



RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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TUESDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2011



The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

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

For the sitting week, Mr Speaker acknowledged the traditional owners of the land upon which this parliament is assembled and the custodians of the sacred lands of our state.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I wish to advise that the annual general meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Queensland branch will be held in the Legislative Assembly chamber today at 1.00 pm.

PETITIONS

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

Solar Bonus Scheme

Mr Moorhead, from 150 petitioners, requesting the House to extend the Solar Bonus Scheme to residents of manufactured home parks [[5659](#)].

Drewvale, Bus Service

Mr Emerson, from 346 petitioners, requesting the House to fund and approve the introduction of a new bus service into Drewvale south of the Logan Motorway [[5660](#)].

Beerburrum-Nambour, Rail Duplication

Mr Powell, from 122 petitioners, requesting the House to revise the timetable currently set for the 2026-2031 rail duplication works from Beerburrum to Nambour and to resume the project as a matter of high priority [[5661](#)].

Hydraulic Fracturing

Mr Wellington, from 92 petitioners, requesting the House to enforce a complete ban on hydraulic fracturing and instead harness readily available renewable energy [[5662](#)].

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

Halifax Bay Wetlands

Mr Cripps, from 491 petitioners, requesting the House to reverse the declaration of the Halifax Bay Wetlands as a National Park and convert the area to a Recreational Reserve under the control of the Hinchinbrook Shire Council to allow all forms of recreation to be enjoyed in that area including but not limited to fishing, camping, hunting and horse riding [[5663](#)].

Petitions received.

TABLED PAPERS

PAPERS TABLED DURING THE RECESS

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

14 October 2011—

[5633](#) Professional Standards Councils—Annual Report 2010-11

[5634](#) Professional Standards Councils—Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2011

[5635](#) Health and Disabilities Committee—Annual Report 2010-11

[5636](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly from the Minister for Finance, Natural Resources and The Arts (Ms Nolan), pursuant to section 56A of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, regarding the Aboriginal Land Regulation 1991

[5637](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly from the Minister for Finance, Natural Resources and The Arts (Ms Nolan), pursuant to section 56A of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, regarding the Torres Strait Islander Land Regulation 1991

17 October 2011—

[5638](#) Transport, Local Government and Infrastructure Committee—Annual Report 2010-11

[5639](#) Advice of the Rules Committee pursuant to section 118C(2)(a) of the Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991 relating to the Civil Proceedings Bill 2011

- [5640](#) Advice of the Rules Committee pursuant to section 118C(2)(a) of the Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991 specifically in relation to each section of the Supreme Court Act 1995 relating to the Civil Proceedings Bill 2011
- [5641](#) Letter, dated 12 September 2011, from The Honourable P de Jersey AC and The Honourable Justice J D M Muir to The Honourable Paul Lucas MP regarding the Civil Proceedings Bill
- [5642](#) Wide Bay Burnett Regional Plan, September 2011
- [5643](#) Wide Bay Burnett Regional Plan: State Planning Regulatory Provisions 2011
- [5644](#) Urban Land Development Authority Act 2007: Document by the Urban Land Development Authority titled Moranbah Urban Development Area Development Scheme, July 2011 (Refer Subordinate Legislation No. 141 of 2011)
- [5645](#) Urban Land Development Authority Act 2007: Document by the Urban Land Development Authority titled Blackwater Urban Development Area Development Scheme, July 2011 (Refer Subordinate Legislation No. 141 of 2011)
- [5646](#) Urban Land Development Authority Act 2007: Document by the Urban Land Development Authority titled Fitzgibbon Urban Development Area Development Scheme, Amendment No. 1, July 2011 (Refer Subordinate Legislation No. 141 of 2011)

18 October 2011—

- [5647](#) Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal—Annual Report 2010-11
- [5648](#) Letter, dated 14 October 2011 to Kerry Shine MP, Chair, Industry, Education, Training and Industrial Relations Committee from The Hon. Andrew Fraser, MP, Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade regarding further information to Non-Government Question on Notice No. 10 asked on 29 June 2011
- [5649](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly from the Minister for Finance, Natural Resources and The Arts (Ms Nolan), pursuant to section 56A(4) of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, regarding the Soil Conservation Regulation 1998
- [5650](#) Finance and Administration Committee: Report No. 4—Building Boost Grant Bill 2011

19 October 2011—

- [5651](#) Health and Disabilities Committee: Report No. 3—Report on the Health Legislation (Fees) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2011

21 October 2011—

- [5652](#) WaterSecure—Annual Report 2010-11
- [5653](#) Environment, Agriculture, Resources and Energy Committee: Report No. 3—Portfolio Subordinate Legislation Nos. 93-158 of 2011 tabled between 2 & 23 August 2011
- [5654](#) LinkWater Projects—Annual Report 2010-11
- [5655](#) Amended Participation Agreement: Northern SEQ Distributor-Retailer Authority (trading as Unitywater)

24 October 2011—

- [5656](#) Finance and Administration Committee: Report No. 5—Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill 2011
- [5657](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly from the Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State (Mr Lucas), pursuant to section 56A of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, regarding the Associations Incorporation Regulation 1999, Bills of Sale and Other Instruments Regulation 1999, Business Names Regulation 1998, Casino Control Regulation 1999, Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Regulation 1999, Criminal Code (Animal Valuers) Regulation 1999, Guardianship and Administration Regulation 2000, Interactive Gambling (Player Protection) Regulation 1998, Interactive Gambling (Player Protection—Disqualified Persons) Regulation 1999, Land Sales Regulation 2000, Liens on Crops of Sugar Cane Regulation 1999, Trust Accounts Regulation 1999 and Wagering Regulation 1999
- [5658](#) Letter, dated 21 October 2011, from the Acting Premier (Mr Fraser) to the Clerk of the Parliament enclosing a copy of correspondence from the Commonwealth Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Treaties regarding proposed international treaty actions tabled in both Houses of the Federal Parliament on 20 September 2011, and the Treaties and National Interest Analyses for the proposed treaty actions listed in the letter, and advising as to the online availability of the documents

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

The following statutory instruments were tabled by the Clerk—

Casino Control Act 1982, Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act 1999, Gaming Machine Act 1991, Interactive Gambling (Player Protection) Act 1998, Keno Act 1996, Lotteries Act 1997, Wagering Act 1998—

- [5664](#) Gaming Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2011, No. 199
- [5665](#) Gaming Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2011, No. 199, Explanatory Notes

Personal Property Securities (Ancillary Provisions) Act 2010—

- [5666](#) Personal Property Securities (Ancillary Provisions) (Postponement) Regulation 2011, No. 200
- [5667](#) Personal Property Securities (Ancillary Provisions) (Postponement) Regulation 2011, No. 200, Explanatory Notes

Prostitution Act 1999—

- [5668](#) Prostitution Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2011, No. 201
- [5669](#) Prostitution Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2011, No. 201, Explanatory Notes

Plant Protection Act 1989—

- [5670](#) Plant Protection Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2011, No. 202
- [5671](#) Plant Protection Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2011, No. 202, Explanatory Notes

Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981, Stock Act 1915—

[5672](#) Stock and Another Regulation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2011, No. 203

[5673](#) Stock and Another Regulation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2011, No. 203, Explanatory Notes

Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995—

[5674](#) Transport Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2011, No. 204

[5675](#) Transport Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 3) 2011, No. 204, Explanatory Notes

Major Sports Facilities Act 2001—

[5676](#) Major Sports Facilities Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2011, No. 205

[5677](#) Major Sports Facilities Amendment Regulation (No. 2) 2011, No. 205, Explanatory Notes

Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981—

[5678](#) Exotic Diseases in Animals (Avian Paramyxovirus) Notice 2011, No. 206

[5679](#) Exotic Diseases in Animals (Avian Paramyxovirus) Notice 2011, No. 206, Explanatory Notes

Local Government Act 2009—

[5680](#) Local Government (Operations) Amendment Regulation (No. 5) 2011, No. 207

[5681](#) Local Government (Operations) Amendment Regulation (No. 5) 2011, No. 207, Explanatory Notes

Urban Land Development Authority Act 2007—

[5682](#) Urban Land Development Authority Amendment Regulation (No. 5) 2011, No. 208

[5683](#) Urban Land Development Authority Amendment Regulation (No. 5) 2011, No. 208, Explanatory Notes

MINISTERIAL PAPERS TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following ministerial papers were tabled by the Clerk—

Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services (Mr Roberts)—

[5684](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly from the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services (Mr Roberts), pursuant to section 56A of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, regarding the Police Service Administration Regulation 1990, Police Service Administration (Review of Decisions) Regulation 1990, Police Service (Discipline) Regulations 1990, Police Service (Ranks) Regulation 1991, Weapons Regulation 1996, Police Powers and Responsibilities Regulation 2000, and Prostitution Regulation 2000

Minister for Disability Services, Mental Health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (Mr Pitt)—

[5685](#) Family Responsibilities Commission: Report to the Family Responsibilities Board and the Minister for Disability Services, Mental Health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships—Quarterly Report No. 12—April 2011 to June 2011

MINISTERIAL PAPER


Revocation of State Forest Areas

 **Hon. VE DARLING** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Environment) (9.33 am): I lay upon the table of the House a proposal under section 32 of the Nature Conservation Act 1992 and a brief explanation of the proposal.

Tabled paper: A proposal under section 32 of the Nature Conservation Act 1992 and a brief explanation of the proposal [\[5686\]](#).

NOTICE OF MOTION

Revocation of State Forest Areas

 **Hon. VE DARLING** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Environment) (9.33 am): I give notice that, after the expiration of at least 28 days, as provided under the Nature Conservation Act 1992, I shall move—

- 1) That this House requests the Governor in Council to revoke by regulation under section 32 of the Nature Conservation Act 1992 the dedication of a protected area as set out in the Proposal tabled by me in the House today, viz

Description of area to be revoked


Main Range National Park

Area described as lots 1 and 2 on SP248330 and containing an area of 2.8116 hectares as illustrated on the attached survey plan and sketch

- 2) That Mr Speaker and the Clerk of the Parliament forward a copy of this resolution to the Minister for Environment for submission to the Governor in Council.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Royal Visit

 **Hon. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Reconstruction) (9.33 am): Yesterday Queensland produced a perfect spring day and Queenslanders were out in force to show Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh how much the 'Queen' in Queensland means to them. What is more, it was a chance for Brisbane and Queensland to show our head of state that we are back brighter and better than before. Her Majesty is not a stranger to her namesake state. But what came through in shining colours yesterday was that the plight of Queenslanders during our summer of sorrow had genuinely touched her deeply and she wanted to pay tribute to that. She also paid tribute to the amazing Queensland spirit that saw strangers help strangers and, in many cases, just put their arm around a fellow Australian who would soon become a friend.

There have been many times this year that I have been proud to be a Queenslanders, and no doubt there will be many more. But yesterday it was simply fantastic to see so many people lining the streets, the banks of our river and the South Bank Parklands to give the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh a right royal Queensland welcome. I am told that more than 55,000 people lined the banks of the Brisbane River and were at South Bank's cultural forecourt to get a glimpse of the Queen after the royal party disembarked from their cruise up our glorious river. During the cruise, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh were briefed on the impact of the floods and the enormous efforts by the authorities, councils, businesses and the community to clean up and rebuild.

The royals also had the opportunity to taste a range of Queensland produce during the cruise. Thanks to the Stamford Plaza, which was also inundated during the floods, a representation of some of our best produce was on show including Sunshine Coast finger limes and Noosa sand crab, Geebung ham, Upland watercress, Granite Belt goats cheese, Diamantina beef, Lockyer Valley duck, Tully bananas, Bowen mangoes, Yandina ginger as well as some of our state's favourites like Bundaberg Rum, Queensland macadamias and Queensland cane sugar.


