples of juveniles who do not largely do the right thing, even to the extent that some commit violent crimes. We must always be aware that the age change from youth to adult is merely an arbitrary boundary and that the real behavioural transition from youth to adult will vary from individual to individual. It is therefore appropriate that we consider provisions in the youth justice legislation that provide powers to the courts and police to apply discretionary tools that will recognise that transition.

In that vein, it is appropriate that this bill considers the community expectation of appropriate sentencing of violent crime youth offenders. It does this in proposing to increase the minimum mandatory non-parole period for young people convicted of multiple murders from 15 years to 20 years imprisonment. The current legislation for a single murder of 15 years is the same for adults and juveniles, and there appears to be no reason to justify a different principle being applied to multiple murders. Having said that, imposing increased mandatory minimum sentences on youths convicted of multiple murders could be seen as little more than window-dressing.

In summary, whilst I am supportive of the proposed amendments to the Juvenile Justice Act 1992, it is disappointing they do little to address the real issues of reducing juvenile crime.

Mr DEMPSEY (Bundaberg—LNP) (12.18 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Juvenile Justice and Other Acts Amendment Bill and the Juvenile Justice (Sentencing Principles) Amendment Bill cognate debate. Let me first state a view that I have no doubt will be supported by all members on both sides of this parliament that young people are our future and that we should do everything possible to give young people the best chance at life. Young people are precious and they need to be given a variety of options to make sure they are able to choose positive life experiences for the benefit of themselves and for the whole of the community generally.

My personal view is that 99 per cent of all children in the community do the right thing. It is only a small one per cent of children in our community who, maybe because of certain circumstances, choose the wrong path. We should be able to avail ourselves of all options to make sure that these young people are able to have a fair chance at life.

In doing that we should also provide challenges and boundaries. I know from my own life experiences and from what I have witnessed in the community that young people enjoy challenges and enjoy boundaries. They like to go up to those boundaries and some young people step over those boundaries, but they like to have a boundary set so that they can measure their development and advancement as they grow. Each child is also affected tremendously by the environment around them. Each child has their own story. Each child has a different set of footprints, as do all of us in this House, that will eventually affect their future direction and the lives of people around them, including their families.

The purpose of this bill is to strengthen juvenile justice sentencing for serious crimes and limit the cycle of delinquency that some young people become involved in. The reference to detention as a last resort has resulted in juveniles who commit serious offences becoming involved in a revolving door of punishment. This amendment seeks to remove this reference to allow sentencing courts the ability to make determinations in line with community expectations.

This bill is not about locking up every child offender. It is about giving our justice system the ability to use detention and early intervention as a meaningful sentencing option which will give young people the opportunity to access rehabilitation and reform. These reforms range from drug and alcohol rehabilitation to basic life skills courses and education and employment based training initiatives. They give the less advantaged a real opportunity at a long-term quality life and the basic right of a job in the future. We all know how important a job is to a person's self-esteem and confidence. This has an effect on them throughout their life.

We have heard during this debate that a community based order costs $30 a day compared to $600 for detention. I find these comparisons the same as comparing apples with oranges—a poor comparison. These two financial costings do not take into account the severity of the crime, the overall rights of both the offender and the victim as to the type of offences committed, the community expectations and the overall benefit of meeting the rights of the victim and the long-term rehabilitation of the offender. I do, however, recognise that every dollar spent on early intervention is money well spent. It should be a priority of this state Labor government which is assisting in the failure of many young men and women to achieve their full potential. It is more interested in financial outcomes than long-term life outcomes.

In the past decade we have seen real levels of violent crime rise. The use of detention has remained a last resort under this government. This amendment will ensure that young criminals are held accountable for their actions and the punishment for their crimes is justified in the circumstances. Unfortunately, it is easy for young people to slide into a life of crime which escalates. It often results in lifelong damage to them and other people they are associated with.

The ABC youth radio station Triple J featured youth and crime on its current affairs show during the first week of August this year. It was interesting to hear from young adults who had broken the law that they thought that the penalty for crime was not enough of a deterrent. One young man who confessed to repeatedly engaging in graffiti said that the only way he would stop was if he was at risk of going to jail. Another told the program that he started out stealing cars as a teenager. When he got away with that he began stealing cars for profit and then finally ended up in prison for armed robbery as an adult. He confessed that it took this prison sentence to finally scare him straight. It is a sad indictment on society that the ultimate penalty of incarceration was the only means of turning around that young person. It shows the failure of modern society, particularly here in Queensland.

The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian's recent annual survey of young people in detention revealed that of the 87 per cent of juveniles who were in care at the time of the survey 75 per cent had been in detention centres multiple times. It is interesting to note that more than 90 per cent of the juveniles in detention considered the activities and counselling they have participated in during their time in detention as helpful. Almost all of the youth identified at least one person who they could discuss their problems with.

The survey found that juveniles in detention want more support and information. They want contact with solicitors and child safety officers. Most importantly, they want information. The same youths reported that there was little assistance with their health, housing and social problems on the outside. They reveal that there is very little support for young people at risk in our community. It is no wonder that young people continue to reoffend when they do not have appropriate support and rehabilitation.

After many years in the Police Service and being involved with many youth clubs, I know that we often see young people out late at night—and we are not always talking about older teenagers; sometimes we are talking about people as young as five. If these young people can be identified and properly assisted by all government departments working together then we can break the cycle and turn these young people around and they can have bright futures.

No support for young offenders along with the slap-on-the-wrist approach to juvenile crime can result in serious outcomes. Any caring person in the community knows that to give a direction and not follow through with actions or assistance shows that affected individual that we actually do not care. Young people need to see that their community cares about them and that they are not just a part of a failed system.

For example, a few years ago a number of young teenage girls were involved in a break and enter of a pharmacy in Bundaberg. The girls made off with a pile of makeup, shampoo and beauty products only to be caught shortly afterwards by the Bundaberg police. They were dealt with under the Juvenile Justice Act. Within months, one of these girls was involved in the murder and robbery of a man on the streets of Bundaberg. The quick escalation in this girl's crime spree goes a way towards demonstrating how the Juvenile Justice Act is actually failing Queensland's youth. As I previously stated, this is mainly due to a lack of assistance from government departments.

As the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian's report confirms, many juveniles who fall into a life of crime are subject to social and health problems. It is very concerning to note that 20 per cent of these young people were in the care of Child Safety Services prior to entering detention.

There is a note on one of the government department websites in relation to integrated justice information strategies. It states—

Criminal Justice Analytics—Proof of Concept project completed

Criminal Justice Analytics has successfully completed the Proof of Concept and demonstrated the ability to produce reports not previously available to government. For example, it showed that 87% of Indigenous juvenile offenders who had been supervised by communities (whether in the community or in custody) and had completed their order were later arrested as an adult. This is a statistically significant finding that should guide future policy development and resource allocation.

I implore this state government to listen to those words and break the cycle which has been going on for many years. That could actually show Queensland as a leading light in relation to juvenile justice as well as many other problems affecting the wider community. This amendment seeks to ensure that a tough but fair approach is taken with youths committing crimes. We need to ensure the community's safety. We need to give young people an opportunity to access support and rehabilitation services.

This government also needs to immediately address the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth within the juvenile justice system and embrace a whole-of-government approach to address the lack of funding in education, health, housing, homelessness and child safety services. The state government does not just need to look at crime figures to identify crime strategies; it must also look at what juvenile crime does to increase the real fear of crime. This real fear of crime is very hard to cost. To look at the cost of fear, we have to look at how many people live in fear in their own homes and compare that to 20 years ago. How much is now being spent on security systems, screens, alarms, lighting, building modifications and so forth? These are the hidden costs for this government not taking responsibility and introducing properly conceived laws that ensure the rights of all Queenslanders.

In terms of the fear of crime, when we walk the streets and talk to our constituents, how many times do we see and have to pass through security doors? How many windows are locked? How does that affect people in relation to fire safety? How does it affect them in relation to their quality of life, and not just their own personal quality of lives but when their families visit them? How many times do we hear of people being locked inside their own homes for fear of going out into the community? We have to address not only the act of crime but also the community perception.

In an age of communication, whereby we can instantly get information from across the whole world, should we not have processes in place to stop that fear of crime? People are affected by crime very easily. I talk specifically to young schoolchildren about when they wake up in the morning and hear the radio, hear their parents talking and hear what is on television. They hear what is on the media broadcasts. They meet up with their friends on the bus and on the streets and the topic of conversation is normally that negativity of fear. We have to ensure we address that because there is an untold amount of money being spent on people's safety and security simply because there are not strong enough multidepartment initiatives to address the issue of young offenders.

With regard to that section of the bill that relates to the age when a young person is transferred from a juvenile detention centre to an adult detention centre, I would ask that this government takes steps to acknowledge the maturity, the mental stability and the health of the offender prior to being transferred. Sometimes we set age limits but we know from our own relationships with people whom we love dearly that they mature at different ages, and we have to take that into account. As I previously mentioned, I have been an active participant in juvenile conferencing and have always found that those conferences have worked well. The majority of the time it is enough of a wake-up call for a young person to be turned around and headed in the right direction, but we need to ensure they do not continue through the revolving door whereby we see the same young offender turning up time and time again, because if we do not follow through with our actions in some way that youth can become blase about their effect on the community.

It really disheartens police and the people involved in youth justice conferencing to see that young person turn up and fail. Many people take that very personally. It is a good system in that the victim is able to be there and understand the pain and suffering of all parties involved, but we need to ensure that those same youths do not continue to come up again and again. There is an amendment in the bill which indicates that if the same person fronts up to youth justice conferencing three times other action will be taken in its place. We can caution and caution, but sometimes one size does not fit all for young people and we have to think outside the square in terms of what we can do, because that young person's life is so valuable.

We have seen so many young people turn their lives around if given the opportunity. It is amazing how sometimes the smallest thing can affect that young person's life. We may not necessarily know at the time that we are affecting that young person's life, but sheer positivity and the knowledge that they are going to get fair dinkum support, assistance and guidance—that when hard times come someone is there to back them up—is the message that we need to send to young people. In closing, we need a state government that takes responsibility for all juvenile offences, particularly serious youth offences, we need an approach that involves all of the interagency strategies and we need cooperation from all levels of government.

Mr O'BRIEN (Cook—ALP) (12.35 pm): I rise to support the Juvenile Justice and Other Acts Amendment Bill and to speak against the Juvenile Justice (Sentencing Principles) Amendment Bill moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. This has been an important debate because it really has shown the stark difference between what we on this side of the House believe and what those on the other side of the House believe. Notwithstanding the very reasonable comments that the member for Bundaberg just made, the speeches of those opposite have been really pointed by this hairy-chested view of law and order that we must be strong against crime. I do not want to say that we have to be strong against crime or weak against crime or whatever; we have to be smart against crime, and that reflects what the member for Bundaberg said. We have to be smart against crime, and just locking kids in jail, like the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has suggested in his bill, is simply just not smart.

Once they go on that path and enter that system—once those young people are in the detention system—it is a slippery slope which is very hard to get off. They learn new tricks in detention. They get exposed to a much higher level of criminality and they go into a system that is a very hard system. I have had the displeasure, I suppose, as a member of parliament to visit many prisons in and around this state. The member for Springwood in her capacity as the chair of the former public works committee had a propensity for that committee, of which I was a member, to visit prisons. Therefore, that committee visited David Longland and both the women's and men's prisons at Stuart prison in Townsville. And Lotus Glen is located in my electorate, so I have visited Lotus Glen as well. I never leave one of those institutions without being thoroughly depressed and thoroughly wiped out by the despair that exists in those places—the complete waste of life that exists in those places, the seeming hopelessness of people as they sit around and just bide their time. Some of them are working, but most of them are not.

When I leave those prisons I just think, 'Oh my God, what a waste of life!' and I hate going to them. Sending young people into those institutions should be done as a last resort. We need to give young people every opportunity to get on the right path. If they do not get on the right path, that is fine; they will probably end up there anyway. However, as a society we need to teach the children well. If we are to teach them respect and teach them the right way then we need to show them the right way. Many young people in my electorate who end up in the juvenile justice system have simply not been exposed to proper social norms or strong family structures.

I think that is the problem with the argument that has been put forward by those opposite. They are stuck with this 1950s view of a nuclear family that simply does not exist in this complicated world in which we live. It certainly does not exist in many of the communities that I represent. Nowadays—not just in Aboriginal communities but in the wider community as well—we have families that have broken apart and families that have siblings from different marriage arrangements and different partners. We have families that have one parent, two parents—all sorts of different arrangements. It is a very complicated world. If you throw into that mix alcohol and drugs, what can we expect to happen to these young people? That is why it is up to the state to step in on these occasions to teach the children the right way and to give them every opportunity to get on to the right path. We do that through a whole range of measures that are outlined in this bill.

I want to talk briefly about how the bill affects young people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background and what the Queensland government is doing to reduce Indigenous overrepresentation in the youth justice system. A number of members have spoken about this issue today. Young Indigenous people are overrepresented in all stages of the youth justice system. They represent 56 per cent of young people in detention but only six per cent of the juvenile population in Queensland. Conversely, young Indigenous people are overrepresented with respect to conferencing and cautioning. The factors that contribute to Indigenous offending are complex and Indigenous people are often exposed to multiple risk factors. Responding to young Indigenous young people who are involved in or who are at risk of becoming involved in the youth justice system requires a multifaceted approach. To ensure that the legislation provided a sound framework, Indigenous overrepresentation was a key issue that was considered during the review of the Juvenile Justice Act. These are very complicated matters.

A number of provisions in the current Juvenile Justice Act reflect the strategies that are used to deal with young Indigenous people in the criminal justice system in a culturally appropriate way. For example, community justice groups can make submissions to the courts in relation to bail and sentencing matters. That assists the court by providing it with an understanding of cultural factors that may be relevant to a young person's behaviour and to help the court tailor an appropriate response to the offending. People should not just assume that those justice groups take a lenient approach to the offender. In fact, on many occasions justice groups recommend to the court that a very strong stance be taken against that young offender. Often it is the justice group that insists on much harsher penalties to be imposed on a particular offender.

The diversionary process of cautioning and conferencing can include respected members of an Indigenous community, thereby maximising the impact of the diversionary measure and linking the young person with the respected figure who may be able to influence that person's future behaviour.

Also, youth Murri courts operate in several locations across Queensland, providing magistrates with support and advice from elders so that the young person can be dealt with in a way that is culturally meaningful, therefore maximising the impact of the process.

A number of amendments in the Juvenile Justice and Other Acts Amendment Bill that apply to all young offenders are likely to have a positive impact on the number of young Indigenous people in detention and on remand and on the way in which they are dealt with in the youth justice system. For example, courts will be required to consider what the likely sentence will be when deciding whether to release a young person on bail. That could mean that if a young person is not likely to receive a custodial sentence, then that person is not likely to have spent time in detention on remand. This is a key problem in Far North Queensland. Some of these young people are sent to youth detention in Townsville and later find out that they would not have had to go to prison. So they are spending time on remand when really the sentence would never have meant that they would have had to have spent any time in detention at all.

Currently, young people can be refused bail because of a threat of harm to their own safety. It will be made clear that this refusal can only occur when the threat is related to the offence. This is aimed at ensuring that young people are not remanded in custody for welfare reasons, for example, a lack of accommodation. The amendments in this bill also clarify that if a young person breaches a supervised release order and then spends some time in detention the detention is counted towards that young person's sentence. That will ensure that periods of detention are not extended beyond the initial sentence because of administrative reasons.

In addition to legislative amendments, the government is investing in a suite of services for Indigenous young people who are in or who are at risk of entering the criminal justice system. I will not go into the details, but they operate in all parts of Queensland.

As I said, this has been an important debate. It has managed to highlight the differences between this side and that side of the House when it comes to these important issues. My philosophy is that we need to teach, we need to mentor and we need to support these young people to keep them out of the criminal justice system.

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (12.44 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Juvenile Justice and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2009. I note that the legislative amendments give the courts specific powers to place curfews on juvenile offenders to reduce the chance of them reoffending, widen core powers in relation to naming juvenile offenders and increase the minimum mandatory detention period for young people. The amendments have certainly been well documented by other members in this House. I think they are very good amendments to the law.

I want to talk briefly about community responsibility in relation to the issue of juvenile justice. In my electorate there is Goodna Youth Services and The Base. These are two excellent services. Goodna Youth Services works at a grassroots level across all cultures with children as young as 10 years of age who are homeless, who have drug or alcohol issues, who have mental health issues, or who have a history of abuse or neglect. The service has street-level response teams available sometimes until 4 am in the morning, evening outreach teams, emergency food relief, supported crisis accommodation and long-term accommodation. Goodna Youth Services provides showers, toiletries, clothes, food, comfort, washing, advocacy and referral for young people in our area. It is very good to see that it has joined up with the Giving With Love group, which is run by Barbara Bradley and all of her friends. They provide toiletries for the young people in our community. I would like to pay our respects to Les Scott and Colleen Smith and the team at Goodna Youth Services who provide this service in our community.

I also want to talk about The Base youth service. I am on the management committee of The Base and I have been so for many years. The Base has been active since 1992. It works with young people with extreme anger issues and those who are displaying violent and aggressive outbursts. The clients are individually case managed with their families. Young people are referred to The Base via mainstream health organisations. The interesting part of this program is that parents and guardians must attend and parents and guardians must partake in the program. The Base aims to steer young people away from detention centres. It also seeks to develop new behavioural strategies to steer young people away from a life of crime. In my area, a life of crime can be a passage of life. Some people in my community believe that juvenile justice—being detained—is just one step in life and then they end up in Sir David Longland, which is a great shame.

Most young people who are referred to The Base have been given a behavioural diagnosis, such as ADD, OCD, autism, or Asperger's syndrome. Clients are assessed medically and they can access the service outside school hours. For example, the service is open at night and it is also open on weekends. The therapies include reality therapy, education programs and supporting parents via parenting skills programs such as Toughlove. The service also includes group work, counselling, mediation, recreation and camps.

I would like to turn briefly to the role of schools in relation to juvenile justice matters. In my electorate some excellent work has been done in relation to bringing down the crime rates of primary school children as well as high school students. The Goodna State School has the Pathways to Peace program. I would like to acknowledge the excellent work of Goodna State School and particularly Dr Simon Petrie, who in 1996 came to see me to say that we have to put a stop to the violence at the schools in our area.

The Pathways to Peace program talks about peace, love, friendship and learning. In my view, the Goodna State School is the leader in Queensland in relation to these peace programs. We have proved in Goodna that we know how to keep our young people on the right track through programs that start as early as the prep years. As a community, through community organisations such as The Base youth service in Goodna, through our schools and through our churches I believe that our peace programs and our community programs, particularly those that have been funded by community renewal in the past, have kept many people out of our juvenile justice centres and put them on the right track where they have actually become active citizens in our community.

Life is tough for young people in the Bundamba electorate. It is very important that we intervene early. I know of child-care centres that have stopped some of the kids attending the centre because they have been too violent and have been belting into the other kids. One has to ask oneself what we can do when children at child-care centres are being excluded. We have to intervene at those young ages of two or three. We also have to intervene in the prep year, in primary schools and in high schools.

I would like to place on record my concern about the mental health of some of our young students in our community. I believe that mental health is not diagnosed early enough in our primary schools. Some of the intervention strategies should be put in place in students as young as those in the prep years because they are showing signs of having mental health issues.

Some good things have happened in our electorate in relation to juvenile justice issues. Mike Parker of Goodna Youth Services has been a wonderful father figure, as have other officers of Goodna Youth Services in relation to young men in our community. Last year I went to Bundamba State Secondary College when one of our students who had been in supported accommodation finished year 12. Mike Parker and I were there for him. We were very proud of the fact that he graduated.

I would like to talk a little bit about our cross-cultural communities in relation to juvenile justice. Some young people in the Pacific Islander communities in my electorate, particularly the Samoan, Tongan and Maori communities, believe that it is a rite of passage to go to the juvenile justice centres and then on to a life of crime. I am very proud of the work of the Samoan Advisory Council in our electorate which intervenes very quickly in our area in relation to young people who are going off the rails. We have an excellent police community liaison officer, Philip Luafutu, who quite often through the Police Service calls meetings of the Samoan, Tongan and Maori elders to make sure that members of their community know that it is not acceptable to be outside the law.

I would like to briefly talk about one particular meeting that I feel privileged to have been invited to. The different communities had had a fight between each other. The young people were actually belting the hell out of each other. The Samoan Advisory Council decided that it was going to deal with it in a cultural manner. At Redbank Plains we had a meeting of over 100 people, including all of the elders of the Samoan, Tongan and Maori communities. The young people who were being charged were made to bow before the elders of the community. They were lying on the floor bowing to the elders and asking for forgiveness. There were 26 of them, if I remember correctly. Mark Breckenridge, the principal of Redbank Plains High School, was also privileged to be in attendance at that particular meeting. It is the strongest possible deterrent for the young people of that community to be told by the elders of their community that their behaviour is unacceptable, not only in our community in Australia but back home.

I place on record my thanks to our Pacific Islander communities, specifically the Samoan Advisory Council, for taking a lead role in relation to cross-cultural issues. I also place on record my thanks to the Dinmore Maori Baptist Church that has similar programs in place. I commend the bill to the House. I believe that our community needs to take more action at a community level. In future years in dealing with juvenile justice programs I would like to see parenting programs in place for many people in our community from the time of conception rather than from when problems arise. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr WETTENHALL (Barron River—ALP) (12.55 pm): I rise to support the Juvenile Justice and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2009 and to oppose the bill introduced by the shadow Attorney-General and shadow minister for justice, the Juvenile Justice (Sentencing Principles) Amendment Bill.

The opportunity to debate these two bills cognately has provided a good opportunity for members in this place to compare and contrast two fundamentally different approaches to juvenile justice in this state. The first, put forward by the government in amendments to the Juvenile Justice Act, is predicated on the basis that young people who are charged with offences and who may ultimately be convicted of those offences deserve a chance to reform and be rehabilitated. The alternative approach that the opposition puts forward is that we ought to fast-track young people through the juvenile justice system straight to detention.

We have heard over and over again during the course of this debate the same tired old slogans, the same tired old simplistic solutions being trotted out, that young people get nothing but a slap on the wrist and things of that kind. We have heard it over and over again during the course of this debate. We hear it over and over again in various forums outside of this House. What those comments reflect is a very fundamental misunderstanding of the way young people think and behave, a fundamental misunderstanding about what are effective measures to correct antisocial or criminal behaviour. If it does not reflect a misunderstanding of those issues, it reflects something much worse, and that is that members of the opposition are using young people who transgress the law or who get charged with criminal offences to make a political point: to erect a platform for themselves to go out into their communities and say, 'Hey, I'm Mr or Ms Tough-on-Crime'. Members can bet their bottom dollar that some of the claptrap that we have heard in this debate by members opposite will be trotted out in their speeches and distributed to their constituents to bolster their position that they talk and act tough on crime.

The problem is that the position that those opposite have advocated—the position that they want young people fast-tracked into our detention centres without proper consideration of what the alternative sentences could and ought to be and might be most effective in turning those young people around—ignores all of the evidence. That is the other fundamental difference between the government and the opposition's approach to these complex issues. The government's approach is based on evidence, objective research and an understanding and an analysis of what works and what does not work; the approach of the members of the opposition is based on what will work for them in their electorates by putting out their speeches saying, 'I am talking tough on crime.'

A number of pieces of research have been referred to. In fact, in the development of this bill wide community consultation was undertaken and many submissions were received. One of the findings as a result of that community consultation was that there is room for improvement in the community's understanding about the way our juvenile justice system works.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.30 pm.

Mr WETTENHALL: Prior to the luncheon adjournment, I was referring to the consultation undertaken preceding and during the development of this bill. One of the findings of that consultation was that there was a level of poor understanding in the community about the way that the bill worked. Unfortunately, that poor level of understanding has been reflected by the contributions made in this debate by members opposite. It is obvious that either they have not read the existing Juvenile Justice Act or, if they have, they have not understood it.

During the course of the debate we have heard criticisms about how the current law does not take sufficient account of the rights and interests of victims, how it is skewed to provide nothing but a slap on the wrist to young offenders and all of their other simplistic slogans. A cursory examination of the Juvenile Justice Act would have led them to the following conclusions: the matters that they criticise and the matters that they say are gaps in the current juvenile justice system are all covered in the act. Section 150, the sentencing principles, states, 'In sentencing a child for an offence, a court must have regard to', and it enumerates all of the things that a court must have regard to, among them being the nature and seriousness of the offence and the child's previous offending history. Importantly, given the emphasis that has been placed on the justification for the opposition's bill today, namely the rights of victims, in sentencing a juvenile offender a court must take into account 'any impact of the offence on a victim'. We have heard a lot from members opposite about the punishment fitting the crime. In that regard the Juvenile Justice Act states a court must have regard to 'the fitting proportion between the sentence and the offence'.

Let us look at the existing Charter of Juvenile Justice Principles. Principle No. 1 states, 'The community should be protected from offences.' There is no doubt that protecting the community would be uppermost in the court's mind in imposing a sentence of detention. The charter also states—

A child who commits an offence should be—

(a) held accountable and encouraged to accept responsibility for the offending behaviour; and

(b) dealt with in a way that will give the child the opportunity to develop in responsible, beneficial and socially acceptable ways; and

(c) dealt with in a way that strengthens the child's family.

Listening to members of the opposition during the course of this debate, one would have thought that the current Juvenile Justice Act mentions nothing about victims. However, the Charter of Juvenile Justice, principle No. 9, states—

A victim of an offence committed by a child should be given the opportunity to participate in the process of dealing with the child for the offence in a way allowed by the law.

Therefore, many of the points made by members of the opposition during the course of this debate really are pointless, because the issues that they raise are already covered by the provisions of the existing legislation.

For years and years, the parliamentary Liberal Party and the parliamentary National Party have tried to beat the law and order drum and we have heard more of it today. All sorts of extreme policy positions have been put forward, including their most favoured one, which is mandatory detention. However, at election after election the people of Queensland have rejected the extreme positions advocated by the far right in Queensland and have rejected the demonising of young people, which has been a consistent theme in past debates and we have heard it again and again during the course of this debate.

The Juvenile Justice (Sentencing Principles) Amendment Bill, introduced by the shadow Attorney-General and shadow minister for juvenile justice, is an attack on one of the most fundamental principles of youth justice, which is that detention should be a penalty of last resort. Of course detention should be a penalty of last resort. In every case, a court should be bound to consider all of the available and appropriate options in arriving at a just sentence which, in appropriate cases, may be, has been and will continue to be a sentence of detention. This process is not only just, fair and rational; it is also based on sound principles of correction for young people. As most parents know and understand intuitively, when a child does wrong we try to make the mode of punishment fit the wrongdoing and we graduate our responses, taking into account the age of our child, their past behaviour and the extent to which stated intentions have been matched with actions. We do this because we know that effective discipline has to be proportionate and because young people take time to learn from their mistakes. A sound justice system does no less.

What is the point of taking away the principle? In the arguments put forward by members of the opposition themselves, we have been told that sentencing young people to youth detention is nothing but a revolving door to the adult criminal justice system. I would have thought that that was an argument in favour of retaining the principle that a sentence of detention will be a sentence of last resort. All of the other options that are available, as a result of successive Labor governments introducing a modern, flexible and adaptive juvenile justice system—including probation, community service, good behaviour bonds and conferencing—must and ought be tried in appropriate cases before a young person is sent to detention.

Earlier in the debate I think it might have been the member for Cook who commented on the role of family in situations involving young people who have been caught up in the justice system. I remind members that there are only two youth detention centres in this state, one in Townsville and one in Brisbane. Young people who are sentenced to detention are removed from their families and their communities if they do not happen to live in Townsville or Brisbane. I remind honourable members that when they are taken into custody they are taken into adult watch-houses. They are removed from those watch-houses as soon as practicable, but nevertheless they are taken into adult watch-houses before they are taken to a youth detention centre and when they are brought back for court. Most importantly, they are removed from their families and their communities. It is an important principle in our Juvenile Justice Act that we investigate and support sentencing options that allow young people to remain with their families and their communities, because the evidence shows that that is the most effective approach.

I want to mention some of the features of this bill that strengthen some important police powers in a number of key areas. Most importantly, these amendments, as I have said, are based on evidence and community feedback. They do support victims of crime and, without pandering to the ill-informed commentary, do move the act to meet community expectations.