At South Bank, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh attended a reception to acknowledge representatives from emergency workers, volunteers and those who had lost family, loved ones and their homes in our summer of natural disasters. At the request of the palace, the function was kept relatively small in order for the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh to personally meet and speak with each attendee. I commend Her Majesty on the personal attention she gave to each and every person who had suffered so deeply. I can assure you that she was genuinely moved by their plight.

I thank the Leader of the Opposition, Jeff Seeney, and Lord Mayor Graham Quirk and their wives for the very warm welcome that they gave to the Queen and to the Duke of Edinburgh as they arrived at South Bank. As only the Queen can do, she lifted the spirits of all who attended the events yesterday. She went on from the reception to officially open Rain Bank, South Bank's innovative stormwater harvesting centre, where she addressed Queenslanders. In her speech she warmly recalled opening World Expo 88 and remarked on how she had watched Brisbane 'come of age'. She particularly praised the resilience and courage of Queenslanders for picking up their lives and continuing to rebuild after a period of great adversity. I would like to thank Her Majesty the Queen, His Royal Highness Prince Phillip and His Royal Highness Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, and the royal family for keeping Queensland so close to their hearts during this year as we have rebuilt after our tragedies.

The program ended with a lunch hosted by Her Excellency Ms Penelope Wensley, Governor of Queensland, and Mr Stuart McCosker. The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh saw not only the progress that Brisbane has made since the floods but also the changes to our capital city over the past nine years. In her speech at South Bank the Queen praised our energy and our optimism as a state. It is this energy and optimism that drives Queenslanders across our state, it is this energy and optimism that drives me as Premier, and it is this energy and optimism that will see us bounce back.

On behalf of members of the House, I want to place on the parliamentary record our shared sincere gratitude to the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh for renewing their association with our state. I particularly thank all of those who were involved in the planning of yesterday's events. This was an extraordinary logistical exercise. I think it is to the great credit of all those involved that it went without a hitch. I conclude by thanking very warmly the people of Queensland, many of whom drove several hours and then waited for a long time to provide a very, very warm and enthusiastic welcome to the Queen and the Duke. I commend them for that effort.

Bureau of Meteorology; Hinze Dam

 **Hon. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Reconstruction) (9.38 am): Claims at the weekend of a secret Bureau of Meteorology report that would compel us to drain the dams were misleading at worst and premature at best. Last night the Bureau of Meteorology released its official summer forecast advice to the Australian public, as it does every year at this time. Last week it

conveyed preliminary advice to our government, the federal government and various agencies such as the police and emergency services. This preliminary advice is part of a procedure that has been in place for many, many years. The only thing out of the ordinary this year was the completely understandable heightened levels of concern following last year's summer of natural disasters.


The official forecast, which was released last night and is now available on the Bureau of Meteorology website, shows a trend towards another La Nina event over this summer. Regional Director Jim Davidson has said that this weak La Nina is unlikely to be as strong as the event that caused such major flooding last summer. However, every La Nina event is different and the one thing we know about Mother Nature is that she offers no guarantees.

This is no time for knee-jerk reactions and populist grandstanding. The government will act in line with the clear recommendations of the floods commission's interim report. The minister will take advice on the Bureau of Meteorology forecast from Seqwater, the Department of Environment and Resource Management, the Queensland Water Commission and the South East Queensland Water Grid Manager in making her decision. The Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry interim report recommended that we should temporarily reduce the level of Wivenhoe Dam if the Bureau of Meteorology makes similar wet season forecasts to those made for 2010-11. The minister will not hesitate to act if the advice recommends that the dam levels should be lowered. Whatever happens this summer, I know that Queensland is ready and I know that we will not be beaten by anything. The government's priority will always be protecting lives and property. While I do sincerely hope that we are not to be tested again this summer, I know that if we are Queensland is ready.


On a separate but related issue, the Gold Coast mayor has suggested that if it is necessary to lower the dam levels that we should pump some of that water to the Hinze Dam. This is an understandable idea from the mayor, but I think it is important for me to put on the record that the Seqwater grid does not pump water from one dam to another. It is a treated water system, which means that dam water from any dam is treated and then pumped directly into the system to go to households and consumers ready for use. The Hinze Dam is currently half full because the dam wall has recently been raised, at a cost of some \$400 million, to provide increased storage capacity and greater flood protection for thousands of residents along the Nerang River. Prior to the raising of the dam wall, Hinze Dam was at 100 per cent full supply level.

As part of the Seqwater grid, residents on the Gold Coast now have access to water from all areas of South-East Queensland, giving the community greater protection from drought and water-quality incidents. The Gold Coast region no longer depends on the Hinze Dam and has not done so since the state government connected Wivenhoe to the water grid so that it can transfer water to Gold Coast households and built a desalination plant at the Gold Coast to give absolute water security to this fast-growing region of Queensland.

Armor All Gold Coast 600

 **Hon. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Reconstruction) (9.42 am): While mentioning the Gold Coast, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the great success last weekend of the Armor All Gold Coast 600 V8 race. The race drew more than 180,000 local, national and international visitors. It extended the Gold Coast's reach to a bigger international television-viewing audience. On all observations it was a great crowd-pleaser. I congratulate the city of the Gold Coast. It really does know how to host a successful international event. The excellent event that was put on over the weekend was a great model to those who are looking to make up their mind on how they will vote on our bid to host the 2018 Commonwealth Games. I was very pleased that the Asian voting delegates were present at the race. They were very impressed with the organisation that they saw and the excitement of the event. I hope that is something they will keep in their minds as they go to the ballot box on this event on 11 November.

Queensland Economy

 **Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade) (9.43 am): Queensland's economic recovery since the natural disasters is strengthening by the month. Already we have seen the cold, hard evidence in the Australian Bureau of Statistics state final demand numbers which demonstrated that domestic activity in Queensland for the June quarter was higher than any other state or territory. Demand was nation leading and being driven off massive investment by the private sector—business voting with their balance sheets and voting confidently on the bright future of our state. That is the official scorecard and it cannot be refuted.


Beyond the independent umpire, there have been numerous other reports and third-party endorsements of the upward trajectory of the Queensland economy as the massive surge of business investment forecast in the budget pumps its way across our state. Deloitte Access Economics says, 'The big rebound in state growth has begun.' NAB predicts, 'Economic growth should outperform the national average this year.' Westpac recently said that as we put natural disasters behind us 'investment

has propelled Queensland from laggard to leader'. Even the Commonwealth Bank's own economic research unit says that the Queensland economy is about to go 'pop', and that is a sentiment most people would agree with. The latest NAB Quarterly Business Survey shows that business conditions in the September quarter of this year were highest in the mining states of Queensland and Western Australia, with the survey reading for Queensland the highest September quarter result since 2007.

Of course, there was another report released yesterday that stood out on its own in talking down the Queensland economy. It was predictably jumped upon by the 'sorcerers of negativity' in the opposition. All I will say is this: that report tries to rank the ACT's economy ahead of Queensland. I have been to Canberra recently and I have also been to Gladstone. There is more economic activity in the city of Gladstone than there is in the whole of the ACT. Gladstone is just one area of Queensland that is surging ahead.

There is no doubt that external risk is crystallising, that headwinds remain. The latest Consensus Economics release shows that Queensland's major trading partner GDP growth has been revised down to 3.5 per cent in 2012 compared with 4.5 per cent at budget time. The global uncertainty can and will have an effect on Queensland. We are, after all, an export economy—one that looks outward and not inward. But the fact is that the Consensus view is that Queensland's economy is locked and loaded for a bright future. We will continue to put the policy settings in place that will build a more prosperous Queensland future to create jobs for this generation and the next—just like we said we would.


Bushfires

 **Hon. TS MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies) (9.46 am): Last week we saw about 300,000 hectares in the Barcaldine area impacted by bushfires. I understand the fires were brought under control over the weekend, but at least 38 properties have been affected, with 10 having between 80 per cent and 100 per cent pasture burnt out. It is encouraging to see that the majority of producers in fire stricken areas were prepared for the fire season and are in a position to self-manage their clean-up. In the Barcaldine area some fires were extremely intense, causing extensive damage beyond the control of many landholders. I am pleased to report that the Bligh government is working with those landholders to provide what assistance we can.

Last week I announced category B natural disaster assistance for primary producers in the Barcaldine Regional Council area. Category B assistance under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements will enable affected primary producers to apply for low-interest concessional loans of up to \$250,000 and freight subsidies of up to \$5,000 to assist with recovery from the bushfires. Due to the widespread pasture burnt, fodder was brought in to sustain livestock until they can be shifted elsewhere. DEEDI also established a fodder register in Longreach to assist those trying to locate where fodder is available. We increased the number of DEEDI officers, including rural financial counsellors, on the ground to provide advice and assistance. We have been working with the local council in the area to address the identified issues.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Mayor of the Barcaldine Regional Council, Rob Chandler, for his cooperation and on-the-ground information to address these issues in a timely manner. I encourage those looking for more information on freight subsidies to contact DEEDI on 132523 and for those looking for more information on concessional loans to contact QRAA on 1800623946. These bushfires have been a timely reminder for all producers across Queensland to be disaster ready in the lead-up to the wet season.


Early Years Education

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Greenslopes—ALP) (Minister for Education and Industrial Relations) (9.48 am): Labor understands the importance of education, particularly in the early years of learning. It is Labor that is currently rolling out a massive program to make kindergarten available to all Queensland children by 2014, investing up to \$321 million to build up to 240 new kindies across the state. It is Labor that is striving to better meet the needs of working parents by funding quality kindergarten programs in long day care centres. It was Labor that introduced full-time prep in 2007, making an extra year of formal learning available at the start of a child's educational journey before they enter their first year of school at year 1.

The early years of learning continue to be a top educational priority for the Bligh Labor government. The *A flying start for Queensland children* white paper, released in June, flagged the government's intention to recognise prep as the first year of school. I am pleased to confirm to the House that prep will be recognised as the first year of schooling in all state schools from 2012. This means that, when a student enrolls in a state school, they will be required to do prep as their first year of formal education. By confirming this approach we are making it clear to all parents that it is our ambition that all Queensland children should benefit from 13 years of schooling—from prep to year 12. This is particularly important given that the new Australian curriculum is due to come into effect from 2012. The Australian curriculum includes prep and it is vital that Queensland's children do not miss out on this important foundation year of their education.

I would like to note that prep will continue to be non-compulsory as we already have a state-wide participation rate of more than 97 per cent of eligible five-year-old children. This figure is higher than the enrolment rate in Tasmania, which is the only state that makes prep compulsory. Obviously, prep enrolments will be closely monitored and if they start to fall the government will reconsider the issue of compulsory enrolment. The recognition of prep as the first year of school continues this government's focus on education in the early years. Our initiatives in prep and kindergarten will ensure that all Queensland children continue to receive the best possible start to learning and life. It is Labor that is the party of equality and opportunity for all Queenslanders, particularly children.


ABSENCE OF PREMIER

 **Hon. JC SPENCE** (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (9.51 am): I wish to advise the House that the Premier, as per her advice to the House last sitting, will be absent on Wednesday and Thursday this week. The Premier will be attending the Commonwealth economic forum being held as part of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Perth.

PEOPLE'S HOUSE BILL

REFERENDUM FOR AN UPPER HOUSE BILL

Cognate Debate

 **Hon. JC SPENCE** (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (9.51 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That, in accordance with standing order 172, the People's House Bill and the Referendum for an Upper House Bill be treated as cognate Bills for their remaining stages, as follows:


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

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

DISASTER READINESS AMENDMENT BILL

Declared Urgent

 **Hon. JC SPENCE** (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (9.51 am), by leave, without notice: I move—


That the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill be declared an urgent bill and that standing order 136(5) be suspended to enable the bill to pass through its remaining stages at this week's sitting.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

MOTIONS

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders


 **Hon. JC SPENCE** (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (9.52 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That notwithstanding anything contained in the Standing and Sessional Orders, when the second reading is resumed for a bill that has been referred to a portfolio committee after the second reading stage has been reached, the member in charge of the bill shall be entitled to speak to the second reading question again as if they had not already spoken, with speaking times as set out in the sessional orders.


Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

 **Hon. JC SPENCE** (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (9.52 am), by leave, without notice: I move—


That so much of the Standing and Sessional Orders be suspended to enable the member for Mount Coot-tha to introduce a private member's bill at 7.30 pm tonight.


 **Mr SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.53 am): The opposition will be opposing the motion moved by the Leader of the House. The private member's bill that the Treasurer seeks to introduce to the parliament has been well and truly talked about in the media. It is obviously a cheap political stunt and there is no reason for the standing orders of this parliament to be suspended for the Treasurer to indulge in a cheap political stunt aimed at saving his own seat in the looming state election. The standing orders of this House give ample opportunity to every member to bring forward a private member's bill. Many members on this side of the House have brought forward private members' bills that subsequently have been adopted by the government in its own legislation. This is the first instance that I can recall that any government member, let alone a government minister, has sought to bring forward a private member's bill. There is no reason why a government member or a government minister should not bring forward a private member's bill, but equally there is no reason why they should not do it under the same standing orders that apply in this House to every other member who has sought to bring forward a similar private member's bill.


The only reason it is suggested that the standing orders be suspended is the government's political imperative. They seek to avoid the standing orders of this place to advance their own political imperative. The motion moved by the Leader of the House this morning should be opposed by every member of this parliament who respects this parliament and every member who works within the rules and the standing orders that are laid down in this parliament.

This parliament is not a forum for cheap political stunts to save the Treasurer's seat. That is not a legitimate use of the Treasurer's time, I would suggest. It is not a legitimate use of the time of this parliament. There are a host of issues facing the government. There are a host of issues facing the people of Queensland. There is a long litany of failures of this Labor government affecting the people of Queensland in their daily lives. The time that is available to this parliament in this week's sitting should be used properly to address those issues, not to address the Treasurer's immediate political future as he sees it.

There is no reason to suspend the standing orders. The Treasurer has every right to introduce into this parliament a private member's bill. However, he has an obligation to do it under the same rules, standing orders and time lines as every other member in this House. On those grounds, the opposition will certainly be opposing the motion moved by the Leader of the House.


 **Mr MESSENGER** (Burnett—Ind) (9.56 am): If the Premier calls an election on 18 February, that will mean that we have only nine sitting days of this parliament left to discuss urgent issues. There are many life and death issues that the people of the Burnett would like to see discussed in this chamber. Same-sex civil unions are not one of those. We would like to talk about hospital waiting lists, rising fuel costs et cetera. There are many life and death issues. This matter should be discussed, but not in such a rushed manner.

 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (9.57 am): I join with the Leader of the Opposition in opposing the motion to bring forward a private member's bill at a special time. During the last sitting, the member for Nicklin introduced a bill. As the standing orders have changed, non-government members are required to introduce their bills in the two minutes to concertina their introductory speech or to have it incorporated into *Hansard*. Like others have said, I do not deny the Treasurer and Deputy Premier the opportunity to introduce the bill, but I believe he should introduce it under the same regime as every other private member's bill.


 **Mr McLINDON** (Beaudesert—KAP) (9.57 am): Regardless of the political games being played in this House, it hurts me to think that, while there are important issues in this state such as grown men who are crying because of the coal seam gas industry and families that cannot put food on their tables, we are putting before the House a private member's bill that is a complete insult to and abuse of the parliamentary time in this place. Time and time again families are being forced out of their homes while we play political games in this House. We have seen the dirt files in this House, yet they offer no policy position. We need to start getting serious, because Queenslanders have had a gutful of the politicians on both sides of the House. Until we start getting a backbone and put real issues on the agenda, we will continue to get what we have always got. I will be voting against the motion.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's expression was unparliamentary. I ask him to withdraw it. There are better ways to express yourself than that.


Mr McLINDON: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

 **Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade) (9.59 am): The government supports the motion moved by the Leader of the House which, at its limit, proposes that this parliament expend 10 minutes of its time this evening in order to enable the introduction of a bill. Let us not misunderstand the confected mirage that is being put forward by those opposite as they seek to hide behind this charade to prevent the grand total of 10 minutes of this parliament's time this evening being used to introduce a bill into the parliament to be debated in accordance with the way in which this parliament operates.

In a year in which we have seen admirable bipartisanship to enable this parliament to accommodate the opposition, to accommodate private members—which includes all 89 members of this parliament in their capacity as members of parliament—I think it is utterly regrettable that those people opposite have sought to cheapen this parliament, to cheapen our democracy and, more to the point, to cheapen the completely valid human relationships which this bill seeks to address. How they cheapen this parliament, how they cheapen our democracy and how they seek to cheapen the validity of the human relationships that this bill will address is regrettable. The truth of it all is that this opposition, by this tactical political manoeuvre, will expend more than 10 minutes of the parliament's time and eat into question time, which is longer than it will take this evening to introduce a bill for which the time has come.

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10.01 am): Fundamentally, when it brings forward a motion like this, this government fails the test of good government and fails to establish urgency. There is no reason for the urgency being sought by the Leader of the House. What we have here, quite clearly, is a special rule being introduced for a special member. No compelling reason has been advanced as to why the standard rules of this place that apply to every other member—the other 88 of us in this place—should not be complied with. The Deputy Premier stands up and says, 'I have a thought bubble. I want to do this. I have a distraction I want to introduce. I want to make it as hard as I possibly can.' No-one should be under any misapprehension that that is what is going on here.

There is no loss of time in the Deputy Premier waiting until Thursday afternoon, like every other member in this place, and complying with the standing orders. What does he lose by waiting another 48 hours to introduce his bill? He has said one thing about what he loses by doing it. The government has advanced not one proposition about urgency being established in this case. This parliament should not be a plaything of the government to abuse at its will. At its heart, this parliament should be about respecting the rules that have been put in place with the full agreement of both sides. This motion moved by the Leader of the House should fail. It should fail because it fails the fundamental test of establishing urgency. It should fail because it is purely and simply a political stunt.

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Skills and Mining) (10.03 am): I rise to speak in support of the motion moved by the Leader of the House. I find it quite extraordinary that those in the opposition come in here and talk about abuses of the parliament. This is an opposition that is led from outside the parliament. They have outsourced their leadership. They have abandoned hundreds of years of parliamentary practice. They have determined that that is not good enough for them. They come in here and lecture the government about parliamentary procedures. This is an appropriate opportunity to make sure that we use the time of the parliament wisely and continue to provide full access to the two-minuters on Thursday to all members of parliament. We will allow some government business time tonight to be used to introduce this private member's bill to the parliament.

I think it is entirely appropriate that we support this motion. We need to understand the hypocrisy of those opposite when they talk about political games. They have been using the whole parliament as some sort of politic game, led from outside this parliament. As we have seen in recent times, it is not just with the outsourced Leader of the Opposition but also with puppet-masters beyond that particular role.

I find it quite offensive that the opposition is saying that we are playing some role in degrading the parliament. I think this is an appropriate way to manage this important issue—a social issue that is vitally important to thousands of Queenslanders who are very interested in seeing this debate brought forward in the parliament. I support the motion.

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


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

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

Resolved in the affirmative.

LEGAL AFFAIRS, POLICE, CORRECTIVE SERVICES AND EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Office of the Information Commissioner, Report


 **Hon. DM WELLS** (Murrumba—ALP) (10.10 am): I lay on the table of the House report No. 3 of 2011-12 to the Legislative Assembly by the Office of the Information Commissioner titled *Compliance review—Queensland Police Service: Review of Queensland Police Service compliance with the Right to Information Act 2009 (Qld) and the Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld)*.

Tabled paper: Office of the Information Commissioner: Report No. 3 of 2011-12 to the Queensland Legislative Assembly—Compliance Review—Queensland Police Service: Review of Queensland Police Service compliance with the Right to Information Act 2009 (Qld) and the Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld) [[5687](#)].

The report details the findings of a review of the Queensland Police Service's implementation of the right to information and information privacy reforms. Overall, the Office of the Information Commissioner found that the Queensland Police Service has made progress in meeting its legislative obligations. The report identifies areas of good practice and contains 28 recommendations to assist the Queensland Police Service improve compliance.

PARLIAMENTARY CRIME AND MISCONDUCT COMMITTEE

Annual Report

 **Dr DOUGLAS** (Gaven—LNP) (10.11 am): I take great pleasure as the first non-government chairperson of the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee to lay upon the table of the House the PCMC's annual report for 2010-11.


Tabled paper: Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee: Report No. 84—Annual Report 2010-11 [[5688](#)].

As chairman of the committee for only a short time during the reporting period, I wish to acknowledge the valuable input made by the former members of the committee and the former chair, Mr Paul Hoolihan, the member for Keppel, and the work of the committee secretariat throughout the year. There have been some changes.

The Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee continues to be an essential part of Queensland's integrity and accountability framework, of which the members are proud to be a part. I commend the report to the House.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Connecting SEQ 2031

 **Mr EMERSON** (Indooroopilly—LNP) (10.12 am): I give notice that I will move—

That this House condemns the Blich Labor government for releasing another glossy brochure called 'Connecting SEQ 2031 plan' that promises \$227 billion in unfunded projects with no commitment to deliver any of them.


SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

School Group Tours

Mr SPEAKER: Before I call question time, I wish to acknowledge in the public gallery the students, teachers and parents from the Kingaroy State High School in the electorate of Nanango, the Wynnum State High School in the electorate of Lytton and the Pallara State School in the electorate of Algester. Question time today will end at 11.13 am.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade

 **Mr SEENEY** (10.13 am): My question without notice is to the Premier. Why is the Premier allowing her deputy and the state's Treasurer to focus on political distractions such as his private member's bill instead of helping Queensland families who are struggling to cope with the skyrocketing electricity bills and the out-of-control cost of living because of the policies of this government?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for his question. I am very proud to lead a team of very talented people—people who can walk and talk and chew gum at the same time, people who can put in place sound economic policy without leaving behind the social policy that matters to the people of our state.

I am very happy to have three minutes to talk about the recent record of the Treasurer when it comes to relieving cost-of-living pressures on Queensland households. What has the Treasurer delivered this year? He delivered a budget.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Those on my left will cease interjecting. The honourable the Premier has the call.

Ms BLIGH: Mr Speaker, I am answering the question as it was asked. The Treasurer this year delivered a budget. And what was in that budget?

Opposition members interjected.

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

Ms BLIGH: In that budget was the abolition of the ambulance levy, which takes more than \$100 off the electricity bills of every single Queensland household and all the businesses who were paying it. So taking the pressure off households has been delivered by the Treasurer in this year's budget. What else did the budget deliver? It delivered a \$10,000 Building Boost to help Queensland families and young Queensland people get into the housing market and to build and stimulate the construction and building industry right across Queensland.

Is the Treasurer also looking at other issues such as social policy? Of course he is. A well-balanced government looks at all of the parts of the lives of the people it serves. I would ask all of those who say that this is a trivial and unimportant issue to ask themselves this question: what are the happiest days of your life? If the day you got married is not up there on the top of the list then you are not in the majority of people who have experienced it.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Those on my left. The Premier has the call.