Although the existing legislation does empower courts to impose curfews, the amendments will give courts specific powers to impose curfews as conditions of orders of the court, such as bail or sentencing orders—all designed to reduce the chances of reoffending and to ensure proper supervision. Similarly, although the existing legislation enables courts to name juvenile offenders, amendments set out particular matters to which the court may have regard to determine whether it is in the interests of justice to do so.

The bill also amends the act to increase the mandatory detention period for young people convicted of multiple murders from 15 to 20 years imprisonment, aligning the minimum non-parole period for both adult and juvenile offenders convicted of multiple murders. Police will also be given stronger powers to arrest young people who fail to comply with orders in relation to youth conferencing, or contravene a youth conference agreement or fail to attend a drug assessment session, and bring them before a court.

Another very significant amendment will be to require a court to consider what the likely sentence will be when deciding whether to release a young person on bail. This is an important change, as nearly a third of young people who are remanded in detention spend eight days or less on remand and of these less than 10 per cent are subsequently sentenced to a period of detention. The likely sentence to be imposed will not be the only factor to be considered. However, it deserves to be given due weight in bail hearings. Many young people who are refused bail before sentencing spend time in adult watch-houses, as I indicated, before being transferred to juvenile detention centres. Together with those amendments

that will clarify that a court cannot remand a young person in custody for welfare reasons, these measures will reduce the number of young people being held in custody on remand, which is a very important objective.

The bill also requires courts to set a date for the transfer of young offenders from youth detention if they are going to turn 18 during the detention period. This will overcome the situation where offenders can remain in youth detention until they are 21 years old. The final amendment I wish to mention is that which provides protection to child victims of crime by automatically prohibiting the publication of identifying information of a child victim of crime.

This has been an important debate. I think it is a great shame that members opposite have reduced their contribution to slogans—the types of things we read in a tabloid newspaper on any day of the week, the types of things we hear a shock jock decrying any day of the week. They have failed to tackle the real issues head on and deal with the evidence that supports the government's bill. Instead we have heard the rhetoric that underpins not only what they have said in here today but what they will no doubt go out and say in their electorates.

I have one final comment in relation to the suggested name change of the bill—that is, it is worthwhile remembering that the Juvenile Justice Act, as it is currently, not only provides for the sentencing of young people who have been convicted of offences but provides for a whole juvenile justice system to deal with young people who have come into contact with police, whether or not they are actually charged with an offence or whether or not they have been convicted of an offence. That betrays yet another fundamental misunderstanding about the whole basis of our criminal justice system—that is, people are presumed innocent until they are proven guilty.

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—LNP) (2.44 pm): The first bill in this cognate debate aims to amend several pieces of legislation including the Juvenile Justice Act 1992, the Child Protection Act 1993 and the Young Offenders (Interstate Transfer) Act 1987 and other relevant legislation for three basic strategic aims. First of all, it will give police stronger powers in relation to juvenile offenders; it will widen court powers in relation to naming juvenile offenders and allowing courts to place curfews on juvenile offenders et cetera; and it will increase the minimum mandatory detention period for young people convicted of multiple murders from 15 years to 20 years imprisonment. I also acknowledge the legislation's priorities articulated in the minister's second reading speech—namely, community safety, public expectations, rights of victims and positive outcomes for young people and their families.

The second bill in this cognate debate—the debate on these bills was only made cognate yesterday—has been brought before this place by the LNP's shadow Attorney-General to amend the Juvenile Justice Act as well. Physically it is a smaller bill, but I believe that it contains similar priorities as the government's legislation—community safety and public expectations. I had hoped that those opposite would show the same spirit of bipartisanship and vote with the LNP for the shadow Attorney-General's private member's bill as well as the amendments proposed by the shadow minister for communities which are being considered by this House in the cognate debate.

I acknowledge what the minister stated in her second reading speech: 'Youth justice is a complex and challenging area that requires balanced, evidence based approaches and action.' The shadow Attorney-General in his private member's bill made a similar observation: 'Responding to youth crime must be measured and based on evidence and research.' The shadow minister for communities is also in harmony and agreeance with the strategic objectives of the Juvenile Justice and Other Acts Amendment Bill and has taken further steps to strengthen laws governing young offenders by moving amendments to the government's bill.

As the member states in her explanatory notes, her amendments are designed to complement the government's legislation, but she is also responding to the need for community protection and the recognition of victims of young offenders, legislating to enshrine the right of a victim to formally present a victim impact statement to the court at the time of sentencing of a young offender. The shadow minister for communities also most importantly changes the name of the act to the Young Offenders Act. Most other states in Australia have a similar name for this legislation. I believe this name more accurately reflects the nature of the legislation.

I have spoken and taken advice from many people who are working within the youth justice system and the broader adult justice system, who, as public servants, naturally wish to remain anonymous if they want to have a career under this government. There is a feeling that children who choose or who are led into a life of crime who are caught within the juvenile justice system should be exposed to what is going to happen to them if their criminal behaviour continues. This is from the experienced workers. The quote I received from one worker was: 'As well as taking the kids on fishing and on picnic trips, we'll also need to take them on a trip through the razor wire and see what's on the other side.' I would have to agree with that quote and that sentiment. There is a degree of frustration being expressed within the workers of the juvenile justice system.

One of the most memorable and profound experiences that I have had, at least as a politician and as the former shadow minister for police and corrective services, was inspecting and visiting my first jail, and then my second and third jail. One of the thoughts I had while I was going through them was that it was an attitude-changing life experience. As you know if you read all the psychological books, one of the hardest things in this world with human beings is to change attitudes and probably doubly more so with juveniles and young adults.

If we were able to safely bring juvenile offenders to an adult prison for an inspection or tour so that they could see, hear and feel the misery and sorrow which permeates these places, they may change their ways. This sort of program would not be effective for all juvenile offenders, but it may be effective for the less hardened or institutionalised juvenile offenders. I offer that positive idea for the House's consideration today.

The shadow minister said that the Labor Party has created a system with 'soft-on-youth-crime sentencing policies'. I agree with that; criminal lawyers agree with that. I recently spoke with an experienced and case hardened criminal lawyer who has dealt with many juvenile offenders and I asked this person for an assessment of the current system and also for some solutions.

Mrs Sullivan: Is he a member of the LNP?

Mr MESSENGER: No, this person is not a member of the LNP. He said that the current juvenile justice system is a joke because of one important fact: the children know that nothing is going to happen to them until they are 17. It is worth repeating that: the children and the families whom he has represented know that nothing will happen to them until they are 17. These kids are smart. We have to understand that this is the feeling within the legal fraternity and it is a common-sense feeling. Members opposite would do well to listen to this person's advice. The children know that nothing is going to happen to them until they are 17. In other words, there is no effective deterrent built into the current juvenile justice system.

Worryingly, this person also said to me that assaults on other juveniles are treated as a joke within the criminal system at the moment. We have seen plenty of examples of this, including tragic examples. When you cross that fence into the schoolyard, you cross into the twilight zone where assaults on people are not treated the same as if they occurred on the other side of the fence.

He described the problem with the current system in two words—therapeutic jurisprudence, or the court's overemphasis on rehabilitation as opposed to deterrence and punishment. This comment will reinforce and back up what those on this side of the House have been saying about the current system. When you take into account the extreme rate of recidivism, you would have to say that the facts agree with this observation and with what those on this side of the House have been saying. He also said, after I assured him once again that he would be protected by anonymity, that the courts are doing their best—and I think he said this next statement with his tongue firmly in his cheek—but the parents of juvenile criminals should be put in stocks, have rotten vegetables and fruit thrown at them and then publicly flogged.

Government members interjected.

Mr MESSENGER: As I said, he had his tongue firmly placed in his cheek—

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Pitt): Order! The member for Burnett has the call.

Mr MESSENGER: But I got the meaning of his message, and his light-hearted comment once again expressed a sense of sheer frustration.

Government members interjected.

Mr MESSENGER: Obviously those members opposite who are interjecting have never heard of the word 'satire'. He went on to point out that we in our society have seen the rise of what he calls the non-working class as opposed to the working class. I think it is an important observation. Just like the working class takes pride in the amount of work they can do—and I can remember my father as a canecutter coming home absolutely beat, dog-tired, covered head to toe in black thrash and collapsing after cutting 20 tonne of cane for $1.60 a tonne, and I am sure many members of the House would have similar experiences about their parents coming home dog-tired—

Mr Hoolihan: My father shore 200 sheep a day.

Mr MESSENGER: Exactly—200 sheep a day. Once again, you have to reflect on the implicit message that is being sent to children through these experiences. The adults and parents of the non-working class are taking pride in the nonwork that they do and all too often in the criminal behaviour of the non-working culture which it leads to. This of course sends a message to the children of the non-working parents. A suggestion of the criminal lawyer is to ban the children of adults who are charged with criminal acts from attending court. Lawyers are sick of seeing innocent children being dragged along to court cases by their parents, and this lawyer thinks that bringing children to court is the wrong type of learned behaviour.

Mr Finn: Do you agree with him?

Mr MESSENGER: I do; I agree. I think it is not healthy for innocent children to be dragged along to court with parents who have been charged with criminal acts and to see that process and think that going to court is a normal thing. That is happening now. It is not healthy for innocent infants and children to think it is normal for mummy or daddy to attend court.

Parents should be taken to task also and held responsible for what their children do. He posed the question: why shouldn't parents be made to perform community service right alongside their children? Maybe then they would have a greater sense of care for their children. Even as I am saying these words I hope that they never, ever come back to bite me, because I am all too aware that sometimes you just cannot understand or have responsibility for what children do.

Mr Schwarten: My mum always said, 'Never talk about other people's kids until your grandkids are 100.'

Mr MESSENGER: I take that interjection from the member for Rockhampton. There has been an erosion of respect for authority. From about the sixties onwards, people have lost respect for members of society who are in traditional roles of authority. Politicians, police, ministers of religion and teachers as a group for various reasons have been found to have feet of clay. Yes, that has been a good thing to prevent child abuse and corruption, but that erosion of respect may have gone too far. Teachers are put in classrooms where, not through their own fault, children automatically do not respect them and it is a learned behaviour, once again, from the time they were born. We do not have to look too far in the media today to find how difficult a time teachers have within their classroom and with the issues of respect.

I do not think any members of this House would deny or dismiss the significant role that drugs, both legal and illicit, play in juvenile crime—

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr MESSENGER: And domestic violence. Starting with the sixties and the influx of heroin from South-East Asia, we have seen a massive increase in drug use. We have seen the introduction of new types of drugs—ecstasy and methamphetamines—where one pill can kill. We have also seen what has been called a hardening of those drugs which have traditionally been described as 'soft drugs'. The hydroponic marijuana is a superbreed with more active ingredients of THC.

There has been increasing dysfunction in families. I believe that in the cities and especially in the larger schools drugs are freely available. It is an issue that the government tries to hide and cover up, but we are not doing enough to ensure that schoolyards are drug free. If it is good enough to have drug sniffer dogs on the streets and outside sporting venues and dance clubs, then it is good enough to have them in the schools that obviously have drug problems. The state has a duty of care to ensure that all steps are taken by the state to stop children from coming into contact with illicit or even legal drugs on school property. If we have a zero-tolerance approach to drugs in our schoolyards, we might have a better chance on our streets and in our backyards. If the government were honest, it would admit that there is a drug problem in our detention centres and our jails.

Sadly, two-thirds of the children in detention are Indigenous. The debate in this House would be an ideal time to hear an Indigenous or a Torres Strait Islander voice on the floor of this parliament. I take this opportunity to put forward my personal belief that we must find a way of guaranteeing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in this place. We have two flags on the floor of this parliament—the Torres Strait Islander flag and the Indigenous flag. They are great symbols, but we must take those symbols a step further in the form of a practical measure. Dedicated Indigenous representation has been in New Zealand since 1867. There were four dedicated members of Indigenous extraction in 1867. I believe it has a fundamental effect on the culture of New Zealand, and I think we should look at that situation right now.

I do not think one person in the House would argue against the premise that it is better to intervene early when a child is at an at-risk stage in life to find a way of successfully preventing repeated and serious criminal behaviour. The $64 million question is: what is a successful intervention? I recently met with the minister in a delegation, and I thank the minister for her honest and heartfelt hearing of that delegation. I believe we brought before the minister an example of a successful intervention.

Bob Davis was the gentleman that we brought before the minister. He has developed a program called 'Operation Hard Yakka', where kids who have found themselves on the wrong side of the law and disadvantaged youths are put through their paces in a training course modelled on the Australian Army recruit course. Mr Davis is a decorated member of the former armed services. He was an SAS serviceman. He has produced spectacular results. He is a committed person with his heart in this. What Bob Davis does for the kids of the Wide Bay area works.

The program has proven results with positive outcomes. It is a vision that I would dearly love to see put into action. I have spoken with a few people about the course, and I have been met with overwhelming support and encouragement. A couple of words and phrases pop up in these conversations, and they have been repeated in this place before. 'Tough love' and 'finally someone cares' are phrases that jump out. Mr Davis has just conducted a short five-day development camp

program for a group of 10 young adults aged 17 to 28. Some of these participants have high levels of needs and have spent time in jail. According to Mr Davis, the outcome so far has been tremendous. Three of the young adults who participated in the program are going back to complete their year 10 studies through TAFE. Three have already received full-time employment. Two are applying for apprenticeships. One is looking at joining the Army. The participants have learnt about respect and the right attitude. Mr Davis is sickened and feels hopeless every time he receives an email or phone call from a desperate parent seeking assistance for a troubled child. He has become the go-to guy in the Wide Bay area because he gets results.

In the very brief time that I have left, I would like to make this point to the minister. The minister talked about costs. We know that we are all under cost constraints. During that meeting the minister said that to take one juvenile from Bundaberg and escort them to detention in Brisbane costs the department around $8,000. I stand to be corrected, but that is the figure I remember. Mr Davis has developed a 30-day course. The cost of that course per child is $6,000. I am thinking that it would be more cost-effective to fund Mr Davis's course than it would be to transport children from Bundaberg to a juvenile detention centre in Brisbane.

In closing, I would like to praise the staff who work within juvenile detention centres. I would also like to praise the police, who exhibit lots of common sense and care for the youth of the Wide Bay region.

Mr HOPPER (Condamine—LNP) (3.04 pm): In rising to speak to this bill today, I would like to recognise Doug Nothdurft in the gallery and Ross and Margaret Thompson. They have been sitting in the gallery through the entire debate on this bill, and I will explain why in a moment.

In May 2007 a review was announced. We in the opposition believe that the review did not go as far as we would have liked. We believe this bill needs to go a way further. We often see juveniles get into trouble. No-one wants their kids to get into trouble. Unfortunately, it is a fact of life. Unfortunately, there are people who are brought up in circumstances that are beyond our control, and it is our duty as a government to put things in place to try to deal with not only those who commit the crimes but also those who have crimes committed against them and the families that it will affect.

The victims must also be addressed. There has been a 2.6 per cent rise and some 2,500 offenders. Out of that, 2,000 offenders possibly will reoffend. They are terribly high statistics. Violent offenders need to be punished, and they need real punishment. The punishment that exists today, before this legislation, is quite light. We heard the member for Burnett speak about how lightly children under 17 are treated and how the police fear when they face a judge that they will be back on the street with no real reprimand.

We need to increase alternatives for youth sentencing. We in the opposition quite often push, 'If you do the crime, you do the time.' That sounds very harsh, but I think strong deterrents need to be put out there. We saw a horrific crime in Toowoomba a few years ago, and the parents of those children are sitting here today. The mother of one of them, Margaret Nothdurft, wrote a letter to me to describe what the family has been through. I would like to share that letter with honourable members. It states—

As you were our local member when this event happened you would have been following the case with interest and shock. This could happen in Queensland realizing there must be a breakdown in Australian society for this to happen as we were. Doug vowed that Tyson's death would not be in vain. Doug promised the families in this case The Thompsons and the Lyons that their sons deaths would not be a waste, that their deaths could bring some good by saving hundreds if not thousands of lives by changing the Justice System. We felt The Juvenile Justice could be the beginning as this is grassroot level where young people could be intercepted and corrected at this young age and not flow onto life of crime leaving victims behind them and saving them from themselves and not flowing onto the adult system. Doug has a personal interest in following this youth act when it has been applied following it from police on the streets to the courts. Making sure this act is used to its full potential.

We feel when this act proves itself it should be brought to Federal Government where Federal Government should put an umbrella over the states. This act should be Australian wide. This would be the beginning for a safer Australia and also bring back the Australian way of life in which we all once lived.

We would like to give a special thanks to Warren Pitt minister for Juvenile Justice at the time for his understanding and concern. Quickly announcing the review of the Juvenile Justice Act 1992. We would like to give Mr Pitt our best wishes in his retirement. We would like to thank many ministers we have met with over this time with our concerns with this act and related issues. A special thanks to Karen Struthers present minister over seeing this act.

They go on to thank me, and I will not read that. I would like to table that letter for all members to have a look.

Tabled paper: Email, dated Tuesday 18 August 2009, from Margaret Wilson to Mr Ray Hopper, member for Condamine [816].

Tyson's mother also gave us a summary of Tyson's life. The last paragraph of that reads—

Tyson died of a brutal death of massive head injuries. He was taken away from us at such a young age of 17 years and 3 weeks. He did not deserve this. Tyson can never fulfil his dreams of being a diesel fitter nor have his life to the fullest, as it was taken away from him.

I table that letter as well.

Tabled paper: Document titled 'Tyson Wilson's Life Story' [817].

I know that this may touch the hearts of many who sit and listen. I commend the government today—and that does not often happen—because this is good legislation. I wish that it were a bit tougher. As I go through and read the bill I find that it is good legislation.

This morning I was asked by the media whether that crime in Toowoomba would have occurred had this legislation been in place four or five years ago. Please God, maybe it might not have. Who knows? Who can answer that? All I can say is that, as elected members of this parliament, as we make legislation in this House let us hope it might save more lives.

A lot of children who get mixed up in juvenile crime move on to adult crime. I have raised three children. My youngest child is 17 years old. That is the same age as the children who were brutally murdered in Toowoomba. This bill allows for curfews to be imposed. I think that is a good thing. It gives the police the power to reprimand juveniles after the criminal act has occurred. The non-parole period can now be extended from 15 years to 20 years. We need these stronger powers for our police. The police have been crying out for years for these stronger powers.

We are not all blessed with being able to have our children live at home. With regard to the victims of the crime in Toowoomba, one came from Cooya, which is 80 kilometres from Toowoomba, so he could not live with his parents and have their supervision. The other was raised in Millmerran.

Surely this bill may help to save further lives. Hopefully it will be used as a deterrent. I would ask the government to seriously consider our shadow minister's amendments when she moves them later. In that regard let it be a bipartisan approach like my approach to the minister today.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—LNP) (3.12 pm): These are two very important bills that we are discussing cognately. It has been interesting to hear some of the debate from both sides of the chamber. I note that our shadow minister has indicated that we will be supporting this bill. There are some aspects of the government's bill, the Juvenile Justice and Other Acts Amendment Bill, that are good and that we agree with, but there are other areas where we believe it needs strengthening. That will be contained in the amendments to be moved by our shadow minister.

We are also dealing in this cognate debate with a private member's bill, the Juvenile Justice (Sentencing Principles) Amendment Bill, that was introduced by the member for Southern Downs. Sometimes we can oversimplify the whole issue of justice and how we should manage what can be a very difficult situation, particularly with regard to young people who are facing jail or punishment for the first time. When young people go through their teenage years they sometimes have enormous peer pressure on them, sometimes they are victims of a dysfunctional upbringing and sometimes they have been brought up in a good home and despite that still get trapped in some form of danger or minor crime leading to more serious crime.

There are three principles that we should always remember when it comes to the types of deterrents we provide. Firstly, the deterrents must be real. They can be a real fright or scare to stop many of those young people from considering again some form of crime, be it minor or major crime. Secondly—and I think this has been expressed by those on both sides of the House, even though some on the government side have got a bit nasty about some of the views that we on this side have expressed—there is a genuine desire to have very effective, workable and practical rehabilitation. I think we would all like to see young people who are close to the abyss of crime given the chance to undertake meaningful rehabilitation that interests them, that challenges them and that enables them to reach their true potential and not fall into a life of crime.

Finally—and I think this is one of the most important principles and one that is often forgotten—we must consider the victims of crime and the need for victims, particularly those who have gone through trauma, either personally or on behalf of family members, to find solace, to find closure and to find some way of managing within their minds and hearts the trauma and hurt that they have experienced as a result of a crime.

We can talk all we like about this and have very good intentions with regard to rehabilitation and giving young people another chance, but we must never forget that there is a very serious side to the crimes that they have committed. It could be someone breaking into the house of an old pensioner in their mid-eighties and as a result that pensioner becomes terrified and closes up their Brisbane or North Queensland house and locks themselves in because they have had their purse and cards pinched. They are suddenly fearful. When it gets towards evening or when they are away, they want their place locked up all the time. It starts to ruin the last few years of their life. It is important that people who want to go out in the streets of their town at night feel safe.

I think we should always keep these things in mind. I have always felt with young people that the idea of a caution first up would work well if it is properly administered. When young people commit their first crime and get brought into a room with two detectives who give them a severe warning and a hell of fright, because that is what they need, in many cases—and police tell me it is in around 70 per cent of cases—those first offenders never offend again. It is important that that happens.

We have to be careful that we do not get into a system of turnstile justice, where it is caution after caution after caution and where it is warning after warning after warning in a higher court. They then get into this syndrome where they say to others, 'Don't worry, you just go down there and front up before so and so and they will send you out again and away you go.' Coupled with that in the past has been the feeling amongst a lot of young people that the curfew or warning means they can only do so much or

they cannot associate with so and so or they cannot go here and there but there is no proper surveillance or punishment if they transgress. Therefore the young people walk out and go on their merry way.

Anything in this bill that addresses cautioning, curfews or restrictions placed on people—and if they disobey those restrictions they get to know that the consequences will be difficult—is a good thing. One of the important things that highly experienced police will often say is that fear of the consequences can often stop a crime. That is why people will go ahead and commit a crime when they are loaded up with drugs, because they are no longer thinking rationally. If they stand before a shop window and think about breaking in and know that there is every chance that they will get caught, that the consequences will be unpleasant, that they may lose their liberty and that it is not going to be a pleasant experience being locked up then it is a very significant challenge to them and can in many instances deter them from committing the crime.

In terms of rehabilitation—we went to the last election with a policy on this basis—I would like to see rehabilitation in the form of training camps for young people who have not necessarily committed serious violent offences but who are in that middle area. Perhaps they have transgressed a number of times and want a chance at turning their life around and are in desperate need of some direction. Many young people need to be told that there is a fence either side of the track and that can give them some certainty about which side they take. Many young people need to know that there is some discipline and, working within that discipline, they can have an enjoyable and satisfying time.

Many young people need to find that which interests them—whether it is mechanics, animals, art or music—in order to have an opportunity, because, in many cases, they have not had that chance. By learning, training and becoming proficient at a particular trade or activity, they can develop their own self-confidence and with self-confidence comes hope and some self-discipline. We owe it to young people because many of the young people who get to that stage of problems with the law often have come from a background that has not given them the full chance at life that they deserve as a young Australian human being. That training can turn them around and have not only a benefit for those young people but also a benefit for society in that they can lead a better life and make a real contribution to society rather than going in and out of jail and causing trauma and damage.

However, I do want to stress the issue of victims. There are some wonderful people who have followed this debate whose families were involved in the awful triple murder tragedy in Toowoomba in 2005. They have worked very hard for a number of years—they have worked with the current minister, previous ministers and people from this side of the House in deputations and so forth—to bring about what they believe are more satisfactory and stronger laws in the area of juvenile justice. In particular, two of the perpetrators were on parole at the time—they had broken their parole, as I understand it—and those people feel that if there had been better and stronger supervision of that these murders may not have occurred.

We also have to remember what people have to carry in their hearts for the rest of their lives. I have been to a number of meetings during my political career involving victims of homicide and met with other people who have been involved in trauma resulting from criminal activity. It is very hard to understand the depth of hurt and trauma that they have felt. However, that can be assuaged in some measure—not totally but in some measure—by knowing that the perpetrator has been caught and that the perpetrator has been punished adequately and for a sufficient time so that it really has an effect on that person and warns other people in the community and gets the message out that if they perpetrate such crimes they will be locked up for a long time and lose their liberty. That goes some way to helping those people. It is so important in this whole debate where we often talk about providing another chance, providing rehabilitation and having a large number of steps along the way, particularly for young offenders, that we do not forget the victims of crime because they are more than 50 per cent of the equation. That is our job as members of parliament in helping our society to help those people who have been victims of crime.

For that reason, some of the amendments brought forward by the government go some way towards starting to meet sensible, experienced, compassionate community expectations. However, I do believe that the amendments that are proposed by our shadow minister strengthen that further and would be, if you like, the icing on the cake to this legislation to make it fit and to make it worthwhile and to make it practical and to help both young people and the victims. The Juvenile Justice (Sentencing Principles) Amendment Bill introduced into this House by the member for Southern Downs is a private member's bill that this side of the House has brought in before, because it addresses a very important principle—that is, the reference to detention as a last resort. That gives the message to the community, to the judiciary and to everybody that jail is the very last resort, but the possibility of jail should be there as a very strong deterrent. It should always be there as an option for the judiciary to consider if it believes that it is necessary due to the severity or the viciousness of the crime.

Other members have quoted the figures from the second reading speech of the member for Southern Downs, but I will quote them again. Not one of the 35 juveniles convicted of producing or supplying dangerous drugs went to detention in 2007-08 and 114 of 147 convicted violent robbers also escaped detention in 2007-08. What sort of message is that? They may have spent some time in

remand or detention, but what sort of message is that when the day of judgement comes and you stand there in the court before the justice system and out you go—you go out the door and you go home? That is not sending any message whatsoever to those who are perpetrating these crimes or who may be moving in those circles, and that is certainly not giving any solace or any comfort whatsoever to those people who have been victims of a violent robbery. Whether it was an old woman or a fit young man or someone who was incapable of standing up to the robber, it has been a violent robbery and an affront to that person. There should be the option to provide detention. The message should not be that jail is the last resort. Jail must be given every consideration, because it is a very important component of punishment. The old saying is that sometimes you have to be cruel to be kind, but punishment can provide a real salutary lesson.

If we talk about rehabilitation for young people, those young people who have simply been in remand and then not sent to jail have had absolutely no chance to access any form of rehabilitation that may be available. I am not saying that they should be sentenced to jail just to get rehabilitation, but it is the only place where there is rehabilitation. There is no rehabilitation in the remand system. There may be a chance for them to get rehabilitation if they have received a sentence. It does not get away from what I have said and what I believe in—there should be another level of, if you like, rehabilitation/detention in the form of a youth training centre where those youths are given another chance in life with some real meaningful training and activities that they actually like in order to learn life skills.

There are some wonderful people in this state, and I am reminded of people like Boyd Curran in Central and North Queensland who is doing wonderful work with young Indigenous youth who are at risk of committing crime or who have been involved in crime. I cannot recall the name of his organisation, but he generally deals with some of the toughest and hardest at the end of the spectrum. He is a wonderful man. I remember him as captain of the First XV at Downlands College in the early eighties in a side that was not strong and I always looked upon the courage and effort that he gave. He went on to become a big cattle producer and live export producer and to forage harvest and so forth in north-western Queensland and is now, in association with some other people, giving time to those youths. It is strong, real men like that who give real training and rehabilitation and who give the respect, love and discipline that can help these young people because they can suddenly see that there is someone who cares about them—someone who is a real manly sort of person who can give them a chance in life.

I think they are the sorts of things we need to do between conferencing, young people committing multiple offences—providing they are not overly serious—and finally receiving detention in jail. But to get back to this private member's bill, we must remove that principle of detention as a last resort. It is sending the wrong message. It is not in any shape or form giving the sort of protection that should be there through our judiciary, which is bound to take note of this principle of detention as a last resort. It is not giving the judiciary the opportunity to be able to provide the protection and solace for victims of crime.

Members on this side of the House should not be condemned for wanting to speak out strongly on behalf of victims of crime. Members on this side of the House should not be heaped with scorn because they talk about strong, fair dinkum practical rehabilitation. Members on this side of the House have worked closely with the government on aspects of this bill by indicating that the bill will be passed. But we have put forward a number of amendments, some of which I believe deserve very serious consideration. They would make this bill what the people in the community are calling for.