Ms BLIGH: Only those who have always enjoyed this right, who have enjoyed it without question and without struggle, can say that it is meaningless or trivial. This government is proud to stand for equal rights, proud to stand for human rights, proud to stand for a fair go.

Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade

Mr SEENEY: My question without notice is to the Premier. I refer the Premier to the 480,000 Queenslanders whom QCOSS has identified as living in poverty. I ask: why is the Premier allowing her Treasurer to introduce the first-ever government private member's bill at this time when he and the rest of the government should be working to address the devastating poverty that inflicts so many people across the state?

Ms Jones interjected.

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

Opposition members interjected.

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

Ms BLIGH: We have just seen the Leader of the Opposition form his mouth around a very unfamiliar word. I have never heard those opposite concerned about poverty in all the years that I have been here.

Mr SEENEY: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I table a press release from 18 October from our shadow minister the member for Maroochydore addressing this very issue. We have been concerned about the poverty levels in Queensland. The Premier is quite wrong.

Tabled paper: Press release, dated 18 October 2011, by Ms Fiona Simpson MP titled '480,000 living in poverty because of Labor's cost of living increases' [\[5689\]](#).

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

Ms BLIGH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. We in the Labor Party understand that the best way to alleviate poverty is to give people a job. That is why we went to the last election—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! A question has been asked. Those on my left should curb their exuberance. The Premier is answering the question. I call the honourable the Premier.

Ms BLIGH: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Lockyer will cease interjecting. I call the honourable the Premier.

Ms BLIGH: We in the Labor Party believe that the best way to alleviate poverty is to give people a job. That is why we went to the last election promising a jobs target, promising job creation programs and promising to keep our record infrastructure building program going so that we would keep Queenslanders in jobs. All of those programs were opposed by those opposite. Not only did they oppose our jobs strategy; they put forward no jobs strategy of their own. Almost three years later, they still have no jobs strategy. What did they offer the people of Queensland at the last election? They said that they would cut 36,000 jobs out of the public sector.

Opposition members interjected.

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

Ms BLIGH: As I said, the policy taken by the LNP to the last election was a three per cent cut every single year, which equates to 12,000 job cuts every year. So what we would have had right now if the LNP had had its way is 36,000 extra people unemployed in Queensland. Instead, what we have is a Labor government on track to meet its jobs target to create 100,000 jobs for Queenslanders. We are now leading jobs growth across Australia.

It is Labor that understands the dignity of work. It is Labor that believes in a fair wage. If my memory serves me correctly, it is those opposite who have stood for lower minimum wages, who have opposed minimum wage increases, who have supported Work Choices and who have opposed public housing. These are people who have devoted their political lives to sentencing people to poverty. It is the height of hypocrisy for them to now try to seek any traction on this ground.

Energy Industry

Mrs MILLER: My question without notice is to the Premier. With the Queensland economy powering forward—

Opposition members interjected.

Mrs MILLER:—could the Premier please update the House on how the government is securing Queensland's energy needs for the future?

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will not take the question. The House was in disorder. The honourable member for Bundamba will repeat the question so I can hear it.

Mrs MILLER: My question without notice is to the Premier. With the Queensland economy powering forward, could the Premier please update the House on how the government is securing Queensland's energy needs for the future?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for Bundamba for her question. The member for Bundamba along with other members of my team understand the very bright future that Queensland has in front of it. Our government is committed to powering that future. That is why I will be very pleased later today to join with energy company TRUenergy to announce a multibillion dollar investment in two new electricity generators for Queensland. They will be two new gas fired power stations that will power Queensland's bright future. The member for Bundamba will be very pleased to know that one of those stations will be in Ipswich and the other will be in Gladstone. They will both be powered by gas from the state's south-west and this means that they will be emitting 50 per cent less CO₂ than a coal fired power station.

This is an investment of \$3.6 billion and it will create around 1,000 jobs in construction alone from early 2013. What is more, it will increase Queensland's overall electricity-generating capacity by 20 per cent—more than meeting all forecast demand. It is also the first major energy investment since the carbon price was passed, proof positive that large-scale energy projects are not being hindered by carbon pricing. In fact, follow the money: \$3.6 billion of investment in new energy in Queensland.

The stations will be where we forecast some of our highest population growth to be—that is, in that western corridor of the south-east of our state—and where we will see some of our greatest industrial growth—that is, in the great city of Gladstone at the centre of our new LNG export industry. What these stations will do is plug us all into a cleaner energy future, and it makes it absolutely clear to the rest of Australia that Queensland is facing a brighter future than anything we have seen in our past.

The two new energy projects will add two 500-megawatt stations initially from 2014, but each of them will have the capacity to expand to 1,500 megawatts. The Ipswich power station will be on a 500-hectare industrial park on land already zoned for heavy industrial use near the existing Swanbank B coal fired power station, which is set to close in 2012. The new Aldoga power station in Gladstone will be located on the 26,000-hectare Gladstone state development area—land already zoned for industrial use by a Labor government because we understood that both of these areas would be power houses of the future, with jobs and prosperity for Queenslanders.

Department of Justice and Attorney-General

Mr BLEIJIE: My question is to the Attorney-General. Why has the Attorney-General allowed the strategic policy unit within the justice department to be used to prepare a cabinet submission and legislation for the Treasurer's political distraction private member's bill, instead of having them act to ease the burden on people accessing justice through QCAT? If this was a private member's bill, why were public servants used in its preparation?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for the question.

Ms Bligh: Who do you think prepares your private members' bills!

Mr LUCAS: Yes, public servants do it. They are the ones who prepare bills for people in parliament.

Ms Bligh: Maybe they could get Barry O'Sullivan to do it.

Mr LUCAS: You do not get Barry O'Sullivan to do it and you do not go down to the Wynnum IGA and pick one off the shelf. Funnily enough, people who are expert in doing it do it. I just say this to the honourable member, who is known in this House for speaking at length on every clause in every bill in every piece of legislation: if he is so interested in access to justice, let us see what happens when he sits on his committee and indeed when matters come back to this House from his committee; let us see how much he has committed to actually getting that legislation through parliament. There is more than enough legislation in relation to matters within my portfolio on the *Notice Paper* of the parliament and before the committee of which he is a member, yet he seems to want to go into everything to the nth degree. It is totally appropriate—

Mr Seenev: Why was your department used?

Mr LUCAS: It is totally appropriate for my department to be involved in the preparation of this material—totally appropriate. It is similarly totally appropriate—

Mr Seenev: Would your department prepare one for me?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition! The question has been asked.

Mr LUCAS: I am more than happy to prepare a bill for you. It will be called 'Why don't we have a Leader of the Opposition who is in parliament bill?' That is the one we will have. Then we will have one which will be called 'Why do Barry O'Sullivan and Bruce McIver dictate the tactics of the opposition in the parliament bill?' Then we will have a third one: 'Where does Campbell Newman get paid from and why are they his masters bill?' We will do that one as well. The simple fact of the matter is this: there are many issues that we need to deal with in relation to both economic and social policy and a good government is a government that is well rounded. We recently—

Mr Seenev: If your department prepared it, why didn't you introduce it?

Mr LUCAS: The honourable member would be—

Mr Seenev: Why didn't you introduce the bill?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition!

Mr LUCAS: The honourable member prides himself on what he reckons he knows about parliamentary procedure. He ought know that any member can introduce a private member's bill—

Mr Seenev: Including you.

Mr LUCAS: Including me.

Mr Seenev: You're the responsible minister.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

Mr LUCAS: I find it quite extraordinary that a person who is so impotent that he is not the Leader of the Opposition would ask anyone about their conduct in this parliament. So lacking in confidence—

Mr Seenev: What are you the minister for?

Mr Fraser: What are you the leader of?

Mr LUCAS: Why do you accept the pay?

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Let us settle down.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will warn the House again. When I stand up, I expect both sides of the House to keep quiet. I warned you on that the other day. Again, I will give the warning. If somebody interjects after I get to my feet, under standing order 253A, they will go out for the rest of question time. Let me make it quite clear: when I am on my feet, you keep quiet. I call the Attorney-General.

Mr LUCAS: The opposition has always had a problem with freedom of thought and speech in this place. Do members remember when we debated the surrogacy legislation to give people the ultimate gift—the gift to have children? What did the opposition do? It bound its members to voting a particular way. This government is not going to do that. This government is going to give people the opportunity with a private member's bill to exercise their conscience. We will see how many people on that side of the House can exercise their conscience. I just say this: sexual preference does not know political bounds. There are people who are conservatives, there are people who are Labor people, there are people who are any other political preference, and they deserve to be heard.

(Time expired)

Mr SPEAKER: I call and welcome back the honourable member for Springwood.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Commonwealth Business Forum

Ms STONE: Thank you. My question without notice is to the Premier. Can the Premier inform the House on her attendance at the Commonwealth Business Forum and the opportunities it provides to promote Queensland?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for Springwood for her question. It is terrific to see her back in this chamber. Many members will know that she has endured a very long and difficult illness, and we can still hear that she is recovering from it. I congratulate her on being here today. She is as tough as teak. Well done!

I will be travelling to Perth tomorrow for the Commonwealth economic business forum that is being held in the lead-up to CHOGM and being hosted by the Premier of Western Australia, Colin Barnett. During this forum there will be a partnership roundtable session entitled 'Queensland, Australia: Industry, Infrastructure and Investment'. This is a unique opportunity for the world's business leaders to learn about Queensland's rapidly growing economy and the many investment opportunities that Queensland presents. We know that private investment drives jobs and prosperity. We are seeing it with the energy announcement I just made, and we are seeing it at record levels in Queensland—unprecedented not only in our state but also in the nation's history.

The roundtable will be chaired by Mr Leon Allen, the head of institutional banking for the Commonwealth Bank. Other speakers will include Mr Warwick King from ConocoPhillips, the joint partner in the APLNG project, which will give a multinational company perspective about doing business in Queensland now and in 10 years time; Mr James McIntyre, the senior economist with the Commonwealth Bank, whose September economic update suggested Queensland's 'investment boom has only just begun'; and Mr Keith Davies, the Coordinator-General of Queensland. I have also been invited to speak alongside Western Australian Premier Colin Barnett at tomorrow night's official dinner for the Commonwealth Business Forum, which will be attended by over 1,000 delegates.

This is another chance to put on the record why Queensland and Western Australia will be the powerhouse states of Australia for the 21st century. We will be arguing that Queensland is even better placed than our Western Australian counterparts with a more diversified economy, with no one industry making up more than a 15 per cent part of our economic output. In my view, one of the great competitions over the next three to five years will be the competition between Western Australia and Queensland for workers and for skilled labour, and Queensland intends to win that competition. I will be making sure that where we can work cooperatively with Western Australia we will, but we will not hesitate to be over there telling people about the great lifestyle they can enjoy if they want to bring their skills and their families to live in Queensland, particularly regional Queensland. It will also be a chance to talk about how under Labor here in Queensland we are working to share the benefits of the boom. That is what our jobs expos have been about. Some 10,000 people attended the expo at the Gold Coast. That tells you that people want to be part of this action. Some of them were already trained; some were willing to do training.

(Time expired)

Bligh Labor Government

Mr NICHOLLS: My question is to the Premier. The Premier has just said that the budget took pressure off households. Does the Premier now admit that Queensland families are hurting and doing it tough under her distracted, high-taxing, big-spending government?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for the question. It would seem to me that those opposite would like to live somewhere other than Queensland. I do not share their view. Queensland is the best place to live in Australia, not only because of our enviable lifestyle and opportunities; in Queensland you pay less tax than you would in any other state of this country, and it has been a Labor government that has protected people. Look at what is happening in Western Australia and look at what is happening in New South Wales under the Liberal and National parties. Have they lowered tax to Queensland levels? No, they have not. In fact, we have seen unprecedented increases in electricity and other cost-of-living pressures under Liberal and National governments in other states of Australia.

What we know is that those opposite have no economic plan. They walk around talking about four pillars, but they have nothing underneath any of that rhetoric. The four pillars are nothing more than crumbling confectionary from a team without an idea. They have had three years since the last election to revise their economic policy and they have yet to present it. What we know is that this government is the only government in Australia that has been working systematically to cut taxes for their residents. In Queensland you pay less tax on average than those other states of this country, and in fact the gap has widened in the four years that I have been Premier. Taxes have gone up further in other states than they have here in Queensland.

This series of questions should be seen for what they are: the desperate attempt of a team that does not have what it takes to stand up and deliver on the tough issues of the day, a team that does not know how it will vote on this issue, a team that will be told by someone unelected—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Those on my left will cease interjecting. The Premier has the call.

Ms BLIGH: They are a team that advised Queenslanders yesterday that they will have someone who is unelected telling them what they will do. On this important social issue, the Labor Party will have a conscience vote. I am very proud to lead a team that wants to see progressive social reforms brought into Queensland to provide human rights to the people that we represent.

Trade

Ms MALE: My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade. Following Export Week last week, can the Deputy Premier inform the House of recent trade achievements and of the Bligh government's plans for the future? Is the Deputy Premier aware of any other plans?

Mr FRASER: I thank the member for Pine Rivers for her question and indeed for her commitment to the government's Trade Strategy, because what we on this side of the House know is that Queensland is a trading state and a trading economy, and trade means jobs. Last week we released our new Trade Strategy, which aims to double our exports out to 2020 to \$100 billion. We will achieve that by making sure that we grow trade and exports to emerging markets by 75 per cent and, critically, as we continue the great project to modernise and diversify the Queensland economy to expand the services in this state by an additional 75 per cent we will secure the jobs and the export prosperity for the future of this state.

While we have been getting on with the job, we know that there is one person who has not been doing their job, and that is the so-called figurehead leader of the LNP, Campbell Newman. What we have seen is that, against an ocean of scandal, he is merely just a cork on the tide. He is out there talking himself up and talking the tough talk, but when it comes to action he just melts away into the background, and we know why that is. It is because he is hopelessly compromised. His severe reprimand to dirt digger James McGrath turned into just a wet lettuce leaf across the knuckles. After that, instead of dismissing him—what did we find out last week?—he is now promoting him. His punishment is to be given a plum federal seat on the Sunshine Coast. Therein is revealed the hypocrisy of Campbell Newman and indeed the hypocrisy that is his so-called leadership.

What we know is that Campbell Newman will not act because he cannot act because he is scared to act because he is paid by a piper. He is paid by those who are calling the shots—McIver, McGrath, O'Sullivan. They are the ones who are running the LNP, and all we see from the figurehead of the LNP, Campbell Newman, is impotent rage. Finally, of course, what we see is him constantly dancing to the tune that the other piper plays, and in truth, instead of standing up and showing leadership, he has been having a lie down lately.

In the last six weeks Queenslanders have begun to see the real Campbell Newman—the tempestuous Campbell Newman, the slippery, weak and hopelessly compromised figurehead leader that is Campbell Newman. Those opposite have begun to realise it as well. They are the last to come to the party of those who realise the truth of Campbell Newman. That creeping realisation has emerged. I think those opposite should all hold their hands in the air and should repeat after me: I get it, fellas; there is a problem, and it is not going away. Its name is Campbell Newman and all of you are just beginning to realise, just as the people of Queensland have begun to realise, the truth that what you bought ain't what you wanted!

Electricity Prices

Mr DICKSON: My question without notice is to the Premier. Will the Premier confirm that this government is aware of Queensland's forecasted price rises into the future for energy? Why has she not told the people of Queensland what increases they can expect on their energy bills—or was this going to be another 'wait until after the election' announcement?

Ms BLIGH: All I can advise the member to do is to apply himself to the legislation passed by this parliament that outlines the basis on which energy pricing is determined by the Queensland Competition Authority. There is an independent Queensland Competition Authority and that authority publicly advises its predicted forecast and then confirms it. We have changed that legislation from time to time, but those changes have been the subject of debates in this parliament.

What I would say is that, like anything else, the price of electricity is partly determined by the question of supply and demand. The news this morning that Queensland is set to see two new energy plants—clean, gas fired energy plants—is good news for prices, because it does mean that we will not see a mismatch between supply and demand. There are other factors that influence it, but that is good news on electricity pricing. As I said, all I can do is refer the member to the legislation of this parliament that outlines the basis on which electricity pricing is set.

Safe Work Week

Mr RYAN: My question without notice is to the Minister for Education and Industrial Relations. Could the minister outline what events are being held to mark Safe Work Week? Is the minister aware of any unsatisfactory work practices?

Mr DICK: I am pleased to say to the honourable member that this week is Safe Work Week—a week in which employers and employees work together with government to take the message of workplace health and safety out to the community. Very sadly, workplace injuries cost about \$6.2 billion to the Queensland economy each year. Those sorts of injuries extract a very significant personal toll as well. So we are going to go out there to the community and talk about our Zero Harm at Work program to make sure all workplaces are safe. We are going to have a range of events—breakfasts, seminars and forums—all around Queensland to take the safety message out to workplaces and out to the community. On Friday the activities will culminate with a community breakfast in Brisbane, led by the Queensland Safety Ambassador and State of Origin legend Mal Meninga, who is on board again this year to take the safety message out to the community.

Last week, regrettably, evidence emerged of a particular workplace in Queensland which has no interest in safety. Of course, that is the back room of the LNP. Last Friday Queenslanders awoke to a front page story in the *Courier-Mail* about a tyrannical, overbearing, dictatorial bully. I am not talking about former Libyan President, Colonel Gaddafi; I am talking about none other than the LNP Treasurer, Barry O'Sullivan. He is another standover merchant. There is only one organisation in the world that could keep the death of Colonel Gaddafi off the front page and that, of course, is the Queensland LNP. They think that is an acceptable way to treat people. It is not acceptable. It is not acceptable in Queensland schools. It is not acceptable in Queensland workplaces. It is not acceptable in Queensland political organisations.

The activities of the Queensland LNP last week demonstrated that they are nothing more than a collection of thugs, mugs and political throwbacks. What did Campbell Newman have to say? He hid behind a press release from the bovver boy in chief, Bruce McIver, when the royal visit was on. He did not demonstrate any political courage at all. He has no ticker at all. They are going to say pretty please in the future when they ask people to hold up their hands. They are going to say pretty please when they put someone in a corner to abuse them. They are going to be nicer. There is no leadership by Campbell Newman and there is certainly no leadership by the member for Callide, the opposition leader. He was missing in action again. He had nothing to say and he has no control or influence over anything that is happening in the LNP. There is no leadership in the LNP. It is led by a rabble. It is led by external parties. It is led by McIver, O'Sullivan, O'Dwyer—oh dear, Mr Speaker, no-one is in charge of the LNP in Queensland.

Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade

Mr GIBSON: My question without notice is to the Premier. With the unemployment rate in Wide Bay at 10.1 per cent, the highest in Queensland and amongst the highest in Australia, exposing Labor's failings at achieving its own jobs target, why is this Premier allowing her deputy and Treasurer to be distracted with the administration of a private member's bill rather than addressing 10.1 per cent unemployment in Gympie and surrounding areas?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for the question. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to talk about what this government is doing to create jobs across Queensland, including in the area represented by the member. This Friday in the region represented by the member we will have a

Queensland jobs expo. I am very pleased to advise the member that we currently have 1,000 people preregistered to attend that event. What we saw at the Gold Coast was some 4,000 people attending within the first hour and 10,000 throughout the day. What we saw at both the one at the Gold Coast and the one on the Sunshine Coast were different groups of people. There were people who, in some cases, had all the skills they needed to sign up for jobs almost immediately. There were other people who had never worked in this industry but who want to make the commitment to get the skills needed, and it is our government that is providing them with that opportunity.

I am pleased again to advise the member and the House—members may recall that the government advised that we would be putting in place 500 positions in a new five-week introductory course to working in the mining sector called Resources 101—we have had 1,000 people sign up with interest in that course. We know that people are interested in taking up some of the action that this government is creating in the Queensland economy.

However, let us have a look at what the member opposite and his colleagues want to do to those parts of the Queensland economy that are really on the boil and creating jobs. These are the people who want to have a moratorium on the resource sector. They want a moratorium on mining approvals. They want a moratorium. They want to stop the resource sector. What will that do? They want a moratorium on jobs. What will that do in the area represented by the member who asked this question?

As I have said many times in this House, Labor understands, believes in and is committed to giving every person possible the dignity of work. That is why we took a policy of jobs, jobs, jobs to the election. It is why it has been our constant mantra. We know that life is about more than a job. It is a job, but it is also the people you are related to, the people you form friendships with and the people you have relationships with. If you are looking to provide happiness, wellbeing and prosperity for all people whom you represent across Queensland, you cannot walk away from social policy or from issues that matter deeply to the emotional lives of the people whom we represent.

Electoral Commission

Mr WATT: My question is to the Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State. Can the minister please inform the House of provisions within the Electoral Act dealing with party administration and whether the commissioner has the power to remove elected officials from political parties?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for the question. The role of the Electoral Commission is a broad one and it is very important in a democratic society. Indeed, under part 9 of the Electoral Act, we have provisions for model rules that apply to preselections. They are expected to be complied with in accordance with the law. Of course, one of the problems is that it cannot be totally comprehensive and it cannot, of course, deal with issues such as those we have seen in the LNP in recent times in relation to how it deals with the preselection of candidates. I regret to advise the honourable member that conduct of the nature that he is referring to is not able to be dealt with by the Electoral Commissioner at this time.

We have seen a very odd form of leadership in the LNP recently. We have seen Campbell Newman say from day one that the buck stops with him, that he is the man in charge, but at every step and at every turn since that time it has been demonstrated to us, from the point of view of who runs the place, that neither Campbell Newman nor any of the elected members of this parliament have any influence over the direction of the LNP, over who its candidates are, over tactics, strategy or policy. Let us just have a bit of a look at it over the last month.

First of all we saw the dirt files with McGrath, O'Sullivan and O'Dwyer all involved. What happens? They get a stern talking to and, as the Deputy Premier indicated, one of them gets a promotion. Then we saw the 'Barrygate' tapes. What happened? They had a little bit of a think about it and have some new rules. Barry will stay in the job. They will not change anything but will be nicer to people now when they have a preselection. It reminds me of my days in the student union when we passed a resolution that Iran and Iraq be nice to each other. Then we have Gavin King, who Campbell Newman described as the 'Newman of the north'. And today we saw the worst of all: John Bjelke-Petersen of that iconic National Party family said that Campbell Newman should exercise some backbone and do something. But we know he will not. Why? Because every single cent of the money that Barry O'Sullivan collects on behalf of the LNP goes into the wallet of Campbell Newman. He is paid by the LNP. There is no way that Campbell Newman has any control over Barry O'Sullivan or Bruce McIver. He is like a yapping dog.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr LUCAS: Speaking of yapping dogs, there is another one. It is like a yapping dog that jumps up and down on the footpath. The yapping dog that jumps up and down is always the one with the fewest teeth and the smallest bite.