Finally, the private member's bill deserves strong consideration. It should not be thrown out just because it was introduced by the opposition. It contains an amendment that we have pushed for for a long time and I believe it has significant merit for the judiciary, for reducing crime and for protecting victims of crime.

Hon. KL STRUTHERS (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women) (3.31 pm), in reply: I commend both sides of the House for their thoughtful contributions. I particularly wish to acknowledge the comments made by the opposition spokesperson, the member for Burdekin, and the member for Southern Downs. I thank everyone for their bipartisan support for this bill.

It may surprise the member for Burdekin and the member for Southern Downs that, after listening to the debate over the past 24 hours, I can say that there is much more we agree on than we disagree on in terms of youth offending. The members opposite have used slogans to make them appear to be the toughest on crime when, in fact, it is Labor governments—this Bligh government—that have introduced some of the toughest penalties in Queensland.

I wish to acknowledge the presence of Doug, Ross and Margaret in the public gallery. They have sat through this debate for the past 24 hours and they are doing it for their kids. They told me that they certainly want to see a better world for their grandchildren. They lost sons in very tragic and horrific circumstances in Toowoomba. Nothing can take back their loss and their grieving. They have certainly worked hard to make sure that other parents do not have to go through that experience. Our thoughts are with them all.

Doug provided a constructive submission to the juvenile justice review, which made suggestions about how we can improve the legislation. We have adopted Doug's suggestions, particularly at clause 25 of the bill, where the non-parole period for multiple murders is increased from 15 years to 20 years to make it in line with adult sentencing provisions. The experience of families like theirs reminds us of the deep impact that a violent act on a person has on their immediate family, their siblings and the whole community. Part of the government's prevention and early intervention programs is to build the values and the resilience of young people so that they do not offend and, importantly, so that they do not become victims of crime.

As I indicated in my second reading speech, the Juvenile Justice and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2009 is the culmination of a substantial and lengthy review commenced in July 2007. Despite the misgivings of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the review provided an opportunity for community and stakeholder input. The government's position has been developed after research, after the careful weighing of the evidence and after consideration of stakeholder views. One hundred and seventy-four submissions were received from the community. Of those, 71 submissions were from members of the public, including 53 submissions from young people, 30 submissions from departmental staff and work groups and 26 submissions from youth advocacy and legal groups. Other respondents included Indigenous advocacy groups, academics, members of the judiciary, other government agencies and victims of youth offences.

Did the members of the opposition make a submission to this review? Do the members of the opposition know if they made a submission to this review? Let me give members the answer: no. That is how much the members opposite care about youth justice. When it comes to the crunch, beyond the slogans, do they care? They had a very good opportunity with that review. Did we get a submission from them? No. I have heard members opposite call for the need for a comprehensive response to youth justice both in program effort and in our legislation. But they were unable to even make a formal submission to help the government through its review process. Over the past 24 hours the members opposite have come into this place with their slogans, but it is very hard to take them seriously.

On 22 January 2008, a consultation report on the submissions received was published. As detailed in the report, the consultation showed that stakeholders hold diverse and often conflicting views. For example, opinions on sentencing were evenly polarised between those suggesting more punitive approaches and those recommending diversion and rehabilitation responses to young offenders. The submissions also showed that the current law was not well understood. For example, many respondents were unaware that a court can compel a parent to attend a hearing. However, the respondents largely supported the act in its current form. That was a big tick. In fact, the majority of responses suggested improvements to youth justice service delivery rather than calling for changes to the act. There has been no great call from the wide range of stakeholders for sweeping changes to the act, confirming that the Queensland government is on the right track with its response to youth justice.

As I said earlier, there is much we agree on. We agree that young people who commit serious offences and who have a pattern of serious offending—those who harm others and put others at grave risk—need to be detained. In the interests of community safety there will always be the need for courts to order the detention of some young offenders, for example, those convicted of serious violent offences. But detention should always be a last resort when all other options have been exhausted. We agree that early intervention and prevention is the key. All of us—members on that side of the House and on my side of the House—have said that programs need to be supported and expanded to focus on early intervention and prevention. We agree that the vast majority of young people do the right thing. Many of us have said that in the House today and yesterday. We agree that there are many complex factors underpinning youth offending behaviour: family breakdown and abuse, intellectual disability, substance abuse, peer group pressures and so on.

As the member for Burdekin said herself, young people—

> ... need a kick in the pants but they also need a leg up. In some cases these kids choose the paths that they take, but in many situations there are many more underlying causes that have brought them to this situation.

We agree that the number of young people on remand in detention must be reduced and that rehabilitation must be meaningful. We need a balanced approach that will protect the victims, their families and the general community but an approach that will allow offenders and potential offenders to break the cycle of criminal behaviour that they find themselves spiralling into.

We know that detention per se does not achieve this. That is why we continue to pursue the principle of detention as a last resort. The assumption that detention acts as a deterrent to young people and will break the cycle of crime conflicts with a large body of Australian and international research that has found repeatedly that detention is ineffective as a deterrent. The theme of the opposition's argument in relation to the legislation seemed to be that more offenders need to be detained for longer periods and that that will enable them to be successfully rehabilitated. In fact, the assumption to be made from the contributions of the members opposite, including the recent contribution of the member for Toowoomba South, is that rehabilitation occurs only in detention. A vast range of programs around the state seek to change the ways of young people and get them back on track. It is fundamentally flawed to view detention as the panacea. Evidence shows that detention for any period can, in fact, have a detrimental effect on rehabilitation.

United Kingdom research has reported that 88 per cent of young people reoffended within two years of release from custody. North American research has reported recidivism rates as high as 96 per cent for young people leaving custody. In fact, numerous studies demonstrate that young people who are placed in detention are more likely to reoffend upon release than those who receive community based sentences.

Research by the government of Victoria has found that reoffending rates among young people following community orders appear to be lower than the very high reoffending rates following incarceration. The belief that a short period of remand in custody acts as a short, sharp shock and deters offenders from further offending has also been disproved. In fact, a British study found that this can lead to significant increases in subsequent offending. The study showed that 64.3 per cent of young people held in custody on remand reoffended compared to 36.6 per cent of young people who were placed at home on remand.

The assumption that harsher penalties will act as a warning to the public, deterring current and potential offenders from committing offences, is also contradicted by research evidence. For example, in the three years following the introduction of mandatory detention for juveniles in the Darwin region, unlawful offences rose 48 per cent. If this increase were translated to young Queensland offenders, it would mean that we would need 63 extra detention beds around the state.

Research evidence consistently demonstrates that increased use of detention does not lead to a reduction in criminal behaviour. Furthermore, it is likely that increased use of incarceration will result in increased recidivism and require significant additional expenditure on detention centre infrastructure beyond the 48-bed expansion of the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre that the government has already announced.

Another consideration—and the member for Everton and others pointed this out—is that the cost of detention far exceeds the cost of community based programs. It takes $600 per day to keep a juvenile detained, which we do when we need to, compared to $30 per day for community based supervision.

An extensive body of research shows that successfully tackling youth offending and reoffending includes identifying and reducing key risk factors which cause offending—for example antisocial peers, substance abuse, family functioning and school failure—and providing a number of services to address the many aspects of a young person's life.

I recently visited both the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre and the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre. I was accompanied by Madam Deputy Speaker to the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre. At Brisbane I had the chance to sit in what was called a yarning circle with the young women and when I asked them what was causing them to be in detention—and some of them had been in a couple of times—they said it was drug abuse, being on the streets and living rough. They were young women aged 15 and 16. Obviously those issues need to be dealt with if their reoffending is to be curtailed.

There has certainly been a lot of good work happening around the state for many years in order to prevent and intervene early. I commend both my own department, the Department of Communities, and the non-government service network that we fund through the Department of Communities. Education Queensland stands out as a beacon in its efforts across the state to support young people. We are spending over $11 million on youth support coordinator positions around the state. They have been recognised nationally for their efforts in helping young people by preventing them from being homeless and reoffending. I have travelled the state and sat in on some of the flexischools. They are for kids who generally do not want to be, and do not cope, at school. The support they get at these flexischools is helping them to get back on track. These are the sorts of initiatives that we need.

Our government made a very serious commitment to a learning or earning initiative whereby young people had to be either learning or earning. We acknowledged that over 10,000 young people were not fitting into mainstream schooling; many of them were truants who were not attending school. That whole agenda has at its heart the needs of young people and keeping them on track so that they do not offend and so that they become productive community members.

There are many specific youth homelessness services and youth support services. When I was in Bundaberg on the weekend I met with the Salvos. Thank God for the Salvos. They are all around the state doing great work. Bundaberg has the wonderful Tom Quinn Centre, where the Salvos do some great youth work. The message they gave to me was that they did not want to see these kids locked up. The Salvation Army are not the great bastion of the Socialist Left. The Salvation Army has held a well-respected position in our community for hundreds of years, I would suggest, and it certainly knows that the best way to work with kids is to get in young, provide them with support, give them a good bed and a roof over their head, and help them get back into their family and on track for a bright future.

If we do not tackle these issues early, these may be the kids who cause serious harm. The Salvos in Bundaberg, like most people around the state, know that detention is not the answer. Detention is only needed with the most serious offenders who are going to cause a lot of harm. I do not take away the importance of that, but that is a very small percentage of people.

We also have some innovative programs for sex offenders. If members had listened to the opposition over the last couple of days they would think we had nothing in our suite of services around the state to deal with that. In fact, we have some world-leading projects. The Griffith Youth Forensic Service is based in Brisbane with fly-in, fly-out arrangements for servicing locations outside South-East Queensland. That has recently been expanded to service Far North Queensland and Indigenous young people. The Mater Youth and Family Counselling Service is funded to provide support to young people who have offended by committing crimes of a sexual nature. They work with families and young people themselves with some very good results.

In fact, the electorate of Southern Downs has some great youth support services doing good work. The programs in the member's electorate include the Goondiwindi Rural Youth Program, the Stanthorpe Youth Information Referral Service, the Warwick District Youth Service, the Millmerran Rural Youth Program and the Youth Partnership Project, which is part of that Warwick cluster. There is certainly a lot happening around the state. There is a lot of goodwill. People are working hard in order to make sure we intervene early to get young people back on track.

We heard from many members opposite who said that this government is soft on crime. It should be remembered that there is a clear and critical separation of powers: the parliament makes the laws and the judiciary administers them. As I have said before and I will say again, Labor governments have brought in the toughest penalties to deal with crime—tougher than any other government in the history of Queensland. It is Labor that has brought in some of the strongest penalties in relation to wilful damage and offences of assault. We have the toughest hooning and graffiti laws. Those laws and the penalties in the Criminal Code were part of the review of the Criminal Code brought about by Labor governments.

In the case of the justice system, the parliament provides the range of sentencing options that the court can use. We give the court the tools through the parliament. The court then decides what is appropriate in the circumstances. It is the courts that determine the sentences ultimately given to offenders. Government provides the tools to assist the police and to assist the courts to do their job in accordance with community expectation, the nature of the offences and the circumstances of those offences.

In fact, by saying that we as a government are soft on crime the opposition is saying that the police are not doing their job and are not taking these issues seriously. They are saying that the magistrates and the judges around this state are not taking these issues seriously. We have the strongest penalties. We are tough on crime. Those opposite are criticising the police and the courts in the carrying out of their duties. Those opposite need to be very careful about that. What they are doing is fearmongering and undermining confidence in our police and judicial systems. What those opposite are doing is irresponsible.

Mr Messenger: We are reflecting reality and bringing a dose of reality in here.

Ms STRUTHERS: Look at the member for Burnett; he knows a lot about crime. The offence of wilful damage attracts a sentence of five years; sexual assault, 10 years; robbery, 14 years; unlawful entry with intent, 14 years; graffiti, five years—seven years if it is obscene. Is that soft on crime?

Our youth justice conferencing staff have been invited to Hong Kong. Why have they been invited to Hong Kong? They have been invited to train staff in Hong Kong in the most modern and effective techniques in working with young people. Is Hong Kong soft on crime? I would not think so. It is just a nonsense—a slogan that the opposition has come up with—to suggest that this government is soft on crime. I remind them every time they say that in this House. I bet they do not say it out in the community, because what they are doing is criticising the police at the Ayr Police Station, the Home Hill Police Station or the Warwick Police Station. They are criticising the magistrate in Warwick, Brisbane or Toowoomba. The tools are there. We have the strongest penalties. We have a framework that is tough on crime. We have a framework that is tough and effective in supporting young people to prevent them from committing crimes. Those opposite are actually criticising the good work of the police and the courts.

Queensland's criminal law prescribes a large range of maximum penalties according to the seriousness of the offence. The Juvenile Justice Act prescribes that courts can order detention of young offenders for either half the maximum term of imprisonment that an adult could be ordered to serve or five years, whichever is shorter. This is in recognition that children are developmentally different from adults. However, for serious offences the Juvenile Justice Act allows courts to impose more serious penalties. The Queensland government has introduced a number of legislative measures to come down hard on criminals and deter others from offending. This includes the prevention and monitoring of sex offenders, indefinite sentences, limiting certain prisoner's entitlements, child exploitation, identity theft, dangerous driving, rock throwing and stalking. We are the ones who have implemented the harshest penalties. I will say that again: in the past decade or so the Labor governments in Queensland have put the tools in place to be tough on crime.

We heard a number of opposition members cite statistics and alarming trends about youth offending rates. Those have been presented in a misleading way. For example, the current rate of juvenile offending is lower than the data relied upon by the opposition. The opposition reported

previously that assaults committed by males aged 15 to 19 increased by 15 per cent between 1996 and 2005. Fifteen to 19 years of age? Are they all juveniles? It is misleading. Juveniles are aged from 10 to 16 years of age. What don't they get about those age limits? They keep citing data about 15- to 19-year-olds and claiming that that refers to juvenile offending. They cannot come in here and mislead the public on rates of offending when the youth crime trends have been on the decline. They are fear mongering, they are irresponsible and they need to think about the impact that has on the community. If one adjusts for population growth during the same period, the 1996 to 2005 period, excludes young adults and takes account of the population, the current rate of offences against the person committed by both males and females aged 10 to 16 years was 10 per cent lower in 2007-08 than in 2005-06. We have to be very careful about how we use statistics. The misuse of statistics can engender fear and it is irresponsible. I will keep saying that until I am taken notice of. Does our side of the House understand that?

Mr Wettenhall: Absolutely.

Ms STRUTHERS: Does our side of the House understand that juveniles are aged 10 to 16 years?

Mr Springborg: They didn't even know how many public houses had been built this morning—

Ms STRUTHERS: I will come to you. In addition, the member for Southern Downs stated that the 2007-08 police statistical report found that 97 per cent of weapons offences were committed by males. Guess what age? Aged 15 to 19. He keeps using the category of 15- to 19-year-olds. That is not the juvenile age category. He is talking about a category that includes adults. One has to be accurate when using statistics. The cohort we are talking about is youth offenders aged 10 to 16 years, male and female, and they committed just 13 per cent of all weapons offences in that period. Let us not lose sight of the facts in order to sensationalise what is a significant justice issue.

I would like to respond to the member for Gladstone, who made a very considered response to the bill. The member was concerned about the amendment to section 166 of the act. She raised a concern that if an offender is a repeat offender the courts have some way of knowing that this particular person has a history of offending. She raised a very important point. While youth justice conference agreements are not recorded on a young person's criminal history, this does not prevent the police or the courts from considering whether the young person has made any other previous conference agreements when deciding on an appropriate response. This information is recorded by both police and the Department of Communities and can be considered by the court.

Many opposition members referred to naming provisions. I note that amendments are proposed and no doubt those issues will be discussed in more detail when we discuss the clauses. However, the opposition does not provide evidence that naming young offenders has any benefit whatsoever. Again it is just a slogan. In fact, the opposite is true: naming can have a detrimental effect. There are also issues about community safety. If widespread naming is allowed, there is a risk to community safety from vigilantism, as well as a risk of impeding a young person's rehabilitative efforts. If young offenders are inhibited from reintegrating into the community, the risk of offending is much higher. Also. the families of the offenders could be targeted and therefore at risk. Some people have made the point to me that if young people are named, their status can be elevated and that is something that they see as a positive thing. We have to be very careful, as we have been in drafting our amendments, to make sure that naming is used in very strict circumstances. The act already provides for the release of information about an offender if it is necessary to ensure a person's safety. The government's bill will provide the courts with clear guidance about the use of the naming provisions. These amendments have been developed after careful consideration of the evidence and submissions to the review. The amendments proposed by the opposition have the potential to have a harmful effect by impeding rehabilitation and risking community safety without any evidence of benefit.

I turn to the private member's bill proposed by the member for Southern Downs, the Juvenile Justice (Sentencing Principles) Amendment Bill. The bill proposes to amend the Juvenile Justice Act 1992 to remove the juvenile justice principle that a child should be detained in custody for an offence, whether on arrest or sentence, only as a last resort and for the least time that is justified in the circumstances. Instead, the bill proposes that a child should be detained where appropriate and for a time that is justified in the circumstances. The explanatory notes and second reading speech state that the intention of the bill is to increase the rate and length of detention as a deterrent to crime and as a means of reducing violence in the community and providing meaningful rehabilitation.

The government is opposed to this bill as it is unnecessary, given the current strong penalties and appeal mechanisms. It will place Queensland in breach of international law. It is not supported by the available evidence. As they stand, the principles in the act do not prevent the courts and the police from making appropriate decisions about sentencing young offenders. The act currently provides specific ways, including harsher penalties, for dealing with young people found guilty of serious offences compared to other offences. Those penalties range from increased periods of probation and detention to life imprisonment for a particularly serious violent crime against a person. For a particularly serious offence, a court may also order that the offender be publicly named. Court results from 2007 and 2008 show that the courts have imposed those harsher penalties. For example, two of the five young

offenders convicted of murder during this period were sentenced to life, while the remaining three received sentences ranging from 10 to 14 years detention. Three of the five offenders were publicly named. Furthermore, existing mechanisms of appeal provide an avenue for community expectations to be represented by the Attorney-General.

The member for Burdekin has proposed a number of amendments to the government's bill. The government will not be supporting these amendments. The amendments proposed by the opposition would, in fact, limit the court's discretion in a number of key respects. I will wait until the debate on the individual clauses before making further comment on these matters.

Again, I thank the members for their contributions to the development of this legislation and to this debate. Once again, my deepest appreciation goes to Doug, Margaret and Ross for their assistance in the development of the legislation and for their tireless tuning in to the debate over the past day or so. I also recognise the many victims and families affected by youth offending across the state. I wish to reiterate that this government is seeking a balance in relation to community safety, protecting the rights of victims and supporting victims, and making sure that young people get a chance at life and are supported so that they can move on the right track in life. Finally, I wish to thank the staff of my department and the staff in my office who have all contributed to this bill. I commend their efforts. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (3.58 pm), in reply: I rise to sum up on the opposition's bill that has been debated as part of the cognate debate. It is interesting to listen to the dissertation from the minister about the proposition that we have put forward. When listening to this minister, one could think that she was the most hairy-chested, crackdown-on-law-and-order minister that the people of Queensland have ever seen. However, this is more typical Socialist Left rhetoric from somebody who stands in this place without understanding the law and talks about being tough but, in fact, is not being tough. This is spin. This is what the Labor Party has done year after year after year. It talks tough on law and order, but never implements a law and order regime that is actually tough.

The minister talks about having tough penalties but what underlies any sort of regime which ensures tough sentencing is the sentencing principle. So you can make as many amendments to the Criminal Code as you want and you can make as many amendments to the Juvenile Justice Act as you want that lift the head sentence from seven to 10 years, to 14 years and to life in some circumstances. But, if you have a sentencing principle regime that says that custody of the offender should be the last resort or that they should be treated with kid gloves, then it does not matter what the head sentencing regime is because the offender will not go to jail or will go to jail for a very short period of time. That has been one of the great criticisms we have heard in recent years under this government. When it comes to people going to jail for the protection of the community, they are just not going there.

If you look at the likes of the Aurukun nine, they are another classic example of that. They can be convicted of rape but not go to jail and then the government needs to be embarrassed into appealing the decision by the court of public opinion. So the minister should not come in here with this nonsense about being tough on law and order and this nonsense about being tough when it comes to penalties when the government has a sentencing principle regime that lets those people who offend fall out the bottom and not be sentenced to jail even if they have committed a particularly bad offence.

The other concoction we have heard from the minister and some members opposite is the proposition that we believe that all young people are bad and that all young people should be sentenced to periods in custody. I said yesterday, and I will say it again today, that that clearly is an inane proposition and something with which we do not agree and should not agree. But there are certain categories of young offenders who continue to take so many liberties in the community with the multiple chances they are given. They thumb their nose at the law and they have absolutely no intention whatsoever of changing their offending behaviour because they are treated with kid gloves over and over again.

We can quote all sorts of things. I am going to quote from the juvenile justice statistics that show that, in 2007-08, 26 juveniles were convicted of rape and 17 escaped jail time; in 2006-07, 14 juveniles were convicted of rape and 11 did not go to jail; in 2005-06, 23 juveniles were convicted of rape and 18 escaped jail. So we are seeing the same proportionate number of characters who are missing out on going to jail year after year. I would be very surprised if that trend changes when the new figures are released, if indeed they have been released to date. So we do have a serious problem when it comes to those juvenile offenders who are committing serious crimes escaping jail time.

We also heard the honourable minister opposite talk about the programs in rehabilitation centres and all of those sorts of things. I remember a number of years ago—and one would hope that things have changed since then—when I toured some of the cape communities and spoke to some of the Aboriginal elders they talked to me about the Cleveland detention facility. They were saying that their young who went there had completely lost respect for the community, completely lost respect for their traditions and completely lost respect for the elders. They used to go off to Cleveland and absolutely loved it. They would came back to the community absolutely emboldened, thumbing their noses at the

elders. They would come back with a new pair of Nikes and away they would go again because there were no real consequences for their actions. So in some cases custody is something that some of these characters look forward to. There is another aspect to custody as well—that is, it can actually protect the community.

Mr Wettenhall interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: No, because when you put them back into the community there is no reinforcement. There is a complete disempowerment in the community to be able to deal with those issues. There are no practical examples that I can point to where the people who are predisposed to that sort of life are going to be in some way altered or changed by what is happening within their community. It was a case of those young offenders seeing it as a soft option. I have put forward the proposition over the years that maybe we should be looking at giving those Indigenous communities the capacity to use their own forms of traditional discipline—the capacity for shame, for humiliation and for exclusion, which are a part of their own traditional justice systems.

Let us look at what the Chief Justice in Queensland has said. The government is saying that it is allegedly all the right-wing fanatics, all the extremists, in this parliament who put forward the proposition that we should be sentencing some of these juvenile offenders to a period in custody or even naming them. Let us look at what the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court said in 2006. Chief Justice Paul de Jersey said, 'Courts should have the power to name juveniles who persistently break into houses, steal cars and spray graffiti.' One would think that a respected Chief Justice of the Supreme Court is an authority that this parliament should be prepared to listen to. But, no, the members opposite are prepared to stand up in this place and quote when it suits them and ignore other quotes when they do not suit them. That is what we are seeing. Clearly, this is another demonstration of the government saying that it is tough when it comes to law and order and naming but the reality of the law is that it restricts the capacity of the sentencing judge or does not provide enough direction to the sentencing judge as to what the intention of the parliament is. Once again, it is a case of talk tough, act weak. That is the sentencing regime which this government has put in place in many cases.

So is the government going to listen today to what the Chief Justice has called for and support the further amendments to the legislation that are going to be moved by the honourable shadow minister when it comes to broadening the categories of when these offenders can be named? The simple reality is that the minister stood up a moment ago and said that naming juvenile offenders can be very detrimental. The left-wing socialist comes out again, but she does not understand her own law which seeks to increase the opportunity for naming in limited circumstances. Again, the legislation does not go as far as it should go. The minister cannot have it both ways. She cannot say that naming can be very detrimental and then try to open up the law to possibly allow the court to consider it. The legislation does not necessarily go far enough, but the minister is saying, 'Yes, we are going to have it but we are not going to have it in these circumstances.' The simple reality is that the government's argument absolutely falls apart when we hear what has been said by the likes of the Chief Justice.

We also heard the minister a moment ago talking about how we have the toughest laws for hooning and the toughest laws for graffiti offences. I asked the honourable minister and I asked the honourable members—considering that they had not been properly trained by the minister this morning when the minister was asked how many public houses had been built. I think it ranged from 3,000 to 4,000-odd. Again, she had to make them jump through hoops and throw them another fish when they got it right and all of that sort of stuff. They got it wrong this morning. Are they going to get it wrong again today? How many graffiti offenders in Queensland have actually been made to clean up their own mess as per the provisions of the code?

Ms Struthers: Are you talking 15- to 19-year-olds?

Mr SPRINGBORG: Any of them. How many graffiti offenders, Minister? You are talking about tough laws. You are talking about deterrents. The answer is none of them. Once again, this is another example of having a law which the government has absolutely no intention whatsoever of enforcing along the way.

Ms Struthers: Forty-six.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Well it may have changed in recent times, because certainly when we pursued government ministers year after year and asked them to disclose those figures to this parliament the answer kept coming back, 'None, none, none, none.' It is good to see that the government has finally been embarrassed into enforcing the graffiti clean-up orders in this state, which had been sitting idle on the statute books year after year so the government could say that something was happening with regard to graffiti clean-up.

Clearly, as we indicated before, there is a serious problem with regard to those young people who graduate from juvenile offending to the early stages of adult offending. That is what we were talking about in this parliament yesterday. There is a serious problem with regard to the extent of criminal activity among those people in that particular age group, and in order to be able to deter it it comes back to the sorts of sentencing principles that the government has in place at the early stages, not just the penalties but the sentencing principles.

This government talks about bipartisanship. We have seen so many examples in recent years in this parliament when this government has said, 'No, we cannot support that. We could never support that because that is the idea of the LNP, that is the idea of the opposition—very bad.' The government votes it down and then comes back in here and introduces it as its own law. I am not sure that that is what is going to happen in this particular case, but there have been numerous examples of that.

For government members, bipartisanship is defined as the opposition having to support the government but the government never having to support the opposition, even when government members believe it is a good idea. There have been many examples of the government voting our legislation down and then bringing it back to this place as their own because they have not even been prepared to open their minds to many of the particular propositions we have put forward.

We have actually heard the Police Commissioner and police officers in recent times go out there and express their concerns about this growing culture of violence and disregard for the community and community property. Once again, are we knocking the police officers for saying that? No, we are not. We are actually saying that the police officers need to be supported by this parliament in the laws that we actually pass. We are not talking about sitting in the court and directing the court; we are talking about clear principles in this parliament that provide guidance to the court in how they move to protect the community's safety.

The amendments in the bill we are putting forward—the Juvenile Justice (Sentencing Principles) Amendment Bill—would make sure that the protection of the community is a greater consideration when it comes to the potentiality of putting a juvenile offender into custody for a period. So the bill moderately increases the sentencing principle to actually include the proposition of custody where appropriate. At the moment custody is last resort and that is the problem. A small minority of juvenile offenders choose to use that principle to their advantage and, frankly, they see no deterrence in the current system whatsoever.

I have actually indicated that there are some good aspects to the government's legislation. I said that it is great that we are going to increase the period of minimum mandatory sentencing from 15 to 20 years. There are particularly heinous juvenile offenders out there who commit crimes that are as bad and horrific as those committed by adult offenders. We have seen examples of that, and I acknowledge our visitors in the gallery today who have been through a particularly harrowing experience themselves. No-one should ever have to go through that. What happened in that circumstance is absolute proof that we can see the worst of the worst in juvenile offenders in the state of Queensland.

Again, the government is prepared to put forward a penalty proposition with regard to that issue because it actually does denote a minimum period of jail. When somebody is sentenced for a particular crime, it will actually ensure that that person serves a minimum period. That is fine. I actually support that. I think that is good. That is an example of this parliament saying that in relation to certain crimes the parliament should override the discretion of the court. That is what has happened in this particular case, and that is right because the parliament needs to make a judgement—just as the parliament should make a judgement when it comes to the issue of how we deal with particular serious offenders, and that is why our proposition has been put forward in the bill that I introduced into this parliament.