Public Transport

Mr EMERSON: My question is to the Minister for Transport. I return to the government's *Shaping Tomorrow's Queensland* document. Why has this Labor government dumped its broken promise made 13 years ago to double the percentage of journeys being taken on public transport by 2010 and instead moved its target out by another 20 years? Is it because the minister thinks the Treasurer's private member's bill is more important than getting outcomes in public transport?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member very much for the question. When asked by Madonna King what the member for Indooroopilly thought about civil unions, he could not give a direct answer. I will be very interested to hear what the member for Indooroopilly has to say about civil unions when the private member's bill is introduced later on this evening. I will be very interested to hear his views and whether or not the members opposite will be able to exercise a conscience vote or whether Campbell Newman will make them all fall back into line and not support it. This will be a test of what individual members have to say.

I am more than happy to talk about public transport. Yes, we do want to see by 2031 our mode share of public transport increase from seven per cent to 14 per cent. We are continuing to invest. On the weekend the Minister for Main Roads and I released the Connecting SEQ 2031 final strategy which outlines a vision for public transport infrastructure for the next 20 years. It is a Labor government that is delivering for public transport.

Mr EMERSON: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. It is a motion before the parliament.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Let me finish.

Mr SPEAKER: Resume your seat. There is no point of order. I will hear the minister.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We have seen from the opposition its can-do LNP plan, taken from the South-East Queensland regional mayors. That is its answer for public transport in South-East Queensland—plagiarism. Since the member for Indooroopilly has asked this question, it is worthwhile highlighting to the parliament that when he was asked some transport questions by Spencer Howson at the end of last month he could not really give an answer. Spencer Howson asked, 'Well, what are you going to do when you get into government?' There was no answer. Spencer said, 'Right, I will ask you a second time. What are you going to do about it—the LNP?' Scott Emerson—again no answer. For the third time Spencer Howson said, 'Right, so I will ask you for a third time. What are you going to do about transport when you get in? Four times you were asked and four times there was no answer.'

The Victorian Liberals have been coming up with some transport policies. The opposition cannot come up with transport policies, but the Victorian government can. It recently had its party conference. What two policies did the Victorian Liberals come up with? One, wi-fi on trains and, two, quiet carriages. Both delivered by this Queensland Labor government. I welcome the day when the shadow minister for transport comes up with some transport policies. I am happy to debate him anywhere, any time. I am happy to debate you because you have absolutely nothing.

Sexual Violence

Ms BOYLE: My question without notice is to the Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women, and I ask: will the minister please inform the House of the importance of raising awareness of sexual violence and advise if there are any other matters relating to this issue?

Ms STRUTHERS: I thank the member for her commitment to ending violence against women. This Friday women will gather across the state to march to say no to sexual violence and to reclaim the night. I urge all men to join in to show their support for this important cause. Marches are organised in Brisbane, Cairns, Townsville, Toowoomba, Gladstone and Bundaberg to raise awareness of sexual violence. Hundreds will gather in the city's Brisbane Square for the rally from 6.30 to march over to West End. There were 5,442 reported cases of sexual assault in 2009-10. Eighty per cent of sexual assaults go unreported. It is especially important that my male colleagues show their support as this month's campaign slogan is 'ending sexual violence against women is men's business.'

One man who will not take a stand is Campbell Newman. He continues to defend the victim-blaming views of his Cairns candidate. Once again Campbell Newman has displayed a complete lack of leadership, particularly when it comes to appalling behaviour by LNP candidates and party officials. Contrast this to the decisive action the member for Southern Downs took. Lawrence Springborg as former leader did not hesitate to dump Michael Giles, the Nationals candidate for Maryborough in 2004, when it was revealed that he had a domestic violence order against him. Last week Mr Newman proudly likened himself to Gavin King, saying he was the Newman figure of the north. Does Mr Newman also believe in the victim-blaming views of Mr King and, like King, has he ever imagined putting a fork through the eyes of a waitress? These are despicable views of the candidate for Cairns.

It is a real boys' club in the LNP. Only 15 per cent of LNP candidates are women. In fact, Afghanistan's parliament has more female candidates and members. Their membership is 27.7 per cent. Women have a bright future under the Bligh Labor government, but it is very risky under that LNP mob.

Cyclone Shelters

Mr LANGBROEK: My question without notice is to the honourable the Premier. With the Bureau of Meteorology predicting higher than average cyclones this season, why are key areas of Queensland still waiting to see the cyclone shelters first promised in 2006, and now being subsidised by Abu Dhabi, and why is she allowing the Treasurer to be distracted with a private member's bill when he should be managing the state's budget to deliver those vital shelters to Queensland?

Ms BLIGH: There were a number of points made in the question asked by the member that I am very happy to address. Firstly, so committed is our government to implementing more cyclone shelters in Queensland that when question time is over today the Treasurer will be preparing to head off to Proserpine, where he will be joining the foreign minister of the United Arab Emirates to turn the first sod on the first cyclone shelter. I thank the member for Surfers Paradise for issuing a media alert on what is a very important policy of this government, to ensure we learn from the terrible disasters of last year and put in place things that will make us safer across Queensland.

I have to say that I am disturbed by the tenor of the honourable member's question which we also saw with the original announcement from the government of the UAE. I would say that this denigration of a generous act of friendship by one of our significant trading partners is dog whistling at its worse. The people of that country were genuinely moved by what they saw on their televisions. We know that it is a wealthy country. They chose to share some of their prosperity with people in Queensland. They were very genuine—

Opposition members interjected.

Ms BLIGH: What is it that the member for Surfers Paradise and his colleagues in the LNP are suggesting? That the government of Queensland should have rejected the gift? That we should have said, 'No, thank you'? What sort of people are those opposite?

I am proud that our government is the first Queensland government ever to deliver cyclone-proof shelters in Far North Queensland. We have done exactly what we said we would do. That is, when public infrastructure is constructed and where it is appropriate to construct it to cyclone-proof levels we will do it. That is exactly what we have done. The very generous gift of the people of the United Arab Emirates has given us the chance to accelerate that program. As a Queenslanders, I am deeply grateful. I hope that we never need to use those facilities to shelter people from dangerous cyclones.

Mr Cripps: How many of those BER projects were cyclone rated?

Ms BLIGH: How disgraceful of the member for Hinchinbrook!

Mr Cripps: How many of those BER projects were cyclone rated?

Ms BLIGH: Every one of them survived the cyclone and will be used again.

Fishing Industry, Restrictions

Mr HOOLIHAN: My question is to the Minister for Main Roads, Fisheries and Marine Infrastructure. Could the minister please inform the House about public consultation underway on the possible relaxing of restrictions on the catch of female mud crabs and also advise the House of protections in place for other slippery species in Queensland?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Keppel for his question. As he represents some prime crabbing country in Queensland, he certainly knows the value of the mud crab industry to Queensland and its value to the mums and dads, grandmas and grandads and kids who want to catch a few mud crabs.

As fellow fishing enthusiasts in this House are aware, in Queensland it has been illegal to take female mud crabs for about 120 years. Some fishing experts tell me that once the females, the jennies, get to about 16 centimetres, they find it difficult to mate with the smaller bucks. It is legal to take a buck, a male crab, once it reaches 15 centimetres, and the big jennies are finding the larger bucks in short supply. Therefore, I am asking Queenslanders: do you support the taking of jennies 16 centimetres or larger for recreational fishers? We are getting a lot of feedback from fishers and crabbers across the state. Many are saying no. The member for Townsville certainly does not approve of it. However, a lot are saying yes. My colleague the member for Mulgrave thinks we should be able to do that. I encourage all Queenslanders to have their say on that.

We know that there are a few other protected species in Queensland. One species is a slimy, slippery creature that lurks in the deep waters of the LNP. It is the kind of species that eats its young and even cannibalises its own, launching abusive tirades and causing fear and intimidation. It survives on a diet of bullying and harassment. It is the dirt digger, clawing away at the personal lives of its opponents—

Mr Lucas: Bottom feeders.

Mr WALLACE: It is a bottom feeder. It collects information as to what school others' children go to or the fact that a person is adopted. Who is protecting those despicable creatures? It is none other than Campbell Newman, of course. He is not a big enough man to take on those people in the LNP because he is beholden to them for the \$12,000 of filthy lucre he receives every month. We live in a democracy, not a dictatorship, and Queenslanders will not stand for his weak leadership and failure to sort out the LNP. It is not good enough for Campbell Newman to look those toadies in the eye, raise his hands and say, 'You're a naughty boy!' He has to take some action and dismiss the grubs who are running the LNP, McIver and O'Sullivan. If there is one thing that I can take from today it is that O'Sullivan is going to need a lot of phone books, because there have been a lot of naughty people opposite.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable the minister, the term you used is unparliamentary. You will withdraw it.

Mr WALLACE: I withdraw.

Adoption

Mr MESSENGER: My question without notice is to the Premier. I refer the Premier to her support for the official recognition of same-sex civil unions in Queensland. Can the Premier give a guarantee that heterosexual Queensland couples on the official adoption waiting list will not have to compete with gay or transvestite couples for adoptive children once same-sex civil unions become legal?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for the question. I note that he is asking a question on a matter that earlier he spoke about, saying that it should not be discussed. I thank him for his interest in something that he said this parliament should not take an interest in.

Mr MESSENGER: I rise on a point of order. The Premier is misleading the House. I said it should not be discussed in a rushed manner.

Mr SPEAKER: Is the point of order that the member believes the Premier is misleading the House?

Mr MESSENGER: Yes.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order. There is a way to deal with that. That is a matter of privilege. There is no point of order.

Ms BLIGH: For the member's benefit, it was a rhetorical point. As the member will see when the Deputy Premier introduces the bill this evening, the bill makes no changes to any other parts of Queensland law—

Mr Fraser: In relation to adoption.

Ms BLIGH:—in relation to adoption. I would advise him to have a very good look at it, to examine his own conscience and to think about the people in his electorate who are living in those relationships and want the opportunity to celebrate them and have them recognised.

Chatsworth Electorate, Cycling Track

Mr KILBURN: My question without notice is to the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport. Queensland boasts a proud sporting community. Can the minister outline for the House the status of the Bligh government's planned cycling track in my local community and whether there are any other views in this regard?

Mr REEVES: I thank the honourable member for the question. He is a great supporter of his own community and the whole of Queensland when it comes to sport and recreation. The Bligh government understands the importance of providing more sport and recreation opportunities and making them available to all Queenslanders. For our athletes to be able to compete with the world's best, we need to give them access to the top-class facilities they deserve.

It appears obvious that the LNP has other ideas and would rather deny Queenslanders opportunities. For the past three years the Bligh government has been asking the LNP council to support our plans for a cycling criterium track at Chandler. It would be a state funded facility which would cater for the needs of the cycling community, providing them with a safe and first-class venue in which to train. It would further add to the expanding Sleeman Sports Complex. It has the only Olympic standard BMX track in the southern hemisphere.

For three years this government has been blocked by Campbell Newman and now Graham Quirk. If the CityCycle program is any indication of what Campbell Newman stands for then maybe he needs to spend more time on a tricycle before trying to remove the training wheels. He is no doubt on a tandem bicycle with the member for Callide, but they are peddling in opposite directions. Campbell Newman cannot control his party let alone a bike. You can just imagine Campbell Newman singing to the member for Callide the famous song *Bicycle Race*—‘You say black, I say white; you say bark, I say bite’. A bit further down the road when he reaches the chorus you can hear him singing to the member for Callide—‘I want to ride my bicycle, I want to ride my bike; I want to ride my bicycle, I want to ride it where I like’. Campbell Newman needs to show leadership. The development of a criterium—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Resume your seat. The House will come to order! I call the minister.