We also heard members opposite talk about what happened in the Northern Territory when there was minimum mandatory sentencing for juvenile offenders. We are not talking about minimum mandatory sentencing for juvenile offenders in our bill.

Ms Struthers: No, you used to. You've given up on that. You saw that it was wrong. You saw the light.

Mr SPRINGBORG: No, I have not talked about that. There are certainly occasions when I support minimum mandatory sentences—when it comes to serious sex offences and a whole range of other offences, and they are propositions that we have put forward. No-one has walked away from that. It is interesting to note that, incrementally, Labor Party members even talk about that in other jurisdictions, in particular New South Wales. They are actually now trying to meet and respond to community expectations and what the community is actually saying out there.

In relation to minimum mandatory sentences for juveniles in the Northern Territory, that is not something which I supported as a proposition and it is not something which is actually contained in this bill. The bill I have here today is about protecting the community in the first instance; it is about ensuring that a custodial sentence is considered in high regard in our sentencing court when it comes to certain categories of offenders in order to protect the community. There may even be a rehabilitative aspect of that.

I would just ask honourable members opposite to tell us what is wrong with supporting a piece of legislation that principally says that the court has to consider custody where appropriate—that lifts it out, that actually highlights it in order to protect the community and provide a deterrent. It will actually ensure that those people who are causing the major amount of mayhem—that small minority of serious juvenile offenders—are held to account to atone for their particular indiscretions and crimes in the state of Queensland.

Therefore, we think it is a fine balance and we think it is a balance that is complementary to the government's legislation. Again, it dismays me that the government considers that bipartisanship is a one-way street in this parliament. Legislation that comes to parliament is supported by the opposition on eight out of 10 occasions. When it comes to supporting opposition legislation, the government is not prepared to support it—with very, very few exceptions. I think there have been only four or five such bills in the history of this particular parliament. Government members cannot always argue that they do that because the legislation is deficient. They do it because it is based on politics, it is based on churlishness and it is based on the fact that the government is not prepared to give credit to a reasonable proposition where credit is due.

Question put—That the Juvenile Justice and Other Acts Amendment Bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Division: Question put—That the Juvenile Justice (Sentencing Principles) Amendment Bill be now read a second time.

AYES, 35—Bates, Bleijie, Crandon, Cripps, Cunningham, Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, Gibson, Hopper, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, McArdle, McLindon, Menkens, Nicholls, Powell, Pratt, Rickuss, Robinson, Seeney, Simpson, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Horan, Messenger

NOES, 49—Attwood, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Dick, Finn, Fraser, Grace, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Johnstone, Jones, Kiernan, Kilburn, Lawlor, Lucas, Male, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Keech, Darling

Resolved in the negative.

Consideration in Detail

Juvenile Justice and Other Acts Amendment Bill

Clauses 1 to 8, as read, agreed to.

Clause 9—

Mrs MENKENS (4.25 pm): I move the following amendment—

1 Clause 9 (Amendment of s 1 (Short title))—

At page 14, lines 24 to 26—

omit, insert—

'Section 1, '*Juvenile Justice*'—

omit, insert—

'*Young Offenders*'.'.

I table the explanatory notes for my amendments.

Tabled paper: Explanatory notes to Mrs Menkens's amendments to the Juvenile Justice and Other Acts Amendment Bill [818].

I acknowledge the change of the name of the act from 'juvenile justice' to 'youth justice'. However, my amendment suggests the short title of the act should be changed to the 'Young Offenders Act 1992'. The reason behind this amendment is to fully reflect the purpose of this act's function and to emphasise the seriousness of its application on youthful offenders and also on the crimes that they may have committed.

As this act, currently named the Youth Justice Act, applies mostly to the offender and not to the victim, we believe that the renaming of this act to the 'Young Offenders Act 1992' would be far more specific. This puts the focus on the offenders and it puts the focus on the offending people. It also puts the focus on the sentencing of such offences. We believe this is more appropriate terminology.

As we are looking at contemporary terminology, it also aligns the naming of this act with the same naming that New South Wales has, that South Australia has and that Western Australia has. It is currently only the Northern Territory that retains the term 'Youth Justice Act'. I would ask the minister to consider renaming this act, as it would be more appropriate for those reasons.

Ms STRUTHERS: I have listened to the comments made by the member for Burdekin, but why do they want to take justice out of this act? This is all about justice. This is all about justice for community members who want a safe community. This is all about victims of crime who want to see justice against offenders. Why do they want to take justice out of the act? I simply do not understand it. The member for Waterford raised it in his speech the other day. I simply do not get it.

In the ACT, the Children and Young People Act is the title of its legislation. In the NT it is called the Youth Justice Act. In Tasmania it is called the Youth Justice Act. In Victoria, it is called the Children, Youth and Families Act. I am not sure where they are getting their contemporary view of the world from,

but this is about justice, and I am not prepared to change the title of the bill and take 'justice' out of a very important system that is based on justice, founded on justice and grounded in principles of natural justice.

Mrs MENKENS: I take the minister's point, but let us look at the word 'justice'. The word 'justice' has many interpretations, and I have looked right across the spectrum at the many interpretations of it. One interpretation is that it concerns the proper ordering of things and persons within a society. The most modern contextual meaning of justice is that it is associated with fairness. Therefore, I question the application of the word 'justice', its application to the offender or its application to the victim. In this case, we believe that this Youth Justice Act really applies to the offender and not to the victim. Who are we looking at justice for? We still believe that the act should be renamed the 'Young Offenders Act', as I said, in line with acts in New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia, which also use that name.

Non-government amendment (Mrs Menkens) negatived.

Clause 9, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—

Mrs MENKENS (4.30 pm): I move the following amendment—

2 After clause 9—

At page 14, after line 26—

insert—

'9A Amendment of s 15 (Police officer may administer a caution)

'Section 15—

insert—

'(4) This section does not apply if the police officer is aware that 3 or more cautions have previously been administered under this Act to the child.'.'.

This amendment applies to the number of cautions that a police officer may administer to a young offender. The amendment actually inserts the words—

This section does not apply if the police officer is aware that 3 or more cautions have previously been administered under this Act to the child.

The purpose of the amendment is to limit the number of times a young offender may receive a caution from a police officer. Without any checks and balances, there is the possibility that young repeat offenders can be repeatedly let off with a caution from many different police officers because, naturally, they are possibly unaware of the situation, particularly in larger areas. The amendment is designed to strengthen the use of the caution as a response to young offenders by limiting the number of cautions that can be dealt to a young offender. This aims to ensure they will get a suitable disciplinary process that the community expects.

We have discussed the revolving door. We are aware that a lot of these young people—I am not talking about the majority of people; I am just talking about serial offenders—are coming back again and again. To see this we only have to speak to the police, and in so many cases the police are totally frustrated because they are finding that these offenders are going back on the streets and reoffending, and often without any conscience at all.

The idea of this amendment is to give the police the tools for the third strike so that the police are able to say to these offenders, 'Hey, this is your third warning. This is the third time that I'm giving you a warning. This is your last strike. This is the boundary. After this, it's going to be a lot stronger and a lot more serious offence.' We are not making this tough; we are setting a boundary in order to give the police more tools and to give the police the confidence and the ability to know that their actions are finite and that there will be more serious discipline or more serious sentences given to those offenders if they are proven guilty—that is, they will not just be given another caution and go back out and do the same thing again. We hear from the police about the absolute lack of any form of reality that these offenders have. They are just out there virtually laughing at the police at times, and it is very difficult for police to handle youth because they are aware that these kids need help but they also need discipline.

Ms STRUTHERS: I can see what the opposition is trying to get at here. I accept what the member for Burdekin is trying to achieve. I am not in disagreement about what she is trying to achieve. She is trying to achieve an outcome whereby repeat offenders are dealt with severely, and they are. That is where I disagree with her. They are. The tools are there. Police can arrest. They have move-on powers. They can detain. They can use force. There are a whole lot of tools available to the police. Fundamentally, what she is saying is that she does not have faith in the police, because they have the tools.

In my view, the police do a great job around the state. In fact, I used to work at the Police Academy. I taught police. In 1991 the Goss government came in and there were 500 new recruits, straight up. And who did they get on the job? Officer Struthers! I was a civilian, but I was there post Fitzgerald. The Fitzgerald report was our bible at the Police Academy. What were we there to teach?

We were there to teach the police how to operate in a non-corrupt system and how to do their job properly. I met a lot of really good police officers. I see them around now and they are doing a tremendous job.

Fundamentally, what the member is saying here is that the police are not doing their job. They have the tools. Let me say it again: they have move-on powers, and this government brought in stronger move-on powers. They have powers to detain and arrest. There are a whole lot of tools available to the police, including cautions, and in many cases cautions are the right way to go. I can see what the member is getting at; I just disagree with the fundamental premise here that the police are not doing their job. They do not need to have these directions about using it three times; they need the discretion to use the full range of tools available to them.

Mrs MENKENS: I take offence at being told that I do not respect the police. I particularly would ask that the minister withdraw that comment because there is nobody that I have more respect for than the police, and that is why we are looking at these tools—to give the police far more powers than they currently have.

Earlier, when she summed up debate on the bill, I heard the minister say that we do not respect the police, and that is totally untrue and a very poor thing for the minister to say. The police have limited powers and limited tools. I know that they have those powers, but it becomes very difficult for them when they see that those kids are sent to court and are then back on the streets the next day. The word I hear from police is that these kids are given a slap on the wrist. They are away for a day and then they are back on the street, thumbing their noses at the victims of their crimes and often times at the police as well.

Division: Question put—That the member for Burdekin's amendment be agreed to.

AYES, 36—Bates, Bleijie, Crandon, Cripps, Cunningham, Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, Gibson, Hopper, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, McArdle, McLindon, Malone, Menkens, Nicholls, Powell, Pratt, Rickuss, Robinson, Seeney, Simpson, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Horan, Messenger

NOES, 49—Attwood, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Dick, Finn, Fraser, Grace, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Johnstone, Jones, Kiernan, Kilburn, Lawlor, Lucas, Male, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Keech, Darling

Resolved in the negative.

Non-government amendment (Mrs Menkens) negatived.

Clause 10—

Mrs MENKENS (4.46 pm): I move the following amendment—

3 Clause 10 (Amendment of s 21 (Childrens Court may dismiss charge if caution should have been administered or no action taken))—

At page 15, lines 4 to 6—

omit, insert—

'(1) Section 21(3)(a), 'the caution'—

omit, insert—

'a caution'.

'(2) Section 21—

insert—

'(5) This section does not apply if the court is aware that 3 or more cautions have previously been administered under this Act to the child.'.'.

This amendment is consequent to the previous amendment, which was lost. However, I commend it to the House. The amendment states—

This section does not apply if the court is aware that 3 or more cautions have previously been administered under this Act to the child.

This amendment applies when a child who is before the court has already received three police cautions. The court must then consider another sentencing option. We are not necessarily saying that these children should go into detention—absolutely not. But the court must consider another sentencing option; the court does not let them off with another caution.

Under the previous amendment, a young offender would have been limited to the number of times that a caution could be administered, that number being three. It would be fair to say that magistrates may not be aware of how many times children may have been given cautions by police officers prior to appearing before them. So by setting into legislation this particular amendment, a process would then become available to the magistrate to know that these young people had already had three cautions and a more serious consideration of the offence was needed and another penalty applied.

Ms STRUTHERS: Again, I understand what the member is trying to achieve. I do not really disagree with the outcome that she is trying to achieve. I acknowledge that the member wants to stop any pattern of behaviour whereby it might be seen that young people are not being dealt with harshly and sequentially. With respect, I understand and acknowledge that she is trying to achieve that.

But again, I remind the member and say quite clearly that there is a separation of powers between us as members of parliament, the parliament itself, the executive government and the courts. I am reluctant and our government is reluctant to interfere in any way with the discretion of the courts. As I have said, we have set in place some of the strongest penalties in relation to youth offending of any government in this state. We have the tools in place and we have to allow the courts to assess the circumstances of the offence, the nature of the offence, the circumstances of the situation and deal with it using their expertise.

I am not prepared to move away from that principle of allowing the courts to have that separation and allowing them to have discretion to deal with youth offenders in the way in which they see fit. They have a very strong framework and a set of tools that provide for strong penalties. It is up to them to use them appropriately.

Mrs MENKENS: I thank the minister for those words and I appreciate her sentiments. However, I question her comment when she referred to the separation of powers. This House sets the legislation. I am only looking at a legislative principle being put in place; I am not looking at interfering with the court processes.

I think the minister would agree that the member for Bundaberg in his contribution outlined very clearly that young people need boundaries. This amendment sets a boundary whereby those young people would know that once they step over that boundary, there could be more serious consequences. I think the minister would agree that a certain percentage of young people do not seem to appreciate that there are serious consequences.

Non-government amendment (Mrs Menkens) negatived.

Clause 10, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clauses—

Mrs MENKENS (4.51 pm): I move the following amendment—

4 After clause 10—

At page 15, after line 6—

insert—

'10A Amendment of s 24 (Powers of police officer if referral is unsuccessful or if child contravenes conference agreement)

'Section 24—

insert—

'(4) Subsection (3)(b) does not apply if the police officer is aware that 3 or more cautions have previously been administered under this Act to the child.

'10B Amendment of s 33 (Who may refer an offence to a coordinator)

Section 33—

insert—

'(2) However, despite a provision mentioned in subsection (1)(a) or (b), a police officer or court may not refer the offence to a conference if—

(a) 3 or more conferences have previously been convened for offences committed by the child; or

(b) the offence is—

(i) a serious offence; or

(ii) an offence against the Criminal Code, chapter 22 or 32.

Editor's note—

Criminal Code, chapter 22 (Offences against morality) or 32 (Rape and sexual assaults)'.'.

The proposed amendment seeks to limit the number of times a young offender can be sent to conferencing. We are looking again at, shall we say, the three strikes. There are two parts to this particular amendment. I will deal with the first part of the amendment first, which is that a young offender can be sent to conferencing a maximum of three times. This again is in relation to setting the boundaries.

I commend the government for the youth conferencing that is occurring. We are hearing some very good outcomes from it. It does work in most cases, but we are still seeing young offenders who are in that cycle of going back numerous times. This amendment aims to ensure this is not another revolving door. It is setting the boundaries.

The second part of the amendment seeks to stop young offenders who have committed offences under chapters 22 or 32 from accessing conferencing. These are the more serious crimes. Chapter 22 of the Criminal Code refers to offences against morality. In short, this refers to sex offences of various descriptions against young people under the age of 18 and in some cases 16. Chapter 32 refers to crimes of rape and assault with intent to rape. This amendment makes it clear that conferencing is not suitable and should not be allowed for these types of offences. Members would agree that conferencing is not an appropriate response to crimes of this type.

That an offender should face up to the crime they have committed has merit. I have no doubt that conferencing has some really good results because the offender is made to face up to the outcome of whatever the crime is. However, in relation to a sex offence we have to look at the victim in these circumstances. That a victim of a sex offence should have to be part of a conference is impossible to consider. It would cause further trauma and grief to that victim. I acknowledge that the government in its amendments has noted the victim in youth conferencing and there is the allowance for more persons to be present with the victim. I acknowledge that that is good.

The two parts to amendment No. 4 are that there should be three conferences only and serious offences should not involve a conference. I am sure that the minister would agree that it would not be suitable for a conference to be held in relation to a sex offence.

Ms STRUTHERS: Let me deal with the second part first. In doing that, I may answer the first part. Firstly, I accept that the member is acknowledging the benefit of conferencing. We see hundreds of conferences around the state. It has become a very contemporary and well-accepted method where offenders have to front their victims. It is a powerful thing for an offender to front their victim and support people, to hear the impact on them and fess up to what they have done. Is a very powerful force. I accept that the member is acknowledging the importance of that.

In relation to offences against morality, or sex offences, what we have to understand is that there is a continuum. All those sorts of offences as a category are unacceptable and many lead to significantly tragic and awful consequences. But there is a continuum. Take the case of two young people, 15 years of age—your niece or nephew—having consensual sex. That is an offence against morality under our Criminal Code. Do we really want those two 15-year-olds having consensual sex? I know that there is difficulty defining 'consensual' in our law and our behaviour, but let us take it as hypothetical consensual sex between 15-year-olds. I think it would be acceptable and probably powerful for them to sit with their family members and any other people, perhaps their local priest, and fess up to what they have been doing and be told that it is not acceptable. To me that is probably a reasonable option to use.

My message to the member is: let us think broadly. Let us understand that the offending behaviour is on a continuum: at this end we have the serious, tragic and horrific sex offences that make us sick in the gut; at this end we have some of what I would see as intrafamilial sexual violation. Tragically or disturbingly, it is all too common that it is a 10-year-old boy interfering with his sister or a nine-year-old boy interfering with someone at school. That, of course, is unacceptable behaviour. In those instances, particularly a 10-year-old boy or the two 15-year-olds having consensual sex, the courts and the police need the discretion to actually use conferencing. I do not want to take away the discretion of those with the expertise and the legal tools to actually deal with these situations case by case, situation by situation, and deal with them appropriately and effectively.

Mrs MENKENS: I note the comments of the minister. We are discussing the situation of children having consensual sex, but there is also non-consensual sex. As the minister said, there is a continuum. In many cases involving children there may be a partner who has not consented and because it does involve children this may not come out. That person could be seriously damaged by being confronted by the offender.

It has been noted that some victims are further traumatised by the effects of the conferencing. A great deal of caution must be taken when considering who is sent to conferencing. I note that the minister is trying to diminish the number of children who are sent to detention and that is the direction that she wants to take. That means that these cases are all going to go to conferencing. In amongst that, some victims are going to be traumatised. I believe a great deal more caution should be taken towards those victims. In this case I am concerned about the victims. It may help the offenders, but what about the victim?

Ms STRUTHERS: Again I accept the genuine sentiment that the member brings to this debate. She is concerned about victims and she is concerned that young people who go off the track are put back on the track as much as possible. I do not challenge the underlying principle here.

As I described, we need to give the courts a discretion. We need the police to have the discretion to investigate matters and present the case to the court, and the court needs the discretion to assess all the matters on their merits. In the case I described of two 15-year-olds having consensual sex, depending on the circumstances of that—and it is up to the police to investigate the matter and put it before the court if that is where it ends up—it must be taken on the evidence. In some cases we would not necessarily want those young people receiving detention or another order. Youth conferencing could be an appropriate mechanism for those young people.

We do not just willy-nilly put people into youth conferencing. The police, the courts that make the decisions and the staff of the youth justice centres determine whether it is an appropriate mechanism. For instance, they ring the victim, they speak to their families, they find out if they want to participate. It is voluntary. They find out if they want to participate. If they say 'no', it does not go ahead. It is explained to them what might occur. It is explained to them that issues that have caused them harm may come to the surface again and they may feel very uncomfortable and distressed. All of this is explained to them. If it is the case that they do not want to proceed, it does not go ahead. If the convener of the youth

justice conferencing decides that it is not appropriate, that the offence was too severe or whatever, it does not go ahead. There are enough checks and balances in the system for us to feel quite confident that youth conferencing would not be used if it was deemed inappropriate.

I say on the record again that I have travelled to lots of parts of Queensland, and I have met with and sat with people involved in youth conferencing. At Morayfield, for a couple of hours the local member and I sat and talked with the elders and others. We sat with staff of the youth justice conference centre in Townsville. I met with the Aboriginal elders and others involved in youth conferencing. The message is consistent: this is one of the most powerful mechanisms in both restorative justice for victims and making offenders dig deep and face up to what they have done.

Mrs MENKENS: I hear the minister's message, but I am still concerned about the victim. We are talking about children. Often the victim would feel very guilty and would go along with what their parents thought was advisable, but that can still cause them a great deal of trauma. These things are very sensitive. We are talking about children and still I am not fully convinced. I do not believe that these types of offences should go to conferencing.

Division: Question put—That the member for Burdekin's amendment be agreed to.

AYES, 36—Bates, Bleijie, Crandon, Cripps, Cunningham, Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, Gibson, Hopper, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, McArdle, McLindon, Malone, Menkens, Nicholls, Powell, Pratt, Rickuss, Robinson, Seeney, Simpson, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Horan, Messenger

NOES, 48—Attwood, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Farmer, Finn, Fraser, Grace, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Johnstone, Jones, Kiernan, Kilburn, Lawlor, Lucas, Male, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Keech, Darling

Resolved in the negative.

Non-government amendment (Mrs Menkens) negatived.

Clause 11, as read, agreed to.

Clause 12—

Mrs MENKENS (5.12 pm): Clause 12 is in relation to decisions about bail and bail related matters. I note that this particular clause says, '... if it is a court that is making the decision, the court must have regard to the sentence order or other order likely to be made for the child if found guilty.' That means that the child can only be kept in custody where, if released, the child's safety would be endangered because of the alleged offence. I can certainly understand the theory behind this—the court will not grant bail and will order that the child be kept in custody, bearing in mind that we are seeing a lot of children in detention at the moment awaiting sentencing.

What support services will the department provide to those young children who are let out who may be at risk from factors other than those directly related to the alleged offence? What support systems are in place for them? Bearing in mind that many of those children do come from unfortunate circumstances and, shall we say, circumstances that are less than desirable, what sorts of support services are going to be in place for them when they are let out? We are talking about kids. We are talking about rehabilitation. We are hearing about all of this focus. What is actually going to be offered to those kids?

Ms STRUTHERS: I thank the member for her question in relation to this matter. It is a very important issue because we want to reduce remand rates. We want young people to be out on bail, if that is the adequate sentencing option for the court. We have programs and have had programs in place for a while and we need to extend these. For instance, YBASS, the Youth Bail Accommodation Support Service, has been operating effectively across Brisbane and into the south-east region for a number of years, and models like that operate in other parts of the state. They provide direct support to young people and help them with accommodation. Sometimes they link them up with other relatives and provide that kind of support work.

The other area that we are focusing our attention on is in our homelessness spend. Our new agreement with the federal government provides us with more options for young people to make sure that they have housing support. That is one of the big issues. As the member has acknowledged, some of these young people come from fairly dysfunctional homes. They do not have a lot of support locally in the area where they may have been caught offending. They may have come from a remote Indigenous community. So we are using options like funding services that make use of elders and funding services that provide accommodation and housing support. But I think one of our challenges now into the future is making sure that they can get that sort of bail support in the regions around the state more so than currently exists.

Mrs MENKENS: We are seeing a higher prevalence of children in the juvenile justice system who are also in the child safety system. Understandably that does occur. I will not go into details other than to say that that is understandable. So these children may have other child safety risks. What factors does the minister take into consideration for their safety?

I will make this a double-barrelled question. We are seeing overcrowding in youth detention centres at times—and I note that there will be additional beds in Townsville at the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre and that will alleviate things. We are seeing a high number of children on remand and, as mentioned in one of the speeches, we are seeing a high number of assaults on officers in these centres. Does the minister have the 2008-09 figures for assaults within detention centres? It is a concerning issue and it is concerning for the officers who work there too.

Ms STRUTHERS: The member has raised two issues. Again, I will deal with the second one first because I remember that one and I will come back to the first one. The member mentioned figures for assaults. I have been getting weekly reports on offences in detention centres. I am very pleased to say that there have been minimal offences and they have been declining significantly over the last couple of years. I think in fact it was our Deputy Speaker's father, Warren Pitt, a former minister, who requested those weekly updates. When I visited the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre recently, I said, 'Because there are not that many, I do not think you need to report to me weekly.' So we will have a look at how I get those reports.

I have just been given a note that says that the number of assaults have halved—from 31 in 2007-08 to 16 in 2008-09. Whilst any aggravated behaviour or assault is a serious matter, given the climate within those detention centres and the nature and behaviour of people, 16 probably is not too bad, but it is certainly half the number of assaults in the previous year.

The member's first point was about the child safety system and the need for young people on dual orders to be cared for appropriately. The aim of the machinery of government changes—to have a mega Department of Communities—and the new arrangements with the ministry is to get us all working better together, and that is what we are doing.

Clause 12, as read, agreed to.

Clause 13—

Mrs MENKENS (5.19 pm): Clause 13 refers to conditions of release on bail and it says that an example of a condition is imposing a curfew on a child—that is, imposing a curfew can be a condition of release on bail. The word 'curfew' is defined as a requirement for the child or person to remain at a stated place for a stated period. We certainly support the use of curfews. In fact I guess it is fair to say that we were calling for the use of curfews some years ago and we have called for their use previously. As the member for Currumbin said, it is good to see that the government has come to the party, to use her words.

We have seen quite a lot of substantial evidence from other jurisdictions that curfews have been working. From the perspective of community safety, the fact that offenders, potential offenders or past offenders are safely ensconced in a certain area certainly does give a sense of security to the community. Let us face it, that is what we are here for: the whole focus is community safety and alleviating community concerns.

Members would recall that I did express concerns about the use of curfews. As we know, many of these children are out on the streets because of where they are living—that is, their home situations are less than satisfactory. It might be fine to impose a curfew on them, but what if they are actually offending because of where they have come from and the possibly dangerous situation they live in? I am told that in my local area, which is only a small town, up to 40 kids are on the street some nights and they are there because their homes are too dangerous to be in. That is really a sad indictment on our society, but that is another story. However, what I am getting at is that, if a curfew is imposed on these children and their home is not satisfactory, what strategies will the department use to ensure that they will not be sent into a situation where they could be endangered? Even though they are offenders, that curfew could still put them in danger.

Ms STRUTHERS: The member has again raised a very important point. We must acknowledge that imposing a curfew is but one mechanism available to the courts. The Juvenile Justice Act contains a number of safeguards to ensure that courts impose curfew conditions on young people only when that is appropriate. The act places an onus on the sentencing court to justify why a condition such as a curfew should be imposed. Both the prosecution and the defence may present legal argument when courts make decisions about orders and curfew conditions.

I guess the message is that we have to act early—before those decisions are made—to actually get the courts to consider the consequences of imposing a curfew. Hopefully, it will not be imposed in inappropriate conditions. If it comes to pass that a curfew is part of the order on that young offender and it is deemed to be inappropriate, the matter could be brought back to the court with the circumstances of why that curfew should no longer be in place and some other alternative mechanism could be used. That would be one way of addressing it.

Mrs MENKENS: I note what the minister says. I guess it would be fair to say that a magistrate would not have a clue what sort of family or home life that child comes from. In many cases, some of these young offenders come from good homes and they have just gone off the rails or pushed the boundaries so being made to stay at home could be a very good deterrent. I think there will still need to be some caution in the actual administration of those curfews.

Clause 13, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 14 to 19, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—

Mrs MENKENS (5.24 pm): I move—

5 After clause 19—

At page 18, after line 9—

insert—

'19A Insertion of new s 158A

'After section 158—

insert—

'158A Victim impact statements

'(1) A victim of an offence committed by a child may present a victim impact statement to a court sentencing the child for the offence.

'(2) If the victim exercises the right under subsection (1), the victim impact statement may be presented orally or in a written statement.

'(3) Before sentencing the child, the court must ensure the victim is notified about the victim's right under subsection (1).

'(4) Subsection (3) is taken to be complied with if the victim can not be contacted after reasonable enquiries.

'(5) In this section—

victim impact statement means a statement about the physical and psychological impact of the offence on a victim.'.'.

This is a new provision that would allow for victims of crime to present a victim impact statement to the court at the time of sentencing a young offender. The amendment would give victims the option of providing an oral or written statement, and it would be ultimately their choice as to whether they did this. The amendment also places a responsibility on the court to notify a victim of this. A court may direct the prosecution to notify the victim at a pre-sentencing hearing, which would fulfil their obligations under this section.

A victim impact statement is defined as a statement about the physical and psychological impact of the offence on a victim. From the government's crime website, a written victim impact statement is signed by the victim and explains how a violent crime has affected their life, and there are quite a few criteria under that. Justice for the victims of crime is imperative. In too many situations, the justice system does not grant them any opportunity, recognition or redress, and that is what this seeks to do—to actually mirror what is available in the adult court, which is a victim impact statement for victims. I am mindful of the time, Minister.

Ms STRUTHERS: I am happy to respond. All of us—every member of this House—place paramount importance on the rights of victims. The legislation already provides for a sentencing court to have regard to the impact of the offence on the victim when making sentencing decisions. In addition, there is a bill before the House so I cannot speak in detail on that, but I want to indicate that the Victims of Crime Assistance Bill will confirm in legislation the ability of a victim to provide information to a sentencing court about their experience and the harm suffered. This government certainly provides a whole range of support for victims, including a victims support unit that comes under the jurisdiction of the Attorney-General. So we already have provision in the bill and, therefore, I am not supporting this amendment.

Mrs MENKENS: I note the minister's comments. I also am aware of the bill before the House, but it does not include a victim impact statement within the youth justice system and that is what I am looking at here—that ability and availability to have a victim impact statement within the youth justice system.

Division: Question put—That the member for Burdekin's amendment be agreed to.

AYES, 36—Bates, Bleijie, Crandon, Cripps, Cunningham, Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, Gibson, Hopper, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, McArdle, McLindon, Malone, Menkens, Nicholls, Powell, Pratt, Rickuss, Robinson, Seeney, Simpson, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Horan, Messenger

NOES, 48—Attwood, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Farmer, Finn, Fraser, Grace, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Johnstone, Jones, Kiernan, Kilburn, Lawlor, Lucas, Male, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Keech, Darling.

Resolved in the negative.

Non-government amendment (Mrs Menkens) negatived.

Debate, on motion of Mrs Menkens, adjourned.

MOTION

Hendra Virus

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—LNP) (5.35 pm): I move—

That the government move to immediately protect the health of Queenslanders and the financial viability of Queensland farmers from the impact of the Hendra virus and flying foxes.

Mr Vic Rail died in August 1994, Mr Mark Preston died in October 1995, Mr Ben Cunneen died in August 2008 and now we have the most recent tragic death of Alister Rodgers, who passed away on 1 September 2009. These four men have one thing in common: they all had the Hendra virus. We in this chamber know that the Hendra virus is an insidious virus that is acquired through coming into contact with blood, saliva or other bodily fluids. The descent into serious illness can be as quick as 24 hours after contracting the disease—24 hours and a person can, in fact, be on life support and looking at a death sentence. It affects the brain with encephalitis leading to convulsions or coma. There is no known cure, nor is there a preventive medicine that can be taken to protect anybody who comes into contact or is likely to come into contact with any of these items.

In Queensland alone seven people have contracted this disease and there have been 12 clusters. Four men have died in the space of 15 years. I pose the question: how many more people in this state or across the nation are going to contract this disease and risk an agonising and painful death? Yesterday in this House I raised this question. It is simply one of human beings or bats. It is a life-or-death question that this state faces with the sad passing of Dr Rodgers only yesterday.

We in this state have a very clear understanding of the sanctity of human life and we have a clear understanding within this parliament that the government and the parliament as a whole must move to protect human life as much as we possibly can. The attack on the Hendra virus should be a whole-of-government attack. It is not an issue to be left to the DPI; it is an issue that has to be tackled by every salient department in the government, and that includes the health department. I table for the benefit of the House an article that appeared in today's *Australian* under the heading 'CRC decision reduces biosecurity' and the subheading 'Cross-species diseases proliferating in the wild'.

Tabled paper: Article from the Australian, dated 2 September 2009, titled 'CRC Decision reduces biosecurity: cross-species diseases proliferating in the wild' [819].

In 2003 the Australian Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre was launched by the Howard government. That centre has as its focus ensuring that lethal viruses evolving in Asia do not find their way to Australia or that, at the very least, we understand how to deal with them before they get here. Sixty per cent of the 1,461 diseases recognised in humans are due to multihost pathogens that crossed species lines. The research centre is under threat because the federal science and research minister, Kim Carr, has been advised not to continue funding. This centre was to receive $42 million over the next six years to check infectious diseases leaping from wildlife to stock to humans. Does that sound familiar? Wildlife to stock to humans—that is the Hendra virus: bats to horses to humans and death.

The centre focused on what it called One Health: bringing all relevant disciplines together to solve serious issues that impact upon the health of our society. The former Deputy Director, John Mackenzie, made this comment—

It became clear from the feedback that they (the CRC committee) had no concept of what we were about or the thrust of the emerging one health idea aimed at understanding the human disease threats from wildlife that is gathering a huge amount of momentum in the US and Europe.

He went on to say that he was worried about a dangerous level of mutation in bat borne viruses in Asia, the overlapping of Asian and Australian bat populations and the potential threat to human life.

Here we have the biosecurity centre's former deputy director warning us now that if we do not do something the overlapping of Australian and Asian bats could lead to greater viruses and greater risks to this nation. The first thing the health minister and the Premier can do is pick up the telephone and ask Kevin Rudd—plead with him and beg with him—to give this centre the money it needs in order to protect every person in this House and every person across this state. We should never forget that this virus first occurred in Hendra. It is not a regional virus; it is a state-wide virus. It will impact upon any person in this House at any time. The World Health Organisation in July 2009 made this comment—

Although Hendra Virus has caused only a few outbreaks, its potential for further spread and ability to cause disease and death in people have made it a public health concern. The concern has heightened in the most recent outbreaks as the horses symptoms have shifted to become largely neurological instead of respiratory. This suggests the possibility of genetic diversity in the strain and potentially a more infective virus.

The World Health Organisation is saying to us right now that this disease could possibly mutate, and we need to move on this very quickly. In September 2008 Queensland Health put out a media release, which states—

Queensland Health will involve interstate disease experts in a review of its response to recent Hendra virus infections.

What happened to that report? Has it been made public? Has it been dealt with? Has the public been informed of what Queensland Health has learned from September 2008 to the current date? I suggest that it has not, and I suggest it has not because of this: when one looks at the advice provided by Queensland Health after the most recent outbreak up north, one finds that the advice given was what? Go and see a GP! For God's sake, we are talking about a virus that the World Health Organisation has said may mutate. We are talking about a biosecurity centre former deputy director who has said that he is concerned about the overlapping of viruses and bats between Australia and New Zealand, and what we had from Queensland Health only a matter of weeks ago was 'go and see a GP'.

Oddly enough, the report was to focus on notification, disease surveillance, contact management and communication. I cannot see any of that having occurred up north. I cannot see any of that having occurred in the past two or three weeks in relation to the two people who were stranded up north with the incredible advice to go and see their GP. It is impossible to believe that Queensland Health has not completed this study. If it has completed the study, the minister should table the document so that we can understand very clearly exactly what has taken place.

Queensland Health has a clear obligation here. It has to educate those people who are most likely to come into contact with the virus as to how to deal with it if the need arises. It also has to look at work practices in relation to dealing with animals that could have the virus. Queensland Health must look at preventative action itself. It must telephone Kevin Rudd and say to Kevin Rudd, 'We want you to put in the $42 million to keep our people safe.' It must develop a rapid response unit so that it gets to the people with the means and the resources to ensure that these people are given the best possible advice from day one, and it must be part of the research to establish a cure and prevention for this disease. At the end of the day, what I do not want to find tomorrow is a headline in the *Courier-Mail*, 'Five-year-old child has Hendra virus'. No-one wants that. The time has now come for Queensland Health to get its act together.

(Time expired)

Mr HOPPER (Condamine—LNP) (5.45 pm): I stand with great pleasure to second the motion moved by the member for Caloundra, the shadow minister for health. Tonight the opposition calls on the government to take immediate action for the protection of horticultural produce from flying fox populations in Queensland. The opposition calls upon this government to immediately provide compensation to producers for the installation of netting. The opposition calls upon this government to immediately provide funding for the development of a vaccine for horses to prevent Hendra virus. The opposition calls upon this government to immediately reinstate mitigation permits, as the New South Wales government has recently done. The opposition calls upon this government to put aside funds to study flying foxes and restore the mitigation permits for this year's crop.

Less than one per cent of the flying fox population would be affected by the reintroduction of mitigation permits. The Wide Bay-Burnett area produced 83,175 tonnes of produce last year. The Darling Downs and Granite Belt produced 39,715 tonnes. A fruit orchard can be destroyed—totally destroyed—in three to seven nights by flying foxes. Some orchardists are ploughing out their trees and walking away. There are orchardists in the Gin Gin area who are going bankrupt because the mitigation permits were taken away from them in September and they were told—they were promised—by this government and this minister that an alternative source would be provided. That has not happened and in the meantime they are growing fruit to feed vermin.

Orchardists were promised economical non-lethal control methods. We are still waiting! There are two months to go until the next season. For farmers to protect their crops with non-lethal methods the costs are great. For every 20 acres it costs $70,000 to $90,000 for full-canopy netting. It costs $300,000 to $400,000 for full-canopy netting. Drape netting costs $60 to $70 per tree and a sound system costs $30,000 to $40,000. There will be no control for five months starting in September due to mothers giving birth and then feeding their young.

A report from the New South Wales Flying-Fox Licensing Review Panel has recognised that significant negative, financial, cultural and social imposts will be incurred by some orchardists if shooting licences are banned without reasonable adjustment time. It has recommended a minimum time of 12 months. We see the New South Wales government doing something to protect its produce. What do we see here? We see a government that takes it away and lets our orchardists grow fruit to feed vermin with no alternative method put in place. The panel found that it is important to reduce the adverse pressures on a vulnerable species—the grey-headed flying fox—while at the same time maintain food production and encourage sustainable farm business.

I note the Minister for Primary Industries is here. I am pleased we have flushed him out tonight. He will move an amendment and I am very pleased to see that. But I would really like him to take into account what I am talking about. The panel also found that the cessation of a licence system without subsidies would likely result in a significant increase in the incidence of illegal shooting. So when you take away the mitigation permits, you are hurting the flying foxes more. Therefore, without subsidies, there is likely to be continuing and possibly greater animal cruelty issues and detrimental effects on the grey-headed flying fox population. Thus, there is a very strong case for netting subsidies. It would be good for the orchardists, good for the bats, good for the community and good for a sustainable future.

We need to change the public's perception of the flying fox as being a cute and cuddly animal to a potential killer. We all sat in the House and heard the shadow minister make his contribution. There are people dying out there and this government is doing nothing. Four vets have died and nothing has been done. I have spoken to vets who are very close to having a vaccination for horses that are in close proximity to flying fox populations. We have to make it safe for human beings. This government is turning its back on that. When more people die, their blood will be on the government's hands.

(Time expired)

Hon. TS MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland) (5.50 pm): I move the following amendment—

All the words after 'the' be deleted and the following words inserted—

House notes:

- the tragic death of a Queensland vet as a result of Hendra virus;
- that Hendra virus has claimed four lives from seven cases in Queensland since 1994;
- the work undertaken by government and industry to educate the community, horse owners and veterinarians about preventative measures to protect against the Hendra virus;
- the efforts by the Flying Fox Working Group to investigate non-lethal mitigation methods to reduce the impacts of flying foxes on primary industries, and
- that ongoing efforts are being made to better understand the Hendra virus in collaboration with experts interstate and internationally with a view to better understanding modes of transmission and the possible future development of a vaccine.

At the outset, I pass on my condolences to the family of the vet who has tragically died. I cannot begin to imagine the pain they that will be feeling tonight. Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries scientists have been involved in numerous important research projects since the first Hendra virus occurrence in 1994. They remain actively involved in cutting-edge research into the virus, its hosts and its behaviour. It was our research that first identified flying foxes as a natural host of Hendra virus.

Other research projects that we have undertaken or have been involved in include the frequency and distribution of Hendra virus in Australian flying foxes, the mechanism by which Hendra virus persists and is spread in flying fox populations, bat virus interactions in an effort to better understand the virus and the disease that it causes, and regional differences in the virus. Thanks to our research, it is now believed that the virus is not mutating but varies slightly according to location and bat movements.

Biosecurity Queensland is recognised as a world leader in the research and understanding of this virus. However, work being done overseas on the closely related Nipah virus may be the best chance for a vaccine in the future. Understandably, today there have been calls for more money to be spent on research. The advice I have from the Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr Ron Glanville, is that even though more research and development is needed, we know already that the infection of people is preventable with appropriate precautions. Dr Glanville says that it is vital that vets and horse owners become more aware of infection control procedures. The simple message is that vets and horse owners should use gloves and a mask when treating any sick horse, not just those that they have a suspicion about.

In terms of education, I can inform the House that Biosecurity Queensland has committed to employing a full-time horse industry officer.

Mr Hopper interjected.

Mr MULHERIN: If the member for Condamine listens, he might learn something. This officer will work with the industry and the veterinary profession on a range of communication messages, but high on the list will be Hendra virus.

The QPIF website already contains two very comprehensive documents on Hendra. They are titled *Guidelines for veterinarians handling potential Hendra Virus infection in horses* and *Hendra virus: important information for horse owners.* These guidelines are updated as new information becomes available. That update happened earlier this year when new research showed that Hendra virus can be shed in horses prior to them showing any obvious clinical signs.

In early April 2009, Biosecurity Queensland sent a message to Queensland veterinarians to alert them about the latest research and the imminent release of the updated guidelines. These were updated in April and the guidelines have been widely promoted at a range of national scientific and professional forums. Biosecurity Queensland and the Australian Veterinary Association have also convened a series of infection control workshops for veterinarians in partnership with Workplace Health and Safety Queensland. Four have been held to date. There was one in February in Malanda, one in April in Toowoomba, one in June in Rockhampton, one in July in Brisbane and one in August in Townsville. The purpose of those workshops was to improve the awareness of veterinarians and encourage them to obtain the appropriate personal protective equipment training through accredited organisations.

It is understandable that, with a relatively new virus like Hendra virus, there is considerable public fear. The members of the opposition are cynically using that fear to campaign against flying foxes. The opposition's logic is simple: flying foxes carry Hendra virus, so let us declare open season on these

animals. It is an argument that is steeped in ignorance and it will not work. The experts agree that flying foxes are highly mobile and travel long distances to where the food is. If they are driven out, they will simply return or relocate.

Each year approximately three people die from snakebite. What is next for the opposition? To try to round up all the snakes and kill them?

(Time expired)

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Health) (5.56 pm): I second the amendment. As I said in the House earlier today, the insidious and delayed nature of this virus makes it all the more frightening and stressful for people who are exposed it. I believe this is a very serious issue and a political debate about it should be held. However, I question the sensitivity of the timing of this debate.

This morning we learned the sad news that Rockhampton vet Alister Rodgers passed away overnight from the virus. I reiterate my deepest sympathies for his family at this tragic time. I could repeat the letter from his family that was published in the *Courier-Mail* a few weeks ago to try to score some cheap political points, the same as the member for Caloundra has sought to do, but I will not do that, because the issue is bigger than that. Mr Rodgers is the fourth person in Queensland, and in the world, to die from Hendra virus and the seventh to contract it. All seven contracted the virus through close contact with blood and secretions of sick or dead horses. There is no evidence of humans contracting the virus from bats and no evidence of human-to-human transmission. Regardless, the Queensland government takes Hendra virus very seriously. I am disappointed at the scaremongering and misinformation that was peddled by the member for Caloundra today. The Queensland government is working closely with interstate and international experts and across agencies to gain a better understanding of Hendra virus.

Currently, very little is known about the virus. Indeed, it should be noted that the initial horse infected with Hendra virus was thought to have died of snakebite and was buried long before the other three horses tested positive to the virus and long before Queensland Health or DPIF became involved. Queensland Health and DPIF staff have worked hard to provide the best care and support to everyone concerned.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr LUCAS: Would the member like an autopsy to be done on every horse that dies? What would the industry say about that? Queensland Health staff remain in contact with all 23 people who have had baseline testing for Hendra virus.

The deceased patient and three other patients, who were at highest risk due to their level of exposure to infected horses, were admitted to Rockhampton Hospital for a five-day preventive course of the antiviral drug ribavirin. Ribavirin is an antiviral drug, which was offered on the recommendation of key infectious disease experts with experience in management of Hendra virus infection. Ribavirin had been used once previously during the Redlands outbreak in 2008 for the preventive treatment of people exposed to infected horses.

The rarity of the virus in both horses and humans means that looking into its effects and developing a treatment and/or vaccine is a significant challenge. The development of a vaccine in humans is constrained by the serious nature of the disease. Testing a vaccine in humans would be extremely difficult, given the low number of infections and the seriousness of the disease. Could members imagine clinical trials? There are several other serious diseases for which we do not have vaccines for similar reasons including malaria, dengue fever, HIV, hepatitis C, legionnaire's disease and listeriosis. Each year, billions of dollars are spent world-wide on developing a vaccine for malaria, but we are not there yet. The members opposite are giving false hope to people if they think the answer to this issue is destroying flying foxes and developing a vaccine tomorrow.

There is not yet even a cure for the common cold. The Australian health and hospitals reform report says about the cold—

> The main causative agent, the human rhinovirus, was probably first recognised in the late 1950s and yet 60 years on we still have no effective treatment. Curing the common cold has been one of medicine's most wished for and yet most elusive goals. Even today, despite deciphering the genetic code of all 99 known strains, an effective cure-all treatment for the common cold is predicted to be unlikely.

CSIRO livestock industry scientists are working at the Australian Animal Health Laboratory in Geelong, Victoria seeking to understand how Hendra virus spreads from infected horses to other horses and to humans. Queensland Health is working with Biosecurity Queensland and relevant national agencies to progress research into Hendra virus. A workshop following the recent Rockhampton outbreak is currently being organised and is likely to be held in mid-October 2009 on the Sunshine Coast. This will work towards improving Queensland's response to outbreaks and also seek to clarify future research needs. In Queensland the Office of Health and Medical Research will proactively assist researchers in developing funding bids through the NHMRC or the Australian Research Council.

In his speech the minister asked: is a viable solution to this—particularly when vets are amongst the world's greatest animal lovers—to go out slaughtering bats when other bats can fly back into the colony? Is the solution giving people false hope that we will be able to develop a vaccine tomorrow? This is a very, very serious matter and we will treat it seriously.

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—LNP) (6.01 pm): I proudly support the motion moved by the shadow minister for health. I believe, as would all members, that the most important issue that would ever come our way for debate is the health and quality of life of our community. I believe it is very important that we as parliamentarians prioritise these principles. Otherwise we should not be here and would not be fit to govern.

The question that has to be asked is: why is it that year in, year out the quality of life of residents across this state is ruined because of plagues of flying foxes residing above homes? The best the state government can do is fine residents $100,000 for disturbing those flying foxes. There must be something wrong with this system if people who have had flying foxes flapping around their homes year in, year out are fined $100,000 for removing them. I am speaking on behalf of the residents of Charters Towers, Yungaburra, Cairns and right across Queensland. The frail, the nursing mums and the families are putting up with the filth, stench, parasites and ticks day in, day out—not to mention lethal viruses such as the Hendra virus and the lyssavirus.

Lyssavirus is a rabies like virus. It has already killed one Queenslander. It has killed a number of residents of New South Wales. In relation to the lyssavirus, if one bat dropped its placenta on the ground and a child walked on it with a cut foot, that would be the end of that child. The Hendra virus has recently claimed four horses. The latest confirmed outbreak means that there have now been 12 Hendra virus incidents since 1994 involving 42 horses. There have been seven confirmed human infections, all in Queensland. With the very disappointing news of the death of Alister Rodgers, the number of deaths has reached four.

The time has come for the government to stop being sympathetic to the flying fox and start putting the quality of life of residents before these screeching pests. I will read out something that goes back to 2005. It is an article in the *Northern Miner* headed 'Health fears rally residents'. It states—

The frustrations of residents living with the bat colony were evident, with emotions running high several times during the meeting.

It goes on to state that a resident said that since the arrival of the flying foxes in her trees she had needed to use her asthma medication more than twice the usual amount. The resident said she was gravely concerned about the diseases, including Australian bat lyssavirus, which could be carried via the bat ticks. She said it was time permanent action was taken as health risks and other damage being done to the city were unacceptable. The bats are still there. The question is: does the minister have the guts, the intestinal fortitude, to solve the problem? This has been going on for seven years right across Queensland. Another article, headed 'QPWS tells locals: Time to move out', states—

Local residents are being advised to move out of their homes if they don't like living near the flying fox colonies. Cambridge Street resident David Wilson said he was advised by Cairns Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service to seek emergency housing with a charity organisation, or simply rent somewhere else if he didn't like living next door to the bats.

…

He said he had two children, the youngest less than three months old, and living next door to the flying foxes had him fearful of the safety of his children.

The bats are still there. Where are the guts, the intestinal fortitude, to get up there and solve this problem? A week ago this article appeared in the *Weekend Post* under the heading 'Flying fox colony drives town batty'—

A flying fox colony at Yungaburra has sparked fresh demands on the state government to move them over growing fears of bat-borne diseases. Lakeside residents say a colony of bats, which moved into the area following Cyclone Larry, are noisy, stink and could be putting lives at risk. The Hendra virus outbreak in Rockhampton that has claimed the life of four horses and left vet Alister Rodgers on life support—

he has now lost his life—

has sparked anxiety in the Tableland communities.

No wonder it has raised anxiety! The article quotes a resident who has lived there for 25 years who says that the bats have turned a quiet neighbourhood into a noisy, stinking place overridden by flies. He says that the stench is terrible and the sleep deprivation because of the noise is unbearable. He said—

If we had dogs barking all night the owner would be prosecuted but because it's bats we have no rights.

He said—

They are a health hazard ... Apart from the disease they carry, in tick season thousands die and all those dead bats add to the smell.

(Time expired)

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (6.06 pm): Most of the people in this House would be aware that Cawarral, the site of the latest Hendra virus outbreak, is in my electorate. My and my family's prayers and condolences go out to the family of Alister Rodgers, a well-respected veterinarian, who contracted Hendra virus and succumbed to the illness. I think it is instructive that not one speaker for the opposition has even conveyed their condolences. They should hang their heads in shame.

Dr Rodgers was carrying out his duties when he contracted the disease from a horse that people were unaware had the disease. The owner and staff of the stud also received preventative treatment and, thankfully, they have been cleared. Sadly, this rare and deadly disease has claimed four lives from seven sufferers since 1994. If the presence of the disease is suspected, a series of protocols are in place to protect workers who may come into harm's way.

Because of the rarity of the virus, endeavours are being made to understand its transmission and possibly to develop a vaccine. I have a constituent who has provided the department with some details of a trial being carried out in the US. Although claims are made of its efficacy, it has not been tested widely on humans. Hopefully they are on the right track. I table a report of the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses. Everyone who reads that will find that this virus is a variant of the myxomatosis virus which was spread widely in Australia in the 1950s.

Tabled paper: Extract from website, dated 2 September 2009, detailing ICTVdB Index of Viruses [820].

Amongst all the problems with this outbreak, the indiscriminate claims to wipe out the flying foxes surface again. We have a working group on methods of controlling flying foxes which hopefully will allow humans and nature to co-exist. Many flying foxes that roost in or near towns have been forced there by humans wiping out their habitat. The enthusiastic call from the members for Burnett and Caloundra for them to be wiped out is nothing short of scandalous.

We have also heard from the members for Condamine and Dalrymple. Even the stud owner where the outbreak occurred has requested reason in our approach to flying foxes. In actual fact, he said that there was no justification for going out and trying to cull flying foxes. He had many flowering trees on his property and he could have had horse feed equipment under cover. The difficulty is that we do not know for certain how the disease is transmitted to horses. But one thing is certain: humans do not get the disease from flying foxes; they get it from horses.

Mr Messenger: You don't know that.

Mr Hopper: That's not right. It's wrong.

Mr HOOLIHAN: Science knows that. Speaking in support of the proposed amended motion, I table an interactive primary school education kit so that members may learn about flying foxes. I favoured the members for Caloundra, Burnett, Condamine and Dalrymple with a copy of this kit. It is able to be understood by my primary schoolers so I thought they would be able to understand it, but obviously not.

Tabled paper: Interactive Primary School Education Kit—About Bats [821].

In the Ross Creek and Fig Tree Creek estuary in the centre of Yeppoon there is a massive colony of grey and spectacled flying foxes. There are estimated to be about 30,000. We sometimes get the little red flying fox, which usually moves inland following the flowering eucalypts. One major fact which no person has raised, in my electorate or anywhere else—even during the Livingstone Shire Council's campaign against our present hospital staying in its position—is that these 30,000-plus flying foxes have lived within 750 to 50 metres of the present hospital for about 80 years with no detriment to public or private health.

Ross Creek provides mooring for about 40 industrial and private boats, which moor in the creek beneath the mangroves where the flying foxes roost. There is no doubt that flying foxes do carry certain diseases. We have undertaken education programs and have trained people who we can contact to avoid any danger to ourselves. My kit sets out our local contact points, but every member would know the carers in their local areas.

Let me give the House some details about the spurious claims made about flying foxes, such as that farmers want to eradicate scouts. There are no scouts. Each animal has the smell and sight to find blossoms and fruit by themselves. The welfare of our forests rely on these remarkable animals. They pollinate our native trees and certain of our native species germinate because the seeds have been eaten by flying foxes and passed through their intestines. They do cause some difficulties in my area, which contains a big fruit-growing industry, but generally there is peaceful co-existence. It is about time that we allowed the experts to deal with any problems that arise out of the close co-existence of flying foxes and humans, and that we support those programs that ensure the safety of our citizens.

I have to say that if I had to choose between spending time with flying foxes or some of the people who have spoken tonight, I would pick the flying foxes. I commend the amended motion to the House.

Mr ELMES (Noosa—LNP) (6.11 pm): The reason we are here tonight and the reason that this motion has been proposed by the member for Caloundra is that we seek the government's help, and primarily the ministers for health, primary industries and the environment, to save the lives of

Queenslanders. Nowhere in anyone's contribution have we suggested that people should go out and start madly culling flying foxes anywhere in the state. We are trying to look at a problem. Every person who has taken the slightest interest in this issue understands that the problems exists. It does not exist right across the state, but it exists in pockets of the state and it needs to be dealt with in individual pockets.

There comes a time when the health of humans has to take precedence over the life or the lifestyle of an animal such as a flying fox. Right across Queensland there are flying fox colonies, mainly in coastal areas of the state. Some of those colonies are permanent and some are not permanent. In my own seat of Noosa there is a permanent flying fox colony, so I have some understanding of the mess that they make as they move about my part of the world twice a day.

We have to understand that in communities such as Charters Towers the flying foxes do not move over the town a couple of times a day; they roost over the top of the town. Also we have to understand what many residents will go through, not just in Charters Towers but also in other areas, firstly because of the noise and secondly because of the danger to health in many ways. I would ask some of those opposite who are scoffing at what we are talking about to think about what happens to people who live on properties that are reliant on rainwater when, twice a day, tens of thousands of flying foxes move across the tops of their roofs. Those roofs capture bat faeces, which is then fed into the water that the people have no option but to drink. We need to be aware of these things.

Flying foxes are the natural carrier of the Hendra virus. The virus has been identified in the placenta and the foetal tissue of flying foxes. As far as we know all infections have come directly from horses, but we also know that when you put a flying fox, a horse and a human being together, you have a potentially severe health problem. The LNP is not calling for the large-scale culling of animals. Indeed, we are asking the hopefully responsible ministers of the Crown to help solve a problem that allows communities to move flying foxes on so that they do not pose a danger to the communities above which they live.

To understand the seriousness of this issue one needs to look at the explanatory notes from the Queensland Chief Health Officer. All the way through the explanatory notes we see lines like 'do not touch the bat without wearing gloves' and 'members of the public should not handle bats'. What are you supposed to do if every night and every morning tens of thousands of bats fly over your home, doing what bats do naturally? Should you allow your children to play in the yard, on the swings and so on, if they can come into contact with what the animals leave behind?

The issue of primary industries has also been touched on. I know that something like 27.5 per cent of all stone fruit grown in the Granite Belt is lost to flying foxes. We are asking the three responsible ministers to please have a look at this motion and work with our members of parliament so that we can do something to help the people of Charters Towers and those in more remote communities so that they can carry on their lives just as all decent ordinary Queenslanders should be allowed to do.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will not have the House persist in interjecting when I have called order.

Mrs Sullivan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Pumicestone, I warn you under standing order 253. I call the member for Morayfield.

Mr RYAN (Morayfield—ALP) (6.16 pm): I rise in support of the amendment. Like other members of this House I would like to publicly convey my sincere condolences to the family and friends of Dr Alister Rodgers, the veterinary surgeon from Rockhampton who sadly passed away today after being exposed to the blood of a horse infected with Hendra virus. His death is a great tragedy for the Rockhampton community specifically and the Queensland veterinarian community generally. Sadly, four of the seven people who have reportedly contracted Hendra virus have died and I take this opportunity to remember, in addition to Dr Rodgers, the horse trainer who passed away in 1994, the Mackay cane farmer who died in 1995 and the Brisbane vet who died last year.