Mr REEVES: The development of a criterium circuit would attract athletes from other nations to Brisbane and further our reputation as a sports hub for athletic training and development. This is what the people of Queensland want yet the LNP has spent three years ignoring the calls. If Campbell Newman had his way, he would run sport and recreation into the ground the same way the CityCycle scheme is headed—if his past record at the Brisbane City Council is anything to go by.

Campbell Newman will not even let the government construct a cycle track so it is no wonder he cannot construct a vision for Queensland. How can he lead Queensland if he cannot even lead his own party. The Bligh government has a plan for a cycling track that people will actually want to use and utilise. I call on the LNP to stop blocking the delivery of this track. Only a Bligh government will secure the future of Queenslanders, keep Queenslanders in a job and maintain our reputation as a champion state and the event state.

Social Housing

Mr SORENSEN: My question without notice is to the Minister for Communities. I table a photograph of 11 units in Pine Street, Hervey Bay; social housing units completed more than three months ago.

Tabled paper: Photo of public housing units at Hervey Bay [\[5690\]](#).

Minister, given that there are still no occupants in the accommodation, why is social housing so badly managed that there are 30,000 people on the waiting list, but new units such as these are standing empty and unused?

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Those on my right! The honourable minister, you have one minute.

Ms STRUTHERS: I thank the member for the question. I will need to take on notice the actual block of units he is referring to. He may be aware that we have more than 4,000 new units of social housing right around the state as part of the massive investment in social housing that this government is responsible for—a \$500 million Queensland Future Growth Fund that we continue to rollout. With the investment from the federal government we are seeing the biggest ever investment in social housing. I take on notice the block that he is talking about. I will certainly look into that for him.


It is a bit rich for the member for Hervey Bay to come into this House and ask about public housing when many on that side do not support it. In June, what did the shadow minister for housing say? She said that she could not commit the LNP to more funding for social housing. Do they have a housing policy? No.

(Time expired)

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time for question time is over.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Bligh Labor Government

 **Mr SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.14 am): Over the years we have seen many occasions when the Leader of the House has come into this parliament and moved a motion that began with ‘we should suspend as much of standing orders as is necessary to’. There have been some memorable occasions when standing orders have been suspended, as they have been this morning.

Probably the most memorable was when the government moved to protect Gordon Nuttall—the former member for Sandgate. It moved to change the rules of this place to protect one of its own—one of the worst members who has ever sat in this parliament. One of the worst members who has ever been elected to this parliament was protected by this government. It sought to change the rules and suspend standing orders, as the Leader of the House has done this morning. It sought to change the standing orders to protect one of its own who is now receiving the punishment that he justly deserves.

This morning the government sought to change the standing orders to introduce a bill which may as well be an admission that this government has failed. It might as well stood up this morning and said, 'We want to suspend standing orders to introduce a bill which admits the failure of this Labor government.' It is clear that the government has nothing left. This is a government that is bereft of ideas. It is a government that is bereft of initiative. It has nothing left but to try cheap political stunts to save some of its members from the electoral oblivion that they deserve.


The record of this government is what the people of Queensland will pass judgement on at the next election. Right across Queensland people are waiting for that day. They are waiting for the day when they get the opportunity to pass judgement on a government that has clearly failed; failed in every area of public administration. But now the government has given up on so many of those areas of public administration. It has given up trying to address the cost-of-living issues. It has given up trying to address the cost of water, the cost of electricity, the cost of registration—all of those areas that impact on every family. The Treasurer is not interested. The ministers are not interested. They come into this parliament and instead seek to suspend standing orders to indulge in political stunts rather than address those issues which are impacting on Queensland families right across the state.

The government is not interested in putting forward any initiatives. The only initiative that the government can come into the parliament and talk about this morning is an initiative by private enterprise. The Premier stands up and tries to take credit for an announcement by TRUenergy of its intention to invest over \$3 billion in the infrastructure that Queensland needs. So not only is this government bereft of ideas, not only is it bereft of initiatives, but it seeks to claim credit for the ideas and initiatives of private enterprise.

This is clearly a government that has run its course. It is clearly a government that is out of ideas. It is clearly a government that has failed. It is clear that the people of Queensland need the opportunity to vote this government out. They need an opportunity to pass judgement on this government. That is why I would today repeat the call that I made last time this parliament met: the Premier call the election that the people of Queensland badly need. Give the people of Queensland the opportunity to pass judgement on the performance of this government rather than indulge in the stupid political stunts that we have seen from the Treasurer this morning. These are stupid political stunts that completely ignore all of the big issues, all of the big problems, all of the crises that have been the result of this government's administration and that have now been consigned to the back room while the Treasurer and his political machine men seek to find some sort of life raft for a government that does not deserve a second chance.

The best thing the Premier can do for Queenslanders, the best thing that the Deputy Premier can do for Queenslanders, is to call an election. Let the people of Queensland have their say about the performance of this government. It will be a day of judgement that this government cannot avoid for very much longer.

Cost of Living

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.19 am): I want to focus on the issues that are of most concern to Queenslanders today across the whole state and to not be distracted as the Treasurer and Deputy Premier would have us. Let us look at how tough Queenslanders are finding it. A study by the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling at the University of Canberra, commissioned by Australians for Affordable Housing, found that more than 10 per cent of Australian households are spending so much on rent and mortgage payments that they have little left over to cover their bills. In Queensland many householders who rent are struggling, with a reported one in four in housing stress.

Last week the ING Direct Financial Wellbeing Index showed that Queenslanders are under more personal financial pressure than anyone else in the country. The report starkly revealed just how badly this long-term Bligh Labor government's constant cost-of-living increases are hurting households. It revealed that about a quarter of all Queenslanders have no savings at all, while only 12 per cent of Queensland households will increase spending around Christmas time and about one in three say they cannot afford to increase spending in the foreseeable future. That is the reality that affects Queenslanders today.

The reasons Queensland household budgets are so squeezed right now are becoming clear. We heard the Treasurer earlier today talking about other reports that he had listed in terms of Queensland's economic performance. Queensland's unemployment rate—the independent umpire that the Treasurer is so fond of referring to—shows that Queensland still has the highest unemployment rate in the nation at 5.8 per cent. That is the labour force data for September 2011. The unemployment figures showed the long-term trend of unemployment in Queensland was also increasing, and September was the fourth month in a row that Queensland's trend unemployment rate had risen.

The NAB monthly survey for September showed that business conditions in Queensland continued to be the weakest in the country and that trading conditions, profitability and employment conditions all went backwards in Queensland. While the NAB survey points to mining industry profitability, other sectors like manufacturing, retail and construction are still struggling, and Labor's carbon tax will only stifle that economic recovery.

The Deloitte Access Economics report that the Treasurer refers to claims that little economic recovery is being felt in Brisbane, on the Gold Coast and in Cairns. Unemployment is set to continue to rise, and Queensland is still the unemployment capital of Australia. It also showed that small business confidence in Queensland is set to continue to be weaker than the national average. These are not the figures that the Treasurer wants Queenslanders to hear. These are the figures that condemn this government's mismanagement.

Yesterday, when CommSec's *State of the States* report came out it was interesting how quickly, how stridently and how vehemently the Treasurer and Deputy Premier started to hoe into the messenger—shoot the messenger; do not heed the message. It is interesting that the CommSec report says that Queensland remains at the back of the pack while the other resource-rich state Western Australia is streaking ahead. Population growth has slowed—it is below decade-long averages—unemployment has risen, and our housing industry has been hammered. They are all the outcomes of the CommSec *State of the States* report.

The Treasurer lashed out. He tried to browbeat CommSec, as he has done in the past when he has got bad reports from them. He picks up the phone and has a screaming fit down the line to someone who does not say the right thing. He tells them that their report is wrong and that their methodology is flawed—just like he does when he does not get good media reports. We hear from the opposition office how loudly the Treasurer screams when he gets something he does not like coming through. It has all been confirmed here today when he does not like it.

But exactly one year ago the Treasurer put out a media release supporting CommSec's then *State of the States* report. So a year ago it was all good news. It was all sweetness and light. They said things were going well. There was no question of the methodology when that report came out. There was no question about what it said and how it saw the future. It is only when he gets a bad report that he throws a bit of a wobbly and has a bit of a paddy and gets the old Nathaniel Jessep marching up and down, 'You can't handle the truth. I'm the only purveyor of the truth.' And that is what has happened.

It is clear that there is only one party that can deal with the cost of living, that will remove Labor's insidious tax on the family home, that will reduce electricity prices, that will reduce water prices—and that is the LNP. The Labor Party do not deserve another chance—not this time.

(Time expired)

Civil Partnerships Bill



Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Reconstruction) (11.24 am): The Labor government that I lead believes in a fair go. A fair go means equality of opportunity, of lifestyle and of basic human rights. These are the foundations upon which Australian society has been built, and later today we will see the introduction of a private member's bill that continues that tradition—a bill to implement civil unions for people in same-sex relationships. Former Justice of the High Court the Hon. Michael Kirby recently wrote—

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

He went on to say—

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

I think we can all agree that these are wise words—'Dignity, recognition and acceptance are precious in their own right.' How could a society which claims to believe in a fair go deny its citizens these precious rights?

Labor strives, and always has, for equality, the best education for our children, the dignity of work for job seekers, high-quality care for the sick and the vulnerable. But equality is not just about these things, as important as they are. The ethos of a fair go cannot elevate one type of love above another, recognise one relationship and not another. It cannot condemn a meaningful commitment. The 'fair go' that I believe in embraces dignity, recognition and acceptance for all.


Today the Deputy Premier will introduce a bill to provide for civil partnerships. A civil partnership is a legally recognised relationship that may be entered into by two adults regardless of their sex. If the bill is successful, same-sex and opposite-sex couples will be able to enter into a civil partnership, to hold an authorised ceremony to celebrate their relationship and to register their relationship with the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. This bill will give same-sex couples the opportunity to publicly celebrate their love and their commitment. All of us who have had the opportunity to do just that—to celebrate our own relationships and have them legally recognised—know how much that means in our lives.

There are some who dismiss this as a minor issue, who seek to avoid dealing with it by denigrating it as an irrelevant distraction. I would ask all of those who do so to recall the happiest days of their own lives—and for most of us our wedding day will always be near the top of that list. So why would we deny that experience to others? I venture to suggest that many of those who seek to dismiss this experience as minor, unimportant or trivial are those who have enjoyed this entitlement all their lives, without question and without struggle.

I am proud that the human rights of people in same-sex relationships has been an ongoing program of reform for our government. Whether it is protection from domestic violence, property law, succession laws or surrogacy, this initiative builds on that long tradition of reform. I am ashamed to hear some opposite decry human rights as a political stunt. Let me conclude by again drawing on the words of a great Australian Justice Michael Kirby—

Fortunate is a human being straight or gay, who has such a lifelong love. Evil are those who would deny such love to a fellow human being.

Civil Partnerships Bill

 **Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade) (11.27 am): It is our human relationships that give meaning to our existence. They make the joys of life joyous and the sadness in life sad. The sharing of experiences provides our context—the reference point for our hopes, our travails and our daily endeavours.

Our interrelationships define our society and inspire our creativity. Democracy and art are both functions of the truth that we do not live alone. For many of us this communitarian conviction lies at the core of our politics. Human relationships have not much changed for hundreds of years. Despite the wishes or ignorance of some—whether blissful or baleful—humans have been loving each other in many different ways for centuries. What has changed is society's recognition of the breadth of human relationships.


We humans are sorters and sifters of most things in life, constantly attaching labels and often ordering hierarchies according to relationships. Marriage has long been elevated amongst all other relationships in our society, and its sanctity is held dear to many. But beyond the traditional legal recognition of a union of a man and a woman in the Christian tradition, others have been involved in human relationships of companionship and devotion that are not accommodated as marriage under the laws of this nation.