This debate is about how the Queensland government is working with key stakeholders and the Queensland community to protect Queenslanders from the impact of Hendra virus and the impact of flying foxes on primary industries. The Hendra virus was first identified in Queensland in September 1994. I understand that Queensland is the only place in the world to report outbreaks of Hendra virus. Whilst flying foxes are the natural hosts of this virus and humans and horses are susceptible to the disease, from reports released by Queensland Health I understand that Hendra virus does not appear to be very contagious and that human infections have only resulted from direct exposure to horses infected with Hendra virus. I also understand that there is no evidence of human-to-human transmission.

Nonetheless, suspected outbreaks of Hendra virus are treated very seriously by the Queensland government. In instances where an outbreak of Hendra virus is suspected, I am pleased to hear that, through Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries, the Queensland government is prepared to respond quickly and effectively. Government agencies, including Biosecurity Queensland and rapid

response teams, assist in the whole-of-government response to suspected outbreaks. As already stated, the most recent outbreak of Hendra virus occurred at a property located near Rockhampton. On being notified of this outbreak I understand that the relevant Queensland government agencies responded decisively.

The relevant agencies quickly quarantined the property and the infected horses. In fact, the property was quarantined on day one, and departmental officers from the relevant government agencies immediately commenced testing and tracing of all horses that had come in contact with the property. The Queensland government treats suspected outbreaks seriously and cautiously. The acting chief veterinary officer, Dr Rick Symons, was recently reported as saying, 'We take a very cautionary approach to these cases. We are really concerned that we continue to protect horses and other humans.'

Whilst any case involving contraction of Hendra virus by humans or horses is distressing for all involved, it is important to not equate those specific emotions with a general attack on the native flying fox species in Queensland. A recent jointly published report by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, along with Griffith University and the Rainforest CRC from the James Cook University, called *Ecology and management of flying fox camps in an urbanising region*, says—

Flying foxes are important pollinators and seed dispersers of many plant species. They play important roles in the reproduction, regeneration and dispersal of plants within rainforests, eucalypt forests, woodlands and wetlands.

I am encouraged to hear that the Queensland government is working with the Flying Fox Working Group to investigate ways of reducing the impact of flying foxes on primary industries. This is about getting the balance right—getting the balance right about the value of the vital role of flying foxes in relation to our environment's biodiversity.

Recently the Flying Fox Working Group held a research and development forum with world renowned flying fox experts and growers who have successfully developed non-lethal management options. I understand that Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries has committed significant resources to exploring effective non-lethal methods of management where existing practices such as netting are either impractical or cost prohibitive. I welcome the direction, and congratulate the working group on its general interest in working towards getting the balance right between preserving our environment's biodiversity, supporting our primary industry sector and protecting our communities from Hendra virus. I commend the amendment to the House.

Mr SEENEY (Callide—LNP) (6.21 pm): I rise to support the motion that has been moved by the opposition tonight and to express my disgust and dismay at the response the government has provided in this parliament to every Queenslander. The proposition that has been put by the opposition is calling on the government to take some action about a public health issue that has cost the lives of four Queenslanders—a public health issue that has cost the lives of four Queenslanders—and a wildlife management issue that has cost the Queensland horticultural and fruit-growing industry millions and millions of dollars. It is a serious issue.

A public health issue that has cost the lives of four Queenslanders on its own should warrant immediate and decisive action on the part of the government. But tonight in this parliament we have heard a response from the government which dismays me and which should disturb every Queenslander. The absurdity of that response was culminated by the address that was given by the member for Keppel. The address that was given by the member for Keppel should be instructive to every Queenslander about the attitude of this government to issues such as this.

Nobody is suggesting that the solution to this issue is to seek the eradication of the flying fox. What is being suggested by members on this side of the House who have had to deal with this issue in their electorates is that the government recognise and immediately move to implement the mitigation permits that can be part of a management plan and for relocation techniques that have been used successfully in other areas to become available to Queenslanders who are trying to manage this issue so that flying fox colonies can be moved away from areas of population, so that fruit growers can use mitigation permits as one element in a strategy to protect their livelihoods and so that communities can use both mitigation permits and relocation techniques to ensure that we lower the risk of more Queenslanders losing their lives to what has become an emerging public health issue.

In response to that reasonable and sensible call on the government that has been made by the opposition tonight, we have an amendment put before the House which is absurd in the extreme. It begins by noting the tragic death of the latest Queenslander to die of the Hendra virus. Of course we all extend our condolences and our sympathy to his family. But those condolences and sympathies are empty and meaningless unless this government is prepared to take some action—action that is clearly available to it. So it is that the expressions of condolences and sympathies that we have heard from the members of the government tonight have to be seen as meaningless and empty because they are not prepared to do anything more than stand up and move this mealy-mouthed amendment that we see before the House. They are not prepared to take the reasonable and sensible action that is available to them to reduce the risk of more Queenslanders becoming victims of this public health issue.

The amendment that the government has moved is in five parts. Of course the opposition is sympathetic and we extend our condolences to the families of the Queenslanders who have died. But we will not support the remaining parts of the amendment that the government has put forward. It is all about educating the community, investigating non-lethal mitigations and ongoing efforts to better understand. It is all about, as the minister said in his contribution, workshops and guidelines. It is all mealy-mouthed nonsense. It is about the government avoiding the responsibility that it has to address a public health issue in a way that will protect Queenslanders.

That is what the motion before the House is tonight and every member of this parliament should be forthright in their support for it, because every member of this House should recognise the need to take decisive action, reasonable action, to ensure that the people we represent are protected when those protections are available. It is not about eradicating a wildlife species; it is about protecting the lives of Queenslanders and it is about protecting the incomes and the livelihoods of Queenslanders. This government and every member of this government should be condemned for not supporting the motion that has been put forward by the member for Caloundra tonight.

Hon. KJ JONES (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability) (6.26 pm): I stand in support of the amended motion. I also want to put on the record my deepest sympathies for Alister Rodgers's family, friends and colleagues. Recently at the last sitting I spoke at length to John Brady, the owner of the property involved. I want to particularly acknowledge him and give my sympathies to him as well.

Tonight we have heard numerous members of the opposition call for the reintroduction of damage mitigation permits here in Queensland. The current prohibition on the granting of damage mitigation permits under the Nature Conservation Act 1993 to shoot flying foxes is based on a finding by the Queensland Animal Welfare Advisory Committee. This finding was based on their assessment that the shooting of flying foxes with shotguns for fruit crop protection is inhumane.

Mr Seeney: What would you expect them to find? What about the death of four Queenslanders? Is that humane? What about the seven people who are in hospital?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Resume your seat, Minister. Stop the clock. I call the minister.

Ms JONES: This finding was based on a number of key points, one being that it was very hard to get a direct hit to the head or heart of these animals given they are so small. They also found it was very difficult to get a direct hit during low light and also because shotguns are quite indiscriminate.

Under the Nature Conservation Act, the director-general of the Department of Environment and Resource Management is not able to issue a damage mitigation permit if the method of take is considered to be inhumane. This is the law in Queensland.

I know that this is a very distressing time for the family and friends of Alister Rodgers, and every member of this House has expressed their deepest sympathy during this most difficult time. But allowing the inhumane shooting of flying foxes with a shotgun for the protection of fruit crop growing would not eradicate the Hendra virus. In fact, at the time the government made this decision last year, only a low number of growers were still applying for damage mitigation permits. As the member for Condamine said in this House tonight as part of this debate, he thinks that if we reintroduce the permits that would only amount to one per cent of flying foxes in this state. Clearly, shooting one per cent of flying foxes would not reduce the risk of Hendra virus.

As the Minister for Primary Industries has already outlined to the House tonight, the state government is working with industry representatives to find ways of protecting our crops from flying foxes in a humane way. Non-lethal fruit crop protection techniques, such as netting and scaring devices, have been considered best practice for a long time, and non-lethal control measures represent the most sustainable way forward for industry and the environment.

Flying foxes are a native animal which make a significant contribution to environmental health and the economy by pollinating and dispersing seed. For example, flying foxes are a major pollinator of eucalypts and many eucalypts have evolved to produce higher quantities of nectar at night to attract nocturnal pollinators such as flying foxes. Flying foxes are also the main long-range pollinator, travelling up to 50 kilometres a night, and they therefore play a critical role in maintaining genetic diversity.

Furthermore, flying foxes are an indicator species—their fate is an indicator of the broader health of forest ecosystems due to their important role as a pollinator and seed disperser. The management of flying foxes in Queensland, therefore, needs to be responsive to the social and economic needs of the community while protecting the flying fox population and, with it, the long-term environmental benefits it provides.

I can advise the House that Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service wildlife rangers surveyed the known permanent and transient flying fox colonies in the Rockhampton and Gladstone areas. They met with flying fox researchers from Queensland Biosecurity and provided the current information on the flying fox colony locations to test flying fox waste for Hendra virus. The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service is providing assistance to Biosecurity Queensland as requested.

The challenge of resolving human and wildlife conflict is a large one. This government is committed to finding solutions which are responsive to industry and the broader community, while ensuring that our state's unique biodiversity is safeguarded. This is a tough issue and I absolutely support the position of the state government here. We are working closely with industry to ensure that we move forward in this regard.

Mr SPEAKER: Before I put the question, it is my pleasure to welcome into the House some people whom I had indicated when I became Speaker I would be delighted to have in the House. From the South Bank Institute of TAFE, we have adult migrant education students with us this evening. Welcome to Parliament House.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

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

AYES, 48—Attwood, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Darling, Farmer, Finn, Fraser, Grace, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Johnstone, Jones, Kilburn, Lawlor, Lucas, Male, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Roberts, Robertson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Keech, Kiernan

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

Resolved in the affirmative.

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

AYES, 48—Attwood, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Darling, Farmer, Finn, Fraser, Grace, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Johnstone, Jones, Kilburn, Lawlor, Lucas, Male, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Roberts, Robertson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Keech, Kiernan

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

Resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Motion, as agreed—

That the House notes:

- the tragic death of a Queensland vet as a result of Hendra virus;
- that Hendra virus has claimed four lives from seven cases in Queensland since 1994;
- the work undertaken by government and industry to educate the community, horse owners and veterinarians about preventative measures to protect against the Hendra virus;
- the efforts by the Flying Fox Working Group to investigate non-lethal mitigation methods to reduce the impacts of flying foxes on primary industries, and
- that ongoing efforts are being made to better understand the Hendra virus in collaboration with experts interstate and internationally with a view to better understanding modes of transmission and the possible future development of a vaccine.

Sitting suspended from 6.43 pm to 7.45 pm.

JUVENILE JUSTICE AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Consideration in Detail

Resumed from p. 2066.

Clauses 20 to 22, as read, agreed to.

Clause 23—

Mrs MENKENS (7.46 pm): I move the following amendment—

6 Clause 23 (Amendment of s 166 (Court may take no further action if agreement is made))—

At page 21, after line 22—

insert—

"(2A) However, subsection (2) does not apply if the court has previously decided, 3 or more times, to take no further action in relation to an offence committed by the child.'.

This amendment seeks to limit to three the number of times that a court may take no further action against a young offender appearing before a court. Minister, I do appreciate that we have discussed this principle in relation to various other clauses, but I am actually now looking at the revolving door of those young offenders appearing before a court. The amendment seeks to amend a section of the act titled 'Court may take no further action if agreement is made' and inserts the following—

However, subsection (2) does not apply if the court has previously decided, 3 or more times, to take no further action in relation to an offence committed by the child.

It would be fair to say that different magistrates and courts may not be aware that a child had previously been given several cautions or had no further action taken in relation to a crime in other courts. By putting this provision in legislation, a process could then become available whereby the magistrate was made aware of this.

We did raise this matter with Department of Communities officers and, with respect, they assured us that young offenders who have been to court and have not been charged will have a history of the number of times that has occurred. Naturally, as we understand it, offenders can have a criminal history with charges behind them. As I said, the departmental officers assured us that the same thing happens—that there is a history whereby offenders have been to court and there has been no further action taken in their case. I have spoken with police prosecutors and they have assured me that in many cases if young offenders are let off with no charges against them it is not recorded. So it is possible for these young people to actually go to court and come back out again.

The purpose of this amendment is to set in place a procedure to let a magistrate know that these children have been through the court before and it would actually set a limit on that. It would set down a history that the magistrate would become aware of. I understand that this would certainly not apply to the majority of our young people—we have magnificent young people out there—but we are looking at that very small proportion of serial offenders, of young people who offend against society and are leaving the courts and laughing at the police.

The police are having a tough time. These young people are laughing at the police and laughing at the judicial system. They know that they can get away with it. They have been using the system. The recidivist offenders have committed multiple offences and they have been getting away with it for years. I have spoken to local police officers about this. Their comments have been that young offenders get a slap on the wrist and then they are back on the street the next day, thumbing their noses at the police and often the victims of crime. We need to provide some stricter penalties to actually give them the tools to handle these situations.

Ms STRUTHERS: Again, I understand what the member for Burdekin is trying to achieve here. However, our bill does further strengthen the powers of the police because they will have the power to arrest a person where they do not appear in court after noncompliance with the conference agreement. As I have said consistently throughout this debate, the tools are there and we are strengthening them with the amendments that we are bringing in with this bill. I am not sure that there is any merit in putting in a 'three strikes and you're out' type of arrangement in any of these provisions. Again, I will not be supporting it on behalf of our government.

I also want to explain that taking no further action does not mean that there are no repercussions for the young person. The young person must complete the conference agreement; if they do not, they will be arrested and that matter will be brought back before the court.

Mrs MENKENS: I do understand what the minister is saying, but we are still concerned. I do feel that there should be more checks and balances in the bill to strengthen it so that these young people know there are boundaries and limits. We all need boundaries in our lives in order to know what is acceptable and what is not. To that extent I am still concerned and wish to keep to the strength of this amendment.

Ms STRUTHERS: One of the things I would mention—and this might give the member some reassurance—is that, as I have said, I fully understand and work by the separation of powers. I am not in any way supporting anything that interferes with the powers of the court and the discretion of the court. However, for the member's information, my director-general does meet fairly regularly with the Chief Magistrate to discuss trends in youth crime and other matters. It is through those meetings that some of these issues are raised. There is a mechanism whereby officer to officer—chief officer of the court to chief officer of my department—they actually meet to discuss trends in sentencing, trends in crime and what needs to occur.

I hold the view that the courts have to get on with their job. We as legislators have to give them the tools to do so. As I have said before, this Labor government has put in place some of the toughest penalties in relation to youth crime and adult offending that this state has ever seen.

Mrs MENKENS: I do understand the minister's comments. However, I still believe that we as legislators have the ability to provide stronger tools to the police and to the courts to use. We do have a concern with our young people; we have to set standards. They have to be allowed standards. There is a percentage of youth out there who are crying out for assistance and discipline. The disciplinary processes must be put in place followed by the rehabilitation and, as I said earlier, the leg up. I understand the minister's concerns. However, I still believe that these laws need to be strengthened.

Division: Question put—That the member for Burdekin's amendment be agreed to.

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

NOES, 46—Bligh, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Darling, Dick, Farmer, Finn, Fraser, Grace, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Johnstone, Jones, Kilburn, Lawlor, Lucas, Male, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Scott, Shine, Smith, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Keech, Kiernan

Resolved in the negative.

Non-government amendment (Mrs Menkens) negatived.

Clause 23, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 24 to 35, as read, agreed to.

Clause 36—

Mrs MENKENS (8.02 pm): I move the following amendment—

7 Clause 36 (Amendment of s 234 (Court may allow publication of identifying information))—

At page 26, lines 16 to 29—

omit, insert—

'(1) Section 234(1)(a)—

omit, insert—

'(a) a court makes an order under section 176 relating to a child found guilty of a serious offence; and'.

'(2) Section 234(1)(c)—

omit, insert—

'(c) the court considers it would be in the interests of justice to allow publication of identifying information about the child.'.

'(3) Section 234(2), 'may order that'—

omit, insert—

'must order that the'.'.

This amendment refers to the court allowing publication of identifying information, and I commend the government and the minister for putting this specific amendment into this bill. However, my amendment seeks to slightly broaden and widen the government's proposal. This amendment applies to the publication of young offenders' details and seeks to extend the provisions that are currently in the act. The amendment sets out to extend publication of young offenders' details for all serious offences if the court deems it to be in the interests of justice or in the community interest. Serious offences are those that are defined in section 8 of the act, which states—

... ***serious offence*** means—

(a) a life offence; or

(b) an offence of a type that, if committed by an adult, would make the adult liable to imprisonment for 14 years or more.

These are serious offences we are talking about. It continues—

(2) An offence is not a serious offence if it is of a type that, if committed by an adult, may be dealt with summarily under—

(a) the Criminal Code ... or

(b) the Drugs Misuse Act ...

So a serious offence is just that—an offence of the type that, if committed, would make an adult liable to imprisonment for 14 years or more.

The government's bill says that the court may allow publication; we are saying that the court must allow publication if it is deemed in the community interest. I refer again to Chief Justice Paul de Jersey, who three years ago called for this. Chief Justice Paul de Jersey called for courts to have the power to name juveniles who persistently broke into houses, stole cars and sprayed graffiti. These are simply not serious offences. We are looking at a much higher level of offence, yet a senior judicial officer is calling for the naming of juvenile offenders for much less serious offences. Chief Justice de Jersey's comments appeared in an interesting article in the *Sunday Mail* which received many comments, and I want to quote some of those comments from the wider community to the House. Senior Constable Ian Levers is the Police Union representative and a Juvenile Aid Bureau officer. Senior Constable Ian Levers said—

Police are sick of seeing juveniles going through the revolving door of crime. We've had examples of juveniles with up to eight pages of criminal history, and they keep just getting reprimands. The community has a right to know who is committing these crimes. They see a juvenile break into a house and get a reprimand while others get a fine for doing 75 kilometres an hour in a 60 zone. Decent parents say to their kids, 'There are consequences for your actions,' but there ends up, in this case, being no consequences.

Sadly, what we are seeing in the youth justice system is that in many cases there are no consequences and these kids are just caught in that revolving door. There were also comments from Neville Coventry, the Chief Executive of the Homicide Victims Support Group, and he made some very serious comments. He said—

Naming young people is not simply about labelling young people as criminals and discarding them.

That is a very important comment. He continued—

Community members have a right to safety and security, and if there is a danger to that safety and security they have a right to know about it. If judges identify juvenile offenders, it could lead to a community response through programs to help them realise the consequences to themselves, the victims and the public.

There is an area of the community that can assist these young people. As Neville Coventry says, we have to start somewhere in developing a conscience. Safety for the community is the priority of the justice system. This amendment will also provide that when a court is satisfied that it is in the interests of justice to publish such details then it must do so. The government's bill suggests that the courts may publish identifying information if they believe it is in the interests of the community, but this amendment strengthens that proposal to say that the courts must publish the information. As demonstrated by Chief Justice Paul de Jersey's comments, he believes that courts should have the power to name juveniles who commit much less serious offences. These crimes are far less serious than the crimes outlined in section 8. To this extent, we believe the government is still only tinkering around the edges and the bill needs much more strengthening.

Ms STRUTHERS: I want to say a couple of things about this. The first thing I want to do is quote from a member who spoke during this debate, because I think his comment was a really important one and one I had not really taken enough account of. The member said—

In my opinion, naming and shaming is a high-risk strategy. Naming offenders has the potential to become a badge of honour among a youth culture. It could almost become a bragging right and a tag of honour. This is something we will not know until it is too late. Based on the evidence of YouTube, SMSing, video phones, Facebook and similar technology, naming will not be a deterrent. It will provide a very public, high-profile, in-your-face way to brag about exploits. For that reason, I caution all honourable members about the naming and shaming provisions.

Who was the member who said that? Was it a member from this side of the House? No, it was the member for Redlands. I think he made a really important point. Naming and shaming can backfire. Naming and shaming, with modern technology, can make these young people heroic. We have seen it with the exploits of—and this is in a different way but analogous to it—Corey. Who remembers Corey? Some of these people who play up end up on a global network. Do we want that? I commend the member for Redlands because, frankly, I had not given that issue enough thought. It could, in fact, backfire. What we have done with our amendments is to be very cautious. We have strengthened the naming provisions but we have been cautious. The member for Indooroopilly also urged us to be cautious and he supported the government's proposal. We have to be very careful in what we do here.

I also pick up on the comment that the member made about Chief Justice de Jersey. I would like to get him on the line here and ask him what he said, because do we want the truth or do we want to read the *Courier-Mail*? I would ask him what he said, because I am sure he would support our amendments which say 'may' and give discretion to the courts. I am not prepared to put my house on it, but I am sure Chief Justice de Jersey would not say 'must', because that takes away the discretion of the court, which is a very important principle of our justice system.

Mrs MENKENS: I certainly note the minister's comments.

Ms Struthers: They were comments from the member for Redlands.

Mrs MENKENS: I know. I have no doubt that it would be. In fact, I probably have the quote here. I have no doubt it would be a tag of honour among the peer group. But who is running this country? Is it the peer group or is it the justice system? I believe that a lot more strengthening can be done. I have no doubt that it is a tag of honour. However, it is up to the justice system to make these young people realise that there are boundaries and those boundaries will have to be adhered to. This is our community. These are our young people and we have to set standards and keep those standards for our young people.

Division: Question put—That the member for Burdekin's amendment be agreed to.

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

NOES, 46—Boyle, Choi, Croft, Darling, Dick, Farmer, Finn, Fraser, Grace, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Johnstone, Jones, Kilburn, Lawlor, Lucas, Male, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Stone, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Keech, Kiernan

Resolved in the negative.

Non-government amendment (Mrs Menkens) negatived.

Clause 36, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 37 to 40, as read, agreed to.

Clause 41—

Mrs MENKENS (8.19 pm): I move the following amendment—

8 Clause 41 (Insertion of new pt 11, div 6)—

At page 40, table after line 7—

omit, insert—

'Column 1	**Column 2**
Juvenile Justice Act 1992	*Young Offenders Act 1992*
chief executive (juvenile justice)	chief executive (young offenders)
juvenile justice principles	young offenders principles'.

This amendment is consequential to previous amendments that have not been passed. It is consequential to establish the use of the words 'young offenders' in all relevant provisions. However, I have no doubt that we do not have a great deal of chance of getting this amendment passed. So I will not speak in great detail to it. It is only consequential to the previous amendment.

Non-government amendment (Mrs Menkens) negatived.

Clause 41, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 42 and 43, as read, agreed to.

Clause 44—

Mrs MENKENS (8.20 pm): I move the following amendment—

9 Clause 44 (Amendment of s 17 (Escape from custody-penalty))—

At page 44, line 12, '*Youth Justice*'—

omit, insert—

'*Young Offenders*'.

This amendment is somewhat similar to the previous amendment. It replaces the term 'youth justice' with 'youth offenders'. I have given quite an explanation as to why we believe this amendment is important when speaking to a previous amendment. This is a consequential amendment that is again in line with amendments that I have moved to the short title of the act.

Non-government amendment (Mrs Menkens) negatived.

Clause 44, as read, agreed to.

Clause 45—

Mrs MENKENS (8.22 pm): I move the following amendment—

10 Clause 45 (Schedule amendments)—

(1) At page 45, line 5, from 'omitting' to "*Youth*"—

omit, insert—

'omitting '*Juvenile Justice*' and inserting '*Young Offenders*''.

(2) At page 45, lines 9 and 10, from 'omitting' to "youth"—

omit, insert—

'omitting 'juvenile justice' and inserting 'young offenders''.

(3) At page 45, lines 13 and 14, from 'omitting' to "Youth')'—

omit, insert—

'omitting 'juvenile justice' (or 'Juvenile Justice') and inserting 'young offender' (or 'Young Offender')'.

(4) At page 45, line 16, from 'omitting' to "*Youth*"—

omit, insert—

'omitting '*Juvenile Justice*' and inserting '*Young Offenders*''.

This clause provides for consequential amendments which follow the proposed amendments to the short title of the act which was to omit 'juvenile justice' and insert 'youth offenders'.

Non-government amendment (Mrs Menkens) negatived.

Clause 45, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Hon. KL STRUTHERS (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women) (8.22 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. KL STRUTHERS (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women) (8.22 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. KL STRUTHERS (Algester—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (8.24 pm), without notice: I move—

That government business order of the day No. 2 be postponed.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

VICTIMS OF CRIME ASSISTANCE BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 18 August (see p. 1628), on motion of Mr Dick—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (8.24 pm): In rising to support this bill before the parliament, I say at the outset that this is a positive step towards supporting victims of crime. It grants victims of crime access to support immediately after the crime and does not make them wait until the offender is found guilty. This bill seeks to provide actual financial support to victims to ensure their recovery from the crime committed against them. The bill finally implements a regime for victim impact statements that has been missing from previous legislation.

The bill is the result of a review of victim support services that was announced in November 2007. The bill is a shift away from court based compensation and to an administrative assistance approach. The assistance will be for acts of violence and will be able to be accessed by victims, families and witnesses. The assistance that can be sought includes counselling, loss of income up to $20,000, crime scene clean-up and other support including a special payment. Funeral costs will also be covered under the new bill.

The most important thing is that the victim or affected person can access the support immediately after the act of violence has been verified by the Office of Victim Assist Queensland. A lead role of victim service coordinator will be established. The assistance will be available to victims from magistrates through to the higher courts. The legislation is modelled on the Victorian scheme that has been in operation for 10 years. An interim assistance amount of up to $6,000 can be granted and a victim has up to six years to vary or apply for additional assistance after the reporting of the crime.

Schedule 2 defines the categories of offences and the maximum amounts that can be given by way of assistance. There is an appeals process through the bill by way of internal review and then through to QCAT if the person is not satisfied with the outcome. Where persons are covered by workers compensation they will still be able to apply to Victim Assist to cover things that are not covered by workers compensation. The sentencing option of ordering compensation will still be available to the courts under the Penalties and Sentences Act.

The bill will also establish a recovery process against an offender which is triggered by a conviction. This will allow an order to be made against an offender that they owe a set amount of money to the state. If the offender cannot pay then the matter can be referred to SPER for recovery. The scheme will receive increased funding rising to $28.8 million by 2011-12 which is an additional $7 million a year over and above current arrangements.

A category of special victims—that is, victims of a crime of a sexual nature or violence against a child—is not required to report to police. Instead they can make a report to their counsellor, psychologist or doctor due to their unique circumstances.

This bill is broken down into seven distinct chapters. I will not go through them in detail. However, assistance for related victims, such as the dependants of those killed as a result of criminal violence, will be more than doubled from a maximum of $39,000 to $100,000 per family. There will be a new compensation category for secondary victims, such as the parents of children who have suffered sexual abuse, with a maximum payment of up to $50,000. The existing maximum of $75,000 for primary victims who have personally experienced an act of violence will continue.

There are some interesting crime statistics that I would like to draw to the attention of the House this evening. In the 2009-10 budget papers it is reported that in 2008-09 there were 19,875 reported assaults; 5,697 reported sexual crimes; 1,803 reported robberies; 44,784 reported unlawful entries; 43,372 reported property offences; and 81,615 reported thefts. There was a total of 203,680 property security offences.

According to Victim Support Australasia Inc., victims of crime may become involved with the justice system. In addition to coping with the experience of becoming a victim, people carry significant responsibilities as victims and witnesses of crime in the administration of justice. The support group claims that without a victim's decision to report the incident to police, to cooperate with an investigation and to provide a statement, the crime could not possibly be properly addressed. A victim is also needed to cooperate with the prosecution—even though there can be a situation of a hostile witness, but nobody really wants to go to that—to attend court and to be a witness. The prosecution of a crime relies heavily on the victims and their statements to the court.

In 1985 the United Nations passed the Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power. Victim Support Australasia celebrated the 20th anniversary of the declaration at a gala dinner in Canberra in 2005. In essence the documents recommended the development of crisis intervention facilities, counselling services, direct assistance, advocacy on rights and entitlements, support within the criminal justice system, training services, public education, prevention activities and standards of good practice. The responsibility for managing the criminal justice system rests within the Australian states and territories. Since 1985 most jurisdictions have passed legislation similar to the UN declaration of basic principles. Other legislation has provided opportunities for victim participation by allowing victim impact statements and has recognised that some victims also need protection in different ways. In 2005 the federal government of Australia approved, through the Commonwealth law ministers, a Commonwealth statement of basic principles of justice for victims of crimes.

In the 2005 Australian Bureau of Statistics crime and safety survey, nearly half a million households had experience of a property crime. Approximately 5.3 per cent of Australians over 15 years had experience of one or more personal crimes. The crime and safety survey comprises citizens who self report their experience of victimisation. The ABS survey also showed that those most at risk of assault were young people and males. The offender is also most likely to be a male. Females are most likely to be assaulted by someone they know and to be assaulted in their own homes. The vast majority of assault victims seek help after an incident, most usually from a family member, 61 per cent, and/or a friend or neighbour, 57 per cent. The survey showed that 44,000 Australians experienced 72,000 incidents of sexual assault. The majority of victims of most types of offences who report to police are aged over 25 years. Males are more likely to report as victims in most categories of offence except kidnapping/abduction. Knives are the most common weapon used in the offences of murder, attempted murder and assault that are reported to the police. That is an interesting snapshot of some of the crime profiles that we see across Australia. Obviously members can draw their own conclusions as to the impact on victims of crime.

One thing that heartens me about the bill before the parliament—and I wish to talk about this in some detail—is the fact that it completely changes the way that victims of crime are dealt with. For a long time I have been concerned that Queensland's victim compensation scheme does not really support and help to rehabilitate the victim. I commend the Attorney-General for bringing this significant and overdue reform before the parliament, because it will completely change the way victims are dealt with in this state. No doubt there will need to be consequential amendments. From time to time after it has been enacted by this parliament we will need to review the legislation to ensure that its application is absolutely what we want it to be. I believe that victims will be better supported and the burden on society will be reduced as a consequence.

Until the changes that occurred in the past couple of decades, and principally in the past 10 years, it concerned me that victims were used basically as an exhibit in court. The crime was considered to be committed against the state, that is the Criminal Code, and by and large the victim was just an exhibit in the court. Therefore, victims were not always dealt with compassionately and appropriately, taking into consideration the fact that they are human beings who have feelings and, in many cases,

who have gone through very traumatic experiences and will be scarred for life. That trauma does not stop with the victim. The victim's direct family and others who are related to them feel their pain. They are also involved in the emotional turmoil that often accompanies such experiences.

A lot of people do not realise that a crime that impacts upon the victim physically, such as a bashing or a sexual assault, can have profound effects not only on them but also, by extension, on their family. It can lead to relationship breakdowns, a lack of confidence, a lack of understanding from the people around them and the victim can become an absolute recluse and no longer a worthwhile contributor to society. Only those people really know what it is like to wake up in the middle of the night in an absolute sweat because they have had flashbacks to the crime that was committed against them if they were the primary victim or, indeed, if they are the secondary victim such as a loved one of the primary victim.

By extension, it concerns me that the current compensation regime, well intentioned though it may be, simply tries to compensate the victim financially for the crime that had been committed against them. The problem with that is many people apply for an amount of money and the court then awards that money to them, and some simply spend it on a feel-good fling. They think, 'I have this amount of money, I feel really bad, I'm going on a holiday, I'll buy a car or a boat and I'll have a good night out.' In some cases there is not much money left at the end of the day. I am not saying that all victims do that, but in many cases the money is spent in such a way. Maybe there is something material to show for it or some good memories to mark the fact that they were awarded that amount of money. However, in many cases the physical and emotional trauma continues because they have had no remedial intervention, which is designed to fix the physical scars and deal with the emotional trauma.

The great thing about the legislation before the parliament tonight is that it will ensure that the majority of support available to victims will be in the form of assistance to make sure that they are able to recover as much as possible from the crime that has been committed against them. Counselling services will be available to them. If someone requires specialist counselling that the state is not able to offer, a portion of the money that is given to them through the victims' assistance office can be used to access private counselling. That is a good thing. Of course, as I indicated earlier, the legislation also allows for the granting of $20,000 for loss of income. People can lose income because they cannot work as a consequence of the crime that has been committed against them. There is also a maximum $10,000 special payment for other unforeseen circumstances. By and large, the legislation aims to fix that problem.

The good thing is that the money should be available almost immediately to the victim of the crime. From the moment that the crime is perpetrated and reported against them, they are able to make an administrative approach in order for that assistance to start flowing through to them on an interim basis—as I indicated, $6,000—and then they will have a period of six years to be able to apply to have that amount adjusted. The amount of money that is currently available through the victims program of up to $6,000 for funeral expenses will be available where somebody has lost their life principally through a homicide.

If a person is concerned that the amount of money which is available to them is insufficient, there is an internal review process. If they are still dissatisfied, then they will be able to go through the QCAT process to have that matter addressed. Hopefully, that appeal process is sufficient to ensure that people will be satisfied with regard to the payment which is made to them for the assistance they need to get their life back in order.

The other provision which I think is a sensible approach is in relation to the perpetrator of the crime. Rather than tying up court resources, once a person is convicted of a crime which has been perpetrated against a particular person, the same office through the department will be then able to start the process of recovering that amount of money from that perpetrator. As I indicated, that follows the conviction of that person. There will be a very narrow band of exceptions under which a convicted person can argue that they cannot pay. I would imagine that those exceptions will be, as I indicated, applied very narrowly. If that person does not pay that amount of money, then recovery action will be taken through SPER. I hope that the SPER process will be sufficiently resourced to ensure that it can deal with what will inevitably be an increased demand to recover outstanding amounts. There will be no doubt about that—SPER's workload will increase as the intervention of SPER will be required at some time in order to recover outstanding amounts.

I make the point that we need to pay tribute to the various victim organisations that operate throughout Queensland. Some of those have operated in the past and have now been disbanded, such as the likes of Victims of Crime. We still have the likes of the Homicide Victims' Support Group in Queensland and others. They do an absolutely wonderful job. They are sterling people. They are people of extraordinary devotion. They are people of extraordinary commitment. They are people of extraordinary compassion who work to support people at their lowest ebb in life. One can only imagine what happens when somebody rings up the Homicide Victims' Support Group to talk to somebody there—to talk to a person who is experienced in counselling and experienced in directing people to support services—about what has happened to them.

In my discussion with the Homicide Victims' Support Group I learned that they not only take calls from people who have been the victim of a homicide in their family but also take calls from people who have suffered the unfortunate circumstance of somebody in their family who has taken their own life. So often these extraordinary groups who do great work in our community and who are established to fill a particular need find that the demand that comes to them is over and above their charter. But of course they cannot turn those people away, and they do everything they possibly can to ensure that those people have their issues addressed or at least they are given a compassionate and sympathetic ear.

I do hear from time to time—and this relates to the Attorney's colleague the minister for police and potentially other colleagues who deal with people who have been assaulted—that there is a view that there is inconsistency in the understanding and the approach taken across certain levels of departments. There are some who are very compassionate and understanding, very au fait and very aware of what is available to victims of crime and point those people in that general direction very quickly because they have an interest; others do not know anything beyond doing their job. That is not to say they are derelict in their duty and that is not to say that they are not doing their day-to-day job professionally. It is often one of those things that is overlooked when it comes to dealing with victims of crime—that is, what is the next step with regard to referring them and making sure that they put information in that person's hand so that person is then able to competently go and access those services.

Having said that, the process is a million times better than what it would have been 40 or 50 years ago when the downstream needs of a victim of crime or their family were not even considered very much. In the society we live in today, they are considered more. Mind you, more needs to be done to educate those people who deal with victims on a day-to-day basis to make them aware of what services are available. I am not saying that people are dispassionate in their approach to victims of crime and their families, but there is this lack of coherent understanding of downstream referral to those services that can help them with their immediate need and help them get their life back on track. I would like to encourage that situation to be continually monitored and addressed. Those people who work across government and come in contact with victims on a day-to-day basis need to have an awareness of those needs.

In conclusion, this is a very good piece of legislation. I commend the Attorney for bringing it before the parliament. It is an absolute quantum shift in the way we deal with the needs of victims. It is about ensuring that hopefully more victims will be able to access better services that will actually address their needs and get their lives back in order. One would expect that additional amounts of money will have to be made available to this program from government over a period of time. There will have to be what are, in effect, special payments because moneys will not always be able to be recovered from an offender, just the same as we need to have a process of ex gratia payments.

Nevertheless, what we will see is more people having their issues dealt with and put back on track to ensure that they have a better life and that their families are able to have somebody who has been so violated rejoin the family as a worthwhile member—that is not to say they are not worthwhile but as somebody who feels that they can contribute and not feel as though they have been violated and damaged for life. It is a privilege to speak in support of this bill on behalf of the opposition.

Ms BATES (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (8.47 pm): I rise today in order to make a contribution to the Victims of Crime Assistance Bill 2009. The objectives of the bill are to declare fundamental principles of justice to underlie the treatment of victims by certain entities dealing with them; to provide a mechanism for implementing the principles and processes for making complaints about conduct inconsistent with the principles; and to provide a scheme to give financial assistance to certain victims of acts of violence.

Current compensation to victims of crime in Queensland has not been reviewed for more than 13 years. The current scheme is a compensation based lump sum payment and generally involves a protracted court battle which only serves to exacerbate the effect of the crime on the victim.

On 26 November 2007, the government announced the victims of crime review to examine how to make the scheme simpler and easier to access. The review's *Report to the Queensland government on the victims of crime review 2008* made 27 recommendations, including the timely provision of financial assistance to victims for services they require as a result of their injuries, rather than a compensation based scheme.

Under the new scheme, victims will no longer be required to apply for compensation through the court system. Instead they will apply for financial assistance to a new Victim Assistance Unit, VAU, within the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. The new scheme will focus on victim recovery by paying for, or reimbursing the costs of, goods and services that the victim requires to help them recover from the physical and psychological effects of an act of violence. The VAU will provide a central point to access support services, practical support during court proceedings and a victim's complaints resolution process, as well as government coordination of services, information, training and policy development for victims of crime in Queensland.

There will be three types of victims under the new scheme. Primary victims are entitled to a maximum amount of financial assistance to the value of $75,000. However, under the bill this assistance will pay for goods and services, such as medical and counselling expenses, and other assistance and special assistance up to $10,000 within the $75,000 maximum amount. Secondary victims are a new category of victims and now include parents who also suffer an injury as a result of an act of violence being committed against their child. These parents will now be entitled to seek financial assistance for goods and services, such as medical and counselling expenses and other assistance as set out in the bill. Assistance can be granted up to the value of $50,000 to be shared between the parents. Witnesses of serious acts of violence such as murder and manslaughter will be entitled to seek financial assistance for goods and services and other assistance as set out in the bill to the value of $50,000, and witnesses of other acts of violence will also be entitled to seek financial assistance for goods and services to the value of $10,000.

This new scheme allows persons known as related victims—being close family or dependants of a person who has died—to seek financial assistance. Related victims will share an amount of up to $100,000, with a maximum amount of assistance of $50,000 per related victim. This assistance will pay for goods and services such as medical and counselling expenses and other assistance specified in the bill within the maximum limits.

The new scheme also allows the payment of funeral expenses up to $6,000 incurred as a result of the death of a primary victim. A victim of crime may be either the person who is directly injured, a witness to that crime or in certain cases a person directly related to the primary care victim. Crimes can include physical assault, sexual assault, rape, domestic violence, domestic abuse, violent robbery, aggravated burglary, childhood sexual abuse, stalking, threats to kill, workplace assault, murder, culpable driving, dangerous driving and any other crime that is committed against a person.

An injury sustained as a result of being a crime victim may be a physical and/or a psychological injury. Victims of crime may suffer from a variety of psychopathologies following criminal trauma, including acute stress disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, adjustment disorder, generalised anxiety disorder, major depressive disorder and panic disorders.

I find it somewhat ironic that the legislation introduced by this government will now assist victims of crime and compensate them for the pain or injury, given that this same government has continually voted down some tough-on-crime measures introduced as private members' bills by the Liberal National Party. The same government has voted down the following bills: the Criminal Code (Protecting School Students and Members of Staff From Assaults) Amendment Bill 2007, the Criminal Code (Assaults Against Police and Others) Amendment Bill 2007 and the Criminal Code (Assault Causing Death) Amendment Bill 2007.

Whilst I commend the Attorney-General for this new bill, if this government were truly serious about crime in Queensland it would also ensure that we had more police with increased powers so that criminals have a very clear understanding that, in the event of a serious criminal offence which either maims or kills a fellow Queenslander, they will indeed be punished. Only recently I lodged a petition with over 2,500 signatures for more police in the electorate of Mudgeeraba. I have continually lobbied on the need for more police in this area, whilst the government and the police minister have continued to mislead the public by claiming that the police stations in Mudgeeraba and Nerang operate 24 hours a day when in actual fact their counter service only operates from 8 am to 4 pm. Law and order is a huge issue in the Mudgeeraba electorate, which is evidenced by the number of signatures that were collected. I have been a vocal campaigner for four years on this issue.

The LNP takes a tough-on-crime attitude. Labor has been soft on crime, soft on hooning and soft on graffiti and has failed to stand up for the residents and police to provide a safer community for Mudgeeraba. The residents of Mudgeeraba and surrounding areas are sick and tired of being treated like second-class citizens and have had enough of the thin blue line being stretched even further. This bill streamlines the difficult process of access to compensation for families, but I am sure if the government actually asked the families what they would prefer the answer would have been to prevent the crime in the first place. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (8.54 pm): I rise to support the Victims of Crime Assistance Bill which is before the House tonight. It is the culmination of an enormous amount of work carried out by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and I would like to mention a few of the officers in the department who I know have done a tremendous amount of work over a couple of years. I congratulate Natalie Parker, Liza Windle, Nicola Doumany, Farina Khan, Gail Hartridge, Susan Kerr, Anna Rickard, Tricia Matthias and Kerry Bichel in particular, as well as the others who have worked on this project from its inception until it has been brought to its conclusion tonight.

I also acknowledge the cooperation received from the various stakeholders—from victims of crime representatives to the legal profession. All of them will have a lot of consequences as a result of this new scheme being introduced, but they all cooperated in a spirit of true reform and were extremely supportive of the process. They are to be congratulated.

The scheme for the assessment of criminal injury compensation in Queensland has not been reviewed in any substantial way since the Criminal Offence Victims Act, or COVA, commenced operation in 1995. As has been mentioned, it was announced in November 2007 that a comprehensive overhaul of the law relating to compensation for victims of crime in Queensland would take place. While COVA was a groundbreaking initiative when it was introduced, over the years of its operation a number of shortcomings were identified. It was recognised that we as a government could do more for victims of crime.

Honourable members would be aware that an extensive review on the victims of crime was held and a report on that review was published in November 2008. I refer to page 14 of that report which summarises the results of the community consultation. At the time, members of the community raised five key themes in the public submissions. First, the current eligibility criteria for compensation were too narrow. In other words, it only dealt with offences that were proceeded with by way of indictment and not dealt with summarily. Likewise, if an offender was dealt with as a juvenile, the victim missed out, or if the prosecution did not proceed, the victim missed out.

Second, the administration of the scheme should be simpler and more transparent. The eligibility criteria were far too complex and the two-stage process for matters successfully prosecuted was confusing and lengthy. It involved, firstly, obtaining a court order for compensation against an offender and, secondly, establishing that the offender does not have assets and applying to the state for an ex-gratia payment. Thirdly, assistance to victims needed to be timely. It generally took a number of years before payments ended up being made. Fourthly, the legal and medical costs were disproportionate to the amount received in many instances. Finally, there was poor coordination and promotion of existing services available to victims. For all of those reasons identified during the review process, it was determined that we should proceed.

The previous legislation was a compensation based scheme which awarded a lump sum payment to victims after the court proceedings had been determined. It was limited in its scope to offences dealt with on indictment, as I said, in the District and Supreme courts so that a large number of victims were not eligible to use the scheme. The review that I referred to recommended a completely new scheme based on the timely provision of financial assistance to victims of crime to access services they needed as a result of their injuries. The philosophy of the scheme varies markedly from previous compensation schemes by helping victims to access the services they need immediately when they need them the most and when they will benefit the most.

Under the new scheme, victims will no longer be required to wait for a conviction to be recorded in the court system and will instead be eligible to immediately apply for financial assistance to a new Victims Assistance Unit, or VAU, to be located within the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. Under the scheme proposed by this bill, victims will be able to access payments for the cost of goods and services required to help them recover from the physical and psychological effects of an act of violence. This scheme will enable victims to access services when and as they need them and puts the victim on the path to recovery at the earliest possible stage rather than having to wait for the conviction of the offender, as is the case under the current system. The VAU will also provide a central point to access support services, practical support during court proceedings, the victims complaint resolution process as well as government coordination of services, information, training and policy development for victims of crime in Queensland.

Under the new scheme there will be three types of victims: primary, secondary and related victims. Primary victims are entitled to a maximum amount of financial assistance to the value of $75,000. This is the same maximum amount as the current scheme. However, under the bill this assistance will pay for goods and services and other assistance and a special assistance payment of up to $10,000 within the $75,000 maximum amount.

'Secondary victims' is a new category of victim which includes parents who suffer an injury as a result of an act of violence being committed against their child. These parents will be entitled to seek financial assistance for goods and services such as medical or counselling expenses and other assistance as set out in the bill. Assistance can be granted up to the value of $50,000 to be shared between the parents. It would include witnesses of serious acts of violence such as murder and manslaughter. They will be entitled to seek financial assistance for goods and services and other assistance set out in the bill to the value of $50,000. Finally, witnesses of other acts of violence will be entitled to seek financial assistance for goods and services to the value of $10,000.

Currently under the Criminal Offence Victims Act there is a limited capacity for dependants of a person who has died to receive compensation, with an available pool of $39,000 and for other family members—related victims—a further pool of $9,000. Under this bill, related victims will be entitled to a pool of $100,000 with a maximum of $50,000 per victim. They are greatly improved amounts. There is also capacity for victims to apply for an interim payment pending final determination of their claim. Up to $6,000 is to be allowed by this method.

As I have said before, the fundamental philosophy of the scheme differs from that of previous schemes. There is no intention for payments to reflect the amount of compensation that a victim would receive at common law. Rather, the payments are made to restore the victim to the position they were in

before they were the victim of the crime. This is done by providing whatever goods and services are needed to achieve this within the parameters of the available funds. The government has committed increased funding to ensure the viability of the scheme. I am pleased to see that funding is to rise to $28.8 million by 2011-12, which is an additional $7 million per year over and above the allocation for the current scheme.

One of the more interesting provisions of this bill is contained in clause 80, which provides that a primary victim is not eligible for assistance if the main or only reason is an act of violence being committed against the person because of their involvement in a criminal activity. The reason for this provision is quite clear: it is not appropriate for the taxpayers of Queensland to be required to provide assistance to victims whose conduct has brought about the act of violence which caused their injury. A victim is entitled to make submissions to the government assessor who is exercising their discretion under this section. So they are protected from arbitrary and unreasonable decisions.

Another limitation on eligibility under the scheme is where a victim fails to report an act of violence or where they fail to provide reasonable assistance. Exceptions exist where they have a reasonable excuse for doing so. The bill provides that the government assessor can take into account a number of factors when considering whether they have provided a reasonable excuse including the person's age, an impaired capacity, if they are a victim of a sexual offence, whether the alleged offender was in a position of power, influence or trust, any threats or intimidation, the victim's injuries, any other special circumstances that prevented the person from providing assistance or any other matter that the government assessor considers relevant. In addition, special victims of sexual offences or acts of violence against children et cetera are not required to report to a police officer. Instead, they can make a report to their counsellor, psychologist or doctor due to the unique circumstances of these victims.

This bill also provides for victims of crime to provide to the prosecutor for the purposes of sentencing details of the harm they have suffered. This information can be provided by way of a victim impact statement. There is no requirement for such a statement to be provided and no adverse inference can be drawn with respect to the extent of harm if no statement is provided. The victim may provide the statement themselves or somebody may provide it on their behalf if they are unable to do so because of age or impaired capacity.

The bill marks a leap forward in the provision of compensation for victims of crime in Queensland. It opens up the scheme to a much wider pool of claimants and eliminates the artificial distinction between victims based on which court the matter is determined in. It takes away the need for a conviction before a victim can claim and provides assistance when and as it is needed to assist the victim to recover from their injury in a timely fashion.

I congratulate all who have worked on this legislation and the Attorney on bringing it into the parliament tonight. I look forward to victims of crime being able to access a fairer and more accessible system of assistance for their injuries. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr WATT (Everton—ALP) (9.06 pm): I am also pleased to support the Victims of Crime Assistance Bill. I will not go into the detail of the bill because I think that has been very comprehensively dealt with by the member for Toowoomba North. However, I would like to add my support to the comments that he made in his speech.

This bill represents a significant overhaul of legislation concerning the rights of victims of crime. It is another example of the Bligh government delivering on its Toward Q2 vision. Members will be aware that that Toward Q2 vision contains five key ambitions for Queensland, one of which is to create a fair Queensland—one that supports safe and caring communities. This is another example of the government delivering on its commitment to support safe and caring communities.

The opposition likes to characterise those on the Labor side of politics as being soft on crime and not caring about victims of crime. We heard that consistently in the previous debate on the juvenile justice legislation and, sadly, we have heard it again tonight, particularly from the member for Mudgeeraba. I am sure we will continue to hear the tired, out-of-date, inaccurate—

A government member: Boring.

Mr WATT:—boring, tedious, repetitive cliches—if that is not tautology—that we have come to expect from the opposition. They carp on about being soft on crime, the revolving door, a slap on the wrist—the kinds of cliches that we are used to hearing on talkback radio and that seem to provide the policy positions of the opposition of Queensland.

The opposition likes to characterise those on the Labor side of politics as representing these kinds of awful positions. This bill puts the lie to that claim. It demonstrates that the Bligh Labor government understands the pain suffered by victims of crime and, more importantly, it shows that this government is prepared to take decisive action to assist them recover from the effects of the crime. We are not interested in getting up and throwing simplistic slogans at the other side of politics; we are interested in working out what works best for all members of the community, most particularly in this case victims of crime, to assist them to recover from the traumatic events they have experienced.

This is a very human bill. It goes to the heart of the responsibility of government to care for those in distress in our community, in this case as a result of their experience of crime. We all know of people who have suffered horrific crimes—the direct victims, of course, but also their families who suffer grief, anguish and sometimes also financial loss. When I think of these victims I think of people like the parents of Matthew Stanley, a young man killed at a teenage party. I think of the women raped on the Kedron Brook bikeway, which runs through the electorate I represent. Of course I was pleased, as I am sure all members were, that the perpetrator of those crimes has been convicted and will now serve a lengthy prison sentence. But there are also less high-profile victims of crime, and they are also deserving of help to overcome the effects of the crime that they have experienced.

This bill replaces the existing criminal compensation scheme, which has been widely criticised as being slow, complex and costly for victims. It is obviously not fair to expose victims of crime to such a system when they are recovering from the effects of a crime. The new system which is proposed in this bill focuses on victim recovery by paying for or reimbursing the costs a victim incurs in recovering from the physical and psychological effects of a violent crime. It will result in earlier intervention in a victim's recovery rather than forcing them to wait a length of time for a lump sum of compensation based on the injury that they have suffered. It will also provide improved access to counselling and medical treatment, which can be some of the most significant types of support needed by victims of crime to assist in their recovery.

I am pleased that the bill provides a simpler process for victims to follow. Rather than applying to a court for financial assistance, this model uses an administrative process in which victims apply through a new unit in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General which will be directed to the needs of victims of crime. This is a quicker, simpler and cheaper process for victims of crime at a time when they may be recovering from the impact of the crime perpetrated upon them. The department will also coordinate the services a victim needs rather than leaving it to the victim to negotiate the various services available to them.

I also support the different amounts of compensation available to victims depending on the impact that the crime has on the victim. It makes sense to recognise the primary victims. It is quite appropriate that those who have actually had a crime visited upon them should receive the largest amount of compensation, but the bill also adequately and, I think, quite generously and rightly recognises the other effects that are felt by other victims of crime such as the family members of the direct victim. The new scheme set out in this bill is supported by victims groups, and I want to thank them for their involvement in the review that led to this legislation.

This bill, as I have mentioned, has a real focus on the recovery of victims. It demonstrates Labor's commitment to get vulnerable people back on their feet. We are not a party which is obsessed with simplistic slogans like 'soft on crime'. We are a party that takes a considered approach to the justice system and that really wants to make it work. We are the party that seeks to punish offenders in an appropriate manner, that supports victims of crime to recover from the trauma they experience and that protects the whole community—something that can be seen in the falling rates of crime across most offences. I am sure we will continue to hear in this debate and in many others into the future claims from the opposition that crime rates in Queensland are spiralling out of control when the facts say otherwise.

We will continue to hear that this government is soft on crime when the facts show otherwise. In fact, we will continue to hear, as I say, the tired clichés that we have come to expect from an opposition which is completely bereft of policy and has only one solution—that is, to resort to those simplistic slogans that we hear over and over again. This is a good bill that treats victims of crimes fairly and that takes a mature and considered response to their needs. For those reasons, I am very happy to commend this bill to the House.

Ms GRACE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (9.12 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Victims of Crime Assistance Bill 2009 and add my support to this important bill which will bring about significant reforms for Queenslanders who are victims of crime. Under the new scheme, victims will no longer be required to apply for compensation through the court system. As the current provisions of the criminal injury compensation to victims of crime in Queensland has not been reviewed since the introduction of the Criminal Offence Victims Act 1995—13 years ago—it is appropriate now that we review this scheme which is outdated and which has been criticised for its complexity, for the cost to victims and for the delay for victims in receiving their compensation. There has been a widespread call for reform from victims support groups and justice stakeholders. So it is good news and I am very happy to be standing here tonight talking about a new scheme which is all about assisting victims of crime.

I also very much welcome a scheme which is a new scheme to be based on a financial assistance model rather than a compensation model, and I think that that model works best for people who are victims of crime. As we all know, no-one goes out seeking to be a victim of crime. But, unfortunately, when crime is committed, victims suffer very greatly after an offence is perpetrated against them. They will now be able to apply for financial assistance to a new Victim Assistance Unit, the VAU, within the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. I come from a background where a lay

tribunal has best met the needs of workers who find themselves in difficult circumstances. It was often very daunting for them even to go in front of a lay tribunal, let alone in the past victims of crime having to go through the court system. I very much welcome the transition from applications being made to the court to a unit within the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

I also very much welcome the widening of the number of victims who will now be eligible to apply for assistance. They have been categorised into three main groups and we have extended the eligibility for victims of crime compensation under the new scheme. There are primary, secondary and related victims. Obviously primary victims do not lose out under this new scheme. They are still able to get the same financial assistance that they currently get but obviously there is a combination of a broader range of services that will hopefully be part of early intervention that will really help them at a time when they deserve that assistance. It is a remarkable step forward. It goes to show that it is about assisting those primary victims of crime, particularly victims of offences which are unfortunately the type of offence that no-one wants to have perpetrated against them.

With regard to secondary victims, we have opened up the system to parents, witnesses and others who often witness acts of violence. They are now eligible for compensation under this scheme. Then of course there are related victims who are family members who obviously share in a smaller pool of money than, say, primary victims of crime. This is a fantastic step in the right direction. It broadens the ability of a wide variety of victims of crime to come forward to not only claim compensation but also get assistance in a bundle of services that will be available through the Victim Assistance Unit.

The new scheme will focus on victim recovery by paying for or reimbursing the costs of all of these goods and services I have referred to that the victim requires to help them recover from the physical and psychological effects of an act of violence. It aims to provide a tailored, needs based response and allows for early intervention in the victim's recovery rather than waiting, as currently happens, for the conviction of the offender. There are tangible and intangible benefits to the victim, government and society of early intervention under the new scheme. The VAU will provide a central point to access support services, practical support during court proceedings and a victims complaints resolution process, as well as government coordination of services, information, training and policy development for victims of crime in Queensland.

The new unit will have five key areas of responsibility. It will coordinate financial assistance and service coordination. It will link victims up with referral services, including a website. It will train government and non-government service providers on the needs of victims of crime and compliance with the principle of justice to ensure fair treatment of victims and offer practical court support services—all very much welcomed by the victims of crime and all very much a step in the right direction to ensure that victims of crime do not necessarily suffer. The VAU will provide a point of contact. Because it will be a lay departmental type of service, the intimidation that often goes with people having to confront courts and judges and those types of things will make it a lot easier for victims to come forward and claim entitlements that are rightly theirs.