In modern times we have had a debate about the legal recognition of the fact of relationships between men and women. A generation ago the introduction of legislation in our nation gave legal recognition to the substance of relationships between men and women who were, by the facts or de facto, in a committed relationship. The debates at that time a generation ago are eerily familiar to the contemporary debate. It is worth noting that the portents of ruin were never realised, nor are they likely to be by the possible actions of this parliament in coming months.

More recently, parliaments—this one included—have undertaken legislative projects to recognise the fact of human relationships between two women and two men as equal in law as to the fact of relationships between men and women. But this factual recognition—giving legal reality to the actual reality of human relationships—can be seen as sterile or almost begrudging. Our laws presently admit the evidence of these relationships. They are there to be proven but often after the fact and often under contest. There is a world of difference between a legal permission to prove a relationship and laws which provide for such relationships to be validated and celebrated.

With the support of my colleagues, I will later today introduce a bill that seeks to amend the laws of this parliament to do just that. I recognise that for each MP—as indeed for each person we represent in this place—this will be a matter for their own conscience, through their own conceptions of human rights and their own moral, ethical and faith based convictions. I implore the hierarchy of the opposition to recognise this and provide for individuals to be given a vote of their own free will. We should, in a civil society, not live a fiction through our laws. Our laws should accept the truth of human relationships.

Liberal National Party, Agriculture Strategy

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (11.31 am): On Friday, 16 September 2011 the leader of the LNP, Campbell Newman, and I launched the LNP's new strategy for agriculture in Queensland. The strategy sets an ambitious target to double our agricultural production by 2040. The LNP's plan is focused on increasing agricultural production—not regulation, not compliance but production. I am pleased today to table a copy of *The CanDo LNP agriculture strategy—Queensland food and fibre: Feeding the new world—a 2040 vision for Queensland agriculture*.

Tabled paper: Report titled 'The CanDo LNP agriculture strategy—Queensland food and fibre: feeding the new world—a 2040 vision for Queensland agriculture' [5691].

The objectives of this strategy are: to provide a long-term and respected future for farming in Queensland; to improve job opportunities and quality of life for Queenslanders working in rural communities, particularly those on the land; to support ongoing investment in our agricultural sector; to ensure the agricultural sector in Queensland remains globally competitive; and to harness science to keep agricultural industries at the forefront of production methods and resilient from disease, disaster and unforeseen events.

The LNP has identified six areas to achieve this goal. The LNP will, firstly, re-establish a stand-alone department of agriculture to drive this strategy. This stand-alone agriculture department will be directed to engage and work cooperatively with farmers to achieve outcomes, rather than focus on bureaucracy and red tape. The six priority areas in our strategic plan are: facilitating new infrastructure; improving skills and career pathways; research, development and extension; protecting strategic cropping land; enhancing biosecurity; and fighting Labor's destructive carbon tax.

The LNP will support new water infrastructure to enhance existing and encourage new agricultural production, including the Connors River Dam, the Nathan Dam and the Water for Bowen projects. The LNP will also support improved transport infrastructure, including road, rail and port infrastructure, to facilitate moving agricultural products for value adding and to domestic and export markets. The LNP will promote agricultural science, agricultural economics and biosciences as pathways for young people to pursue careers in agriculture. The LNP wants to improve the profile of graduate careers, school based apprenticeships and traineeships in agriculture. This will involve close partnerships with universities, agricultural colleges, private training providers and schools.

The LNP will work with industry, existing institutions and universities to identify RD&E priorities to improve productivity, support the sector's ability to address emerging challenges and capitalise on new market and export opportunities. The LNP will develop long-term funding sources for agricultural RD&E as part of our commitment to science and innovation focused on productivity. The LNP will identify and protect strategic cropping land under an improved system of statutory regional plans which will involve extensive community and industry input. The LNP will not allow new open-cut mines on SCL or underground mining, coal seam gas or other resource projects on SCL if it is likely to have a significant adverse impact on the productive capacity of that land.


The LNP will ensure Biosecurity Queensland is adequately resourced to undertake its prevention, emergency response and detection responsibilities, and the LNP will continue to oppose Labor's destructive carbon tax, which will drive up the cost of farm inputs and erode our competitive advantage against imported products. As the shadow minister for agriculture, food and regional Queensland, I am proud that the LNP is promoting and supporting agriculture.

The LNP agriculture strategy sets out our vision and priorities for agriculture in Queensland over the next 30 years. Since the launch of the LNP's strategic plan for agriculture, I have welcomed the support and encouragement of Queensland's peak agricultural industry bodies. I table media releases issued by the Queensland Farmers Federation, AgForce, Growcom and Canegrowers all welcoming the LNP's strategic plan for agriculture.

Tabled paper: Bundle of media releases by Queensland Farmers Federation, AgForce Queensland, Growcom and Canegrowers Queensland relating to the LNP agriculture strategy [\[5692\]](#).

The LNP looks forward to implementing the planks of its strategic plan in partnership with all sectors of Queensland's agricultural industry. Importantly, it establishes the framework for more detailed policies and initiatives. The LNP has also received much valuable and welcome feedback—which we invited at the launch of our strategic plan—from many sources, including individual farmers, academics in the field of agriculture, agricultural scientists working in industry and indeed public servants who were once proud to work for the former department of primary industries and who are desperate for their work to be recognised and valued. The ideas in this strategy will align with plans for each of the state's other key economic drivers. Together with agriculture, they form the four pillars of Queensland's economy.

Commonwealth Games Bid

 **Ms CROFT** (Broadwater—ALP) (11.36 am): The Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games Bid company was officially formed in July 2010 following this government's decision to bid for the 2018 Commonwealth Games. Such a momentous decision was at the instigation of the Premier, who had contacted the Australian Commonwealth Games Association president, Sam Coffa, resulting in a feasibility study on the Gold Coast city's chances of winning the hosting rights for the 2018 games. Mr Mark Stockwell was appointed chairman of the bid company, with Sam Coffa as the deputy chair. The first major task for the bid company was the preparation of a 50,000-word 250-page bid book, which was lodged on 11 May 2011. Prior to this lodgement, the bid company also completed numerous outbound lobbying trips, touching base with the 71 voting delegates to seek their support.

On 11 May 2011, the Premier travelled with the president of the Australian Commonwealth Games Association, Sam Coffa, the chairman of the bid company, Mark Stockwell, and the Gold Coast mayor, Ron Clarke, to lodge the candidature file with the Commonwealth Games Federation in Kuala Lumpur. The bid company worked extensively with the relevant agencies of government, the Gold Coast City Council and other stakeholders to develop and formulate the candidature file. I congratulate Mark Stockwell and his team and all the stakeholders involved on this fine effort.

It was my great privilege to be involved with the bid team on many of their programs and visitations but in particular to be involved with the Adopt a Commonwealth Country program. This program saw 75 schools on the Gold Coast linking with Commonwealth countries, studying their cultures and ultimately meeting with their visiting delegates. The program has been acknowledged by visiting delegates as an outstanding initiative, and our Gold Coast city schools now have links with schools in their adopted countries. I would like to thank and congratulate the schoolteachers, students and parents for their outstanding effort.

Following the lodgement of the bid book, the Gold Coast team met with representatives of the Commonwealth Games Federation Evaluation Commission during their visit to the Gold Coast in June this year. The evaluation commission's visit was to assess the Gold Coast's credentials to host the 2018 Commonwealth Games. The commission's results were published in September and the Gold Coast received a glowing report. A games on the Gold Coast was seen as low risk, with no impediments to a great games being identified.


The next step was to showcase the Gold Coast to visiting delegations from six regions of the Commonwealth—Africa in June, Oceania in July, Europe in August, the Caribbean and Americas in September, and we have just hosted the Asian delegates, who enjoyed some V8 Supercars action during their stay. Again, the results of the visits were very positive. We had a wonderful opportunity to showcase many of the Gold Coast's outstanding theme parks and wonderful places that they could go and enjoy.

The final presentation to Commonwealth Games Association delegates will be at the Commonwealth Games Federation General Assembly in St Kitts and Nevis on 11 November. The games would be a life-changing event for the Gold Coast and everyone who participates, whether they are athletes, officials, volunteers or spectators, can be guaranteed a great games. The games would create a legacy for the Gold Coast by delivering world-class sporting facilities and transport upgrades and enhancing the Gold Coast as a tourist destination.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the bid team for its outstanding effort and publicly recognise those who have worked tirelessly to position the Gold Coast city for what we hope is going to be a positive outcome in weeks to come. The bid company was led by CEO Mark Peters with the following staff: Stuart Craig, Ian Whitehead, George Farrington, Tamara Morris, Melissa Price, Olivia Phillips, Brett McDougall, Megan Crockford, Fiona Galletly, Jodie McDonald, Ashleigh Turner and Stacey McLennan. I pay tribute to each and every one of them. They have worked beyond the call of duty and have been wonderful ambassadors for the Gold Coast, Queensland and indeed Australia.

A free final announcement event will be held for the community at the Broadwater Parklands at Southport, with a live feed of the announcement aired on big screens at 8 am on Saturday, 12 November. I hope that lots of Gold Coasters will come down and join us in what we hope will be a great result for the Gold Coast. I am sure honourable members will join me in supporting the bid and seeking the best result for the Gold Coast, Queensland and indeed Australia.

Health System, Population Growth

 **Mr McARDLE** (Caloundra—LNP) (11.41 am): Queensland's population has grown by an average of 2.4 per cent over the past decade, well above the Australian average of 1.6 per cent and higher than any other state or territory. The strong growth is set to continue, with Queensland's population projected to double to almost eight million by 2056, representing the largest projected percentage increase in population of any state or territory in Australia. This poses a real problem to the sustainability of its hospital system. Population ageing and the increased prevalence of chronic diseases mean a higher percentage of Queensland's future population will be heavy users of the hospital system. Currently, almost one-third of public hospital separations in Queensland, some 32.1 per cent, are accounted for by people 65 years or older even though they account for just 12.6 per cent of the population. Older patients are more likely to be intensive users of hospital services. They have a slower recovery rate than younger people and are more likely to require support services following an acute episode. They will also require support needs related to chronic and debilitating conditions that come with ageing.


The number of people in Queensland aged 65 years or older is set to increase by 83 per cent between 2011 and 2026, reaching 1.1 million. The number of people aged 85 years or older will grow by 92 per cent over the same period to 153,000. This creates clear challenges for Queensland's hospital capacity. By 2026 approximately 45 per cent of public hospital separations in Queensland are likely to be for patients aged 65 or older if the existing ratio between hospitalisations for older persons and the

proportion of older people in the population continues. Queensland's hospital system will also be challenged by the projected increase in particular health conditions in the state. For example, Queensland's obesity rate has increased by 45 per cent over the past seven years. If left unchecked, it will double by 2025, resulting in 1.4 million Queenslanders being obese. Obesity is a known risk factor for diseases such as type 2 diabetes which will require greater hospitalisation. Obese women are almost twice as likely to have a caesarean section than women who are not obese and are three times more likely to have gestational diabetes or gestational hypertension than healthy weight mothers, all of which will increase rates of hospitalisation. Some 19,000 new cases of diabetes are diagnosed in Queensland every year and by 2031 between 600,000 and 700,000 Queenslanders will be at risk of having type 2 diabetes. This will lead to a 2.7 times increase in the current rate of hospitalisation due to diabetes by 2031.

Queensland also has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world. Two out of every three dollars spent on treating these and other cancer patients are associated with hospital costs. Hospitalisations have increased by about 60,000 per year over the last nine reporting years, with an average increase of about 86,