Despite the challenging economic environment in which we find ourselves, I also welcome the additional funding to operate the new scheme. The new scheme will receive an increase to $28.8 million by 2011-2012. This is an additional $7 million per year over and above the current criminal compensation scheme. I think that is money well spent. I think it demonstrates this Labor government's commitment to people who are affected by crime. Under the bill, financial assistance is additional to other services provided by or for government to victims of acts of violence. For example, public health services or government funded community services will continue to be made available to victims of crime.

I have had a number of constituents who have been victims of crime come to see me seeking my support for this bill. I was very glad to be able to inform them that not only will I be supporting the bill but also I will be rising tonight and speaking in support of the bill and making their views known that they support a change from the current system which, as I said, is 13 years old—a little bit outdated and complex—to a more lay, departmentally based system that will give people greater access to a whole package of goods and services. I am grateful to those people who came to see me. I am grateful for the ongoing support and the input from key stakeholders and community groups in the development of the new scheme. I believe that their input, their wise words and their experience played a big role in the department formulating the outcome of this new scheme.

I know that the department is committed to building relationships with the community and continuing to work collaboratively with stakeholders to ensure that quality services to victims of crime in Queensland continue well into the future. We hope that we will meet the needs of these victims of crime. I commend the minister and the department for their work with the report that they received and in adopting the recommendations. I am very glad to commend the bill to the House.

Mr KILBURN (Chatsworth—ALP) (9.21 pm): I rise also to speak in support of the Victims of Crime Assistance Bill 2009. In doing so, I would like to acknowledge the positive statements that we have heard from members of the opposition so far in their contributions to the debate on this bill, except

for the contribution of the member for Mudgeeraba, who I do not think was speaking about this bill at all. This bill is the most significant reform in the protection of and assistance provided to victims of crime since 1995. In November 2007, the government established an interdepartmental working group and a stakeholder reference group to review the operation of the victims of crime process. The review gathered information from public submissions, comparative research on victim of crime schemes in operation in Australia and internationally, and conducted consultation with Victoria and New South Wales in relation to their victim of crime schemes. Overwhelmingly, the results of this consultation show that the government's response to victims of crime should focus on the recovery of the victim—as we would all agree, I am sure.

The key findings of the review were that the scheme should provide financial assistance to a wider range of victims through interim final payments for specific needs related to their recovery from the effects of crime, that the scheme should be simpler and easier to access and reduce victims's costs and contact with the courts and offenders, and that the service available to victims should be more coordinated to provide a continuum of care that will assist the victims to recover and get on with their lives sooner. I believe that the Victims of Crime Assistance Bill 2009 that we are debating achieves these outcomes and is in line with the recommendations of the interdepartmental working group.

The most significant change that this bill introduces is a change from the lump sum compensation model to a financial assistance model. The financial assistance scheme focuses on victim recovery by paying for or reimbursing the costs of goods and services that the victim requires to recover from the physical and psychological effects of the crime. Financial assistance schemes provide a more tailored needs based response and provided for earlier intervention in the victim's recovery than the compensation schemes. This change allows the victim to get on with their lives more quickly. The simplicity and speed of the scheme and coordination with victim support services will deliver greater satisfaction to victims and address the shortcomings of the current system. It is anticipated that most victims will have a greater chance of recovery from the effects of crime through early payment for goods and services, reimbursements for loss of earnings up to $20,000 and a lump sum payment of special financial assistance as a symbolic gesture from the state for the primary victims of serious offences.

To achieve the outcomes of this bill, instead of applying to a court, application will be made through an administrative process. This will remove the requirement that victims of crime would have to appear in court again to apply for compensation and may have to front the perpetrators of the crime against them. This change will make the process easier, fairer and significantly speed up access to payments. This process will now be administered by a new Victim Assistance Unit, which will be created in the Attorney-General's department. The unit will employ staff in five key areas, including financial assistance; service coordination; a victims link-up and referral service, which will include a website to provide up-to-date information for victims; training for government and non-government service providers on the needs of victims of crime and compliance with the principles of justice to ensure the fair treatment of victims; and practical court support. As such, this unit will be a one-stop shop to assist the victims of crime. This is a commendable outcome and I applaud the minister and all the staff involved in the drafting of this bill for the significant improvement that it will provide to victims of crime.

I stated earlier that this bill will expand the scope of victims who will be eligible for assistance. Assistance will now be available to the primary victims, the secondary victims—both parent and witness—and related victims. In particular, I would like to talk about the assistance that will be provided to primary victims. The primary victims will be able to access up to $75,000 worth of assistance to cover such things as reasonable counselling expenses incurred or reasonably likely to be incurred; reasonable medical expenses incurred or likely to be incurred; incidental travel expenses; reasonable report expenses; loss of earnings of up to $20,000; and expenses incurred by the victim for loss of or damage to clothing; and, if exceptional circumstances exist for the victim, other expenses incurred or reasonably likely to be incurred. In addition, there is also $500 available to assist the victims with the legal costs involved in making the application for the assistance.

This is a good bill. It will provide many benefits to victims of crime. As with most of the bills that are introduced into this House by the government, this bill mixes good sense with compassion. This bill demonstrates the government's commitment to responding properly to the needs of vulnerable people in our justice system. As such, I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Kilburn, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (9.27 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Indooroopilly Railway Station

Mr EMERSON (Indooroopilly—LNP) (9.27 pm): I have spoken previously about the Bligh government's $26.5 million upgrade of the Indooroopilly Railway Station being a monument to poor planning. The failure to provide park 'n' ride facilities at the station is a slap in the face to commuters who cannot walk to the station and ignores the reality that nearby streets are parked out by those using the station. The state government has now revealed that it has a policy of not providing any additional park 'n' ride facilities within 10 kilometres of the CBD. The failure to integrate a bus interchange as part of the upgrade also points to poor planning, because it means that thousands of people daily are forced to trek up and down Station Road between Indooroopilly Shoppingtown to the railway station. That poses a further obstacle to encouraging more people to use public transport and help ease congestion on Brisbane roads.

Today, I wish to raise serious concerns about the safety of passengers at the Indooroopilly Railway Station. Despite the multimillion-dollar upgrade, a gap of about 30 centimetres exists between the platform and trains. I table a photo of this gap.

Tabled paper: Photograph of people boarding Indooroopilly train indicating gap between train and platform [822].

My office has received numerous reports about people being injured attempting to negotiate this gap. In one extremely serious case a small boy slipped and almost fell through the gap and onto the tracks. If it was not for the quick actions of his mother in snatching the boy back there could have been tragic circumstances. In another case, 85-year-old Mrs Hilda Brooks, because of this gap, hurt herself trying to board the train and was left bleeding from the legs and suffered other injuries. Mrs Brooks says that she can never use this station while the platform is in its present form.

Clearly the situation is unacceptable, especially when this is the busiest station outside the Brisbane CBD with an average of 1,700 passengers passing through the station every peak hour including hundreds of children attending the nearby Holy Family, Brigidine, St Peter's and Indooroopilly high schools and colleges.

But I have doubts that the Bligh government will recognise this as a problem because last year the then Labor member for Indooroopilly and Bligh government parliamentary secretary told this House he was delighted with the results of the upgrade and in January this year the Deputy Premier, the then minister for infrastructure and planning, Paul Lucas, said that the upgrade set the standard for future infrastructure projects. If this station sets the standard for future infrastructure projects, can there be any doubt why Queenslanders have so little faith in the Bligh government? For the sake of the safety of passengers using Indooroopilly Railway Station, I call on the transport minister to urgently fix this problem.

Varsity Lakes Community Garden Project

Mrs SMITH (Burleigh—ALP) (9.30 pm): I recently celebrated, with the Varsity Lakes community, the opening of a new community garden. The Varsity Lakes Community Garden Project was initiated by a group of local residents spearheaded by Tony King. Tony's vision of a community garden in Varsity Lakes was inspiring and far-reaching. Unfortunately, he died before he could see his vision achieved but we have to be thankful for his foresight and thank his wife June, who has followed his dream through and is a foundation member of the Varsity Vegies Group.

Community Renewal has been operating in Varsity Lakes since 2004 and Tony suggested they might be able to help set up a community garden. This initial contact was made in 2006. A community consultation process indicated that residents felt the garden should be placed in the Jim Harris Park behind the Varsity Lakes Community Resource Centre. With the support of Community Renewal, local residents established a steering group which became Varsity Vegies in 2008. The members have dedicated a great deal of time and effort to ensure the garden came to fruition.

Varsity Vegies, an organic community garden, will give locals an opportunity to grow their own produce, learn gardening skills and meet with other community members. The garden features six raised garden beds for accessibility, 40 garden plots, a community garden bed, water-saving features, worm farms, a fully equipped shed and meeting space and even native beehives. This project was funded by the Queensland government's Community Renewal program in partnership with the Gold Coast City Council and the Varsity Lakes Community Resource Centre. Under the government's Skilling Queenslanders for Work program, nine participants received on-the-job training under the supervision of qualified tradespeople.

I congratulate Sheila Perkins, whose commitment to this project was unwavering. She could be found in the garden at any time of the day organising workers, advising on plant selection, chatting to visitors, watering or just casting an eye over the whole project. I also acknowledge the contribution of Madonna Chesham and Hilary Gallagher from Community Renewal. They never gave up on the project, despite many hurdles they had to overcome!

This garden will be regarded as the Tony King Memorial Garden by all those who knew him. The Gold Coast City Council has recently declared there will be no plaques in public places in memory of deceased people and has, in fact, recently removed plaques from the beachfront at Snapper Rocks. Despite this, I intend to organise a plaque in Tony's name to be displayed in the garden to remember a man whose love of the community and desire to be involved was an inspiration to us all. I know my community would approve of this.

Townsville, Boating Facilities Upgrade

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (9.33 pm): I was pleased today to table a petition signed by 4,145 North Queenslanders calling on the state government to upgrade boating infrastructure in the Townsville region. I was very pleased to be approached by Sunfish North Queensland to sponsor the petition and present it to the parliament. The petition has also been supported by Rosemary Menkens, the member for Burdekin. The petition seeks to draw the attention of the House to the long-term underinvestment in boating infrastructure in the Townsville region.

The petitioners believe that there are no boat ramps in the Townsville region that are of a comparable standard to those in South-East Queensland and believe that, using Queensland Transport's own guidelines, the Townsville region needs an additional 17 boat ramp lanes and 425 additional parking spaces for vehicles and boat trailers. Today I join with the petitioners to say that it is time that the state government recognised that strong population growth in the Townsville region has put enormous pressure on existing boating facilities and investment to upgrade these facilities is urgently needed.

The petitioners maintain that the Townsville recreational boating community believed their needs were going to be accommodated by way of a new boating precinct, as per the 'Port of Townsville, Townsville-Ross River Recreational Boat Ramp Proposal, August 2000', but are extremely disappointed that the plan ultimately put forward does not include the much needed facility for recreational boating. The petition calls for an upgrade of boating facilities in the Townsville region and, in particular, the development of a new boating facility on the south-eastern side of the mouth of the Ross River.

The petitioners believe that the upgraded boat ramp should have at least 12 lanes, pontoons, wash-down bays, an amenities block and at least 500 parking spaces for vehicles and boat trailers. Sunfish North Queensland executive officer, Brian Pickup, has called on the state government to address the lack of boating infrastructure given that there are now more than 11,500 registered boats in the Townsville region. There have been a number of instances of inadequate infrastructure boiling over into ramp rage in Townsville in recent times. Mr Pickup believes that Townsville needs a designated recreational marine precinct to enhance tourism and deliver the lifestyle expectations of people living in the region. Sunfish North Queensland believes there is a real opportunity to build this new facility in conjunction with the construction of the Port Access Road and the Port of Townsville's new commercial marine precinct, which are currently being developed.

Given that this petition has been signed by more than one-third of boat owners in the Townsville region, I call on the three local Labor members of parliament, the members for Townsville, Mundingburra and Thuringowa, to join with the member for Burdekin in support of local boaties to secure better boating facilities. As the member for Hinchinbrook, I am hoping that an upgraded facility at the mouth of the Ross River will reduce pressure on other boat ramps in the region, such as those in my electorate on Townsville's northern beaches, including at Bushland Beach, Saunders Beach, Toomulla Beach and Balgal Beach.

Beenleigh Theatre Group; Beenleigh Senior Citizens Centre

Mr MOORHEAD (Waterford—ALP) (9.36 pm): Tonight I wanted to share with the House how two local organisations have been contributing to the Beenleigh community for more than 30 years.

On 10 August this year I attended the annual general meeting of the Beenleigh Theatre Group. As a patron of the Beenleigh Theatre Group, along with the member for Albert, it was very pleasing to see that BTG is continuing its proud history of cultural excellence in Beenleigh.

Mr Stevens: The Albert shire gave them the money.

Mr MOORHEAD: I will come to the Albert shire later. The strength of the BTG can be seen not only with the healthy situation of more volunteers than positions but the announcement of an exciting schedule of five performances for 2010. The annual general meeting saw president of recent years, Rob Gailer, stand down and Lorraine Pimm-Verrall return to the position of president. On behalf of the Beenleigh community I would like to thank Rob for his great efforts in recent years and assure Lorraine of the support of our town for her role in bringing great productions to Beenleigh.

Again Stella Redhead, ably supported by Derek Redhead, will coordinate the Beenleigh Drama Festival in 2010. The 2009 Drama Festival was a great display of local performers and congratulations must go to the Caboolture based Excalibur Productions on their success. The Drama Festival is well run and is supported by our local community with sponsorship from our local Rotary, Lions and Soroptomists as well as our local business community. I congratulate BTG on their 31 years of success, success that I am sure will continue.

On another matter, I was delighted to join more than 400 local seniors to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Beenleigh Senior Citizens Centre. The Beenleigh Senior Citizens Centre is the biggest and best senior citizens centre in the state with more than 2,000 members. The celebrations included performances by the many talented staff of the centre. There was a guest performance by Elvis, who looked particularly like Davo from the centre's transport services, but I am sure that was just a coincidence. Although I had to leave to come to parliament, I understand the day was topped off with an impromptu performance by our singing federal member, Brett Raguse.

Although the Beenleigh Senior Citizens Club was formed in 1963, it was not until 1984 that the centre delivered its long-held goal of a dedicated building. On 2 September 1984, Governor Sir James Ramsey, Ivan Gibbs, Russ Hinze and David Beddall opened the centre in its current Alamein Street location. The centre has had such a proud history over the last 25 years. Throughout those 25 years Linda Rowan has run a tight ship, providing a wide array of services and a welcoming social environment for Beenleigh seniors.

During those 25 years the centre has had only four presidents, the latest being Stewart Kinross who has held the role since 1998. This long service is a recognition of the community support for our local senior citizens centre. In a town proud of its history, it was also great to see senior citizens centre members presented with a commemorative book commemorating 25 years of success of the Beenleigh Senior Citizens Centre. It was a great job by Karen Clayton who put it all together. Congratulations, Beenleigh senior citizens.

Gold Coast United

Mr STEVENS (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (9.39 pm): I rise to join in the celebration of Mr Clive Palmer's newly created Gold Coast United soccer team, which has taken the Gold Coast into the realm of one of the greatest games on the world stage. The Gold Coast United's inaugural historic home game, at which I was present, was played at Skilled Park Stadium on Saturday, 15 August 2009. It was exciting and exhilarating. It was the culmination of a lot of hard work behind the scenes by many people. Strategies and ideas and lots of long hours have made the concept come to fruition, and the team is well and truly up and running. The owner, Clive Palmer, the CEO, Clive Mensink, head coach and director of football, Miron Bleiberg, and the staff should be very proud of what they have achieved in a very short time.

The team's initial win over Brisbane Roar was the icing on the cake for their first game in Brissie, and its 5-0 romp over the Townsville Fury at Skilled Park entrenched its competitive punch in the first season of operation. Our new team has created exciting opportunities for local players on the Gold Coast to break into the soccer world stage. For up and coming junior players it also provides a fantastic opportunity to look up to and aspire to professional players in our very own Gold Coast United team.

A government member: How did they go last week?

Mr STEVENS: I wrote this before last weekend. Bringing one of the major sporting games of the world to the Gold Coast allows for people from all walks of life to come together. The federal government's $27 million bid for the FIFA World Cup in either 2018 or 2022 would give an even higher profile to the sport in Australia. We are good at hosting world-class events and providing world-class facilities. FIFA should seriously consider Australia as the major contender and the Gold Coast would provide an irresistible venue for international tourists to Australia.

The Gold Coast United team has also given a great opportunity for further event-based tourism on the Gold Coast. Sporting event tourism has the capacity to lure many tourists to our beautiful international destination of sun, surf and glorious beaches, and I thank them for that. It is well known in school circles that many protective mums feel safer in the knowledge that their young sons are playing a predominantly non-body contact game of football. For this reason alone I can see support for soccer gathering enormous momentum throughout the community.

I wish the team every success in the future. I congratulate Mr Palmer for his enthusiasm and vision. He has demonstrated that he is one corporate citizen who is prepared to put his money where his mouth is for the betterment of the Gold Coast community. He has also put his money towards a great political party. I raise a toast to a successful Gold Coast United premiership in the not-too-distant future.

Fantastic Flight Festival

Mr CHOI (Capalaba—ALP) (9.42 pm): I rise to acknowledge a wonderful event in my electorate, the Fantastic Flight Festival. Organised by Capalaba State College Junior Campus, the Fantastic Flight Festival was Capalaba State College's brilliant event organised for the students for Science Week 2009 celebrating the Magic of Science. The festival was also, in part, a response by the college to the state government commissioned master report on literacy, numeracy and science learning in Queensland primary schools.

When I was first told about the festival by Mrs Karen Harris, curriculum head and one of the key organisers at the college, I could not believe that all the activities were going to fit into just five days. They included parachutes, rockets, paper planes, choppers, flying foxes, hot air balloons, frisbees, kite making and flying, peg plane design and construction, performances by the Queensland Arts Council and exhibits from the Queensland Museum as well as live birds from the Wynnum Redlands Budgerigar Society and spectacular kite flying displays by the Queensland Kite Flying Society. The students were the beneficiaries of a lot of hard work by college staff, parents, community science and extreme sports experts and other people who were all happy to be a part of this great activities week. All the activities that the students enjoyed embraced the ethos of Science Week, which is that science contributes to our everyday life.

I would also like to acknowledge that none of the activities enjoyed by the students during that week could have taken place without the dedicated fundraising work performed by the teachers, parents and students at Capalaba State College. All the activities were offered using resources purchased through school science funds, a funding grant that the college had successfully applied for, the school's flight-themed fancy dress day and generous support through community donations from Capalaba State College P&C, the Redlands Aero Model Soarers Inc, Bunnings Capalaba and Jade Installations Pty Ltd. The final high point of the week was a parachute jump on the Friday afternoon. I was so pleased that I had an official engagement before the jump which gave me the perfect excuse not to be a participant of the jump but to observe the event from the very firm and solid ground of the school's playground.

Science is fun and science is important. The future of Queensland relies on science being taken seriously and Capalaba State College should be very proud in promoting science in such a fun and engaging way. I have been told that Mrs Karen Harris has already started to work on the theme for next year. I am sure it will be another great event for the school and the community.

Global Positioning System

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (9.45 pm): Today the term GPS, otherwise known as global positioning system, is becoming a very common term that is used in our daily conversation. Recently we heard about how a dingo's movement was monitored over hundreds of kilometres throughout Central Queensland. I recall when I first came to parliament a number of years ago the member for Murrumba, Dean Wells, who was then the minister for the environment, talked about how his department was tracking and monitoring a turtle nicknamed Dean the Green Turtle as he swam through the oceans on his travels to Fiji. Today we are able to track animals all around the world.

I use this opportunity to call on the Minister for Emergency Services to take the matter up with the Premier and cabinet members to see if we can encourage people who embark on bush walking exercises or exploring adventures, whether it be on the Sunshine Coast or in Central Queensland, not to rely just on a mobile phone should they need help. Time and time again people get lost and need help, and a lot of taxpayers' money is spent in search and rescue efforts.

I believe that Queensland can take the lead on this. I believe the global positioning system is available and accessible to us all. We have an opportunity to lead other politicians around Australia by ensuring that people who embark on bush walking exercises, mountain biking, mountain climbing, caravanning explorations or whatever people wish to do in different parts of Queensland can be tracked and monitored if need be. On the Sunshine Coast many people have become lost on our mountains and bush, and volunteers and members of the emergency services have spent a lot of time and taxpayers' money in search and rescue. I believe we can do better. I believe the global positioning system is available to us today and we should be able to access it.

Edmund, Mrs M

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (9.47 pm): On 19 August 2009 the oldest member of the Darumbal people, the Indigenous title holders of our area, and a descendant of the Kuinmurburra tribe from Shoalwater Bay died. Mabel Edmund, AM Centenary Medal, was born 10 March 1930 as Mabel Mann. As was the practice at that time, when she was about 14 years old she was sent away to work as a housemaid. She met and married her husband, Harold 'Digger' Edmund, while working on a station in Central Western Queensland. She had six children: Isabel, Dale, Darryl, Sally, Dean, and Selena. After raising her family she became active in politics.

From an early age, she was very aware of the treatment of her people and was actively involved with the One People of Australia League. She was instrumental in the commencement of the Aboriginal Legal Service in Central Queensland and was its chair for some years. Her interest in her community and her people led her to become a member of the Labor Party. In 1970 she ran as a candidate for the Livingstone Shire Council and was the first Indigenous woman to be elected to local government in Australia. That was only three years after the referendum. During her two terms on the Livingstone Shire Council, she achieved the bitumen sealing of the road from Tungamull to Keppel Sands and the installation of electricity to Joskeleigh, her Islander community south of Emu Park. She also achieved the restoration of the Sandhills Historical South Sea Island Cemetery. She later became a commissioner of ATSIC.

In 1974, she was a candidate for the Labor Party in the seat of Callide, which was at that time hopelessly gerrymandered to keep Lindsay Hartwig in parliament. She picked the election when the Labor Party was reduced to a cricket team. One historical point which may interest the House is that I recall former Premier Peter Beattie making the comment that the Labor Party had never fielded two candidates to try to win a seat. Well, in 1974, Mabel was one candidate and Bill Mutton was the other. Sadly, neither of them won.

She spent six years as a commissioner with the Aboriginal Loans Commission. She was appointed as a JP and in 1971 was recognised as Woman of the Year. She had always loved art and was a published author with two publications, *No Regrets* and *Hello, Johnny!* In 1982, she was an Australian delegate to Cambridge University World Conference on Arts and Communication. She received the Medal of the Order of Australia in 1986 and the Centenary Medal in 2000 for her services to her people and her art.

She later suffered a stroke and had difficulty with her painting. Her last 3½ years were spent in the care of North Rockhampton Nursing Home, where I kept contact with her when visiting. She was one of a kind. She was laid to rest in North Rockhampton Cemetery on 26 August, after a service at St Christopher's Chapel at Nerimbera. That chapel had been her pride and joy when on the Livingstone Shire Council and she cared for the gardens there. I was honoured to be invited by the family to speak at her service.

Aunty Mabel Edmund, your community loved you. Rest in Peace.

(Time expired)

Callide Valley Schools, Priority Country Area Program

Mr SEENEY (Callide—LNP) (9.50 pm): I rise tonight to call on the Minister for Education to restore the Priority Country Area Program funding to the schools in the Callide Valley. The Biloela Primary School, the Biloela State High School, as well as the Goovigen, Wowan, Thangool, Mount Murchison and Prospect Creek state schools have all been declared ineligible to receive funding that they have previously relied upon to provide cultural and sporting opportunities to assist to provide an enriching curriculum for their students.

The PCAP cluster funding pool available to schools in the Callide Valley has been vital to allow them to apply for assistance to host, attend or participate in cultural and sporting events. Cluster funding allowed small schools to apply as a group, instead of a single school—increasing the viability and ability to attract such visiting artists, exhibitions and tutors. This funding has allowed children from small schools to interact with more children of their own age. For kids who attend large city schools this is an everyday occurrence, but for kids at the small schools in the Callide Valley this is a special occasion. This interaction has been essential in their personal development and growth, and the ceasing of the PCAP fund will mean that these opportunities will cease.

An example is the Jambin State School, which currently receives a PCAP notional allocation of about $5,000. This is not a lot of money in government terms or even in the education department budget, but it is vital for small schools like Jambin. This year the money was used to fund travel to a camp at Emerald for the year 4 to 7s and a day trip to the North Keppel Environment Centre for the prep to 3 class. Cluster funds have also been put towards accessing groups for dance and science visits to the school, drama workshops and personal development for teachers and information technology support.

An annual curriculum based week-long camp for years 4 to 7 and a one-day excursion for prep to year 3 are an important part of the school year. The PCAP money is used to subsidise the transport and accommodation costs which reduces the cost to parents. These annual events provide valuable experiences and opportunities the children may not otherwise have available to them and opportunities that are taken for granted in larger city schools. The goal of PCAP is to contribute to the enhancement of learning outcomes for students in geographically isolated areas so that their learning outcomes match those of other students.

I strongly believe, and the school community strongly believe, that the geographical locations of schools such as Jambin, Prospect Creek, Thangool and the other schools in the Callide Valley warrant their inclusion in the new PCAP model. The PCAP funding has been essential to providing opportunities to those students over a number of years. To cease that funding now without any justification will detract markedly from the educational opportunities that are available to those students. I call on the Minister for Education to review this decision immediately and to provide those schools with the funding that they deserve to attain basic opportunities for their students that city kids take for granted.

(Time expired)

Albert Electorate, Seniors Week

Hon. MM KEECH (Albert—ALP) (9.53 pm): The 2009 Seniors Week in Albert was a great opportunity for the community to recognise and pay tribute to the valuable contribution of our seniors, as well as providing an opportunity to enjoy the winter sunshine and to get fit and healthy in the park.

With the theme 'Positively Ageless', I joined the Studio Village Community Centre in hosting a stall at the very successful Northern Gold Coast Seniors Expo, held at the Oxenford and Coomera Community Youth Centre. The expo was most successful, with seniors travelling from across northern Gold Coast to access the information provided by industry service providers. As well, they really appreciated the very important services available to the elderly through the Public Trustee of Queensland and the Office of the Adult Guardian. That was just the beginning of a full weekend of activities.

The Studio Village Community Centre, under the expert guidance of the community development officer, Veronica Cox, then held a Sunday afternoon in the park with free entertainment based around the popular television show *Australia's Got Talent*. The event was of course appropriately renamed 'Seniors Have Talent'. Sponsored by the Department of Communities and the Gold Coast City Council, the crowd was entertained with a number of musical performances, together with a fantastic art exhibition featuring masterpieces created by our very own local seniors.

I was pleased to be joined at the Studio Village park event by some VIP Albert seniors—my very own parents, Vic and Val Rogers, who, together with the rest of the audience, enjoyed the vocals of Marilyn Rantall and acclaimed violinist Brian Stevenson. I was pleased to give a very special acknowledgement in my speech to another crowd favourite, and one from my own teenage years, cabaret artist Rob McCullough, whom I and some of the other members of the audience recognised from *Young Talent Time*.

The week reinforced the key Seniors Week messages—helping improve community attitudes towards older people, supporting community participation and activity by older people, and enhancing community connections and intergenerational relationships. Congratulations to Veronica Cox, Brian Bedford and the whole team of volunteers at the Studio Village Community Centre, who always work so hard to ensure local seniors are welcomed and supported.

The Albert Seniors Week was truly a fantastic event. It was based on the theme 'Positively Ageless', which says that age is never a barrier to living a full and active life. Instead, as Abraham Lincoln said, 'In the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years.' Happy Seniors Week to Albert seniors.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 9.57 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Attwood, Bates, Bleijie, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, Crandon, Cripps, Croft, Cunningham, Darling, Davis, Dempsey, Dick, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Farmer, Finn, Flegg, Fraser, Gibson, Grace, Hinchliffe, Hobbs, Hoolihan, Hopper, Horan, Jarratt, Johnson, Johnstone, Jones, Keech, Kiernan, Kilburn, Knuth, Langbroek, Lawlor, Lucas, McArdle, McLindon, Male, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Mickel, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nicholls, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Powell, Pratt, Reeves, Rickuss, Roberts, Robertson, Robinson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Seeney, Shine, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Spence, Springborg, Stevens, Stone, Struthers, Stuckey, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wellington, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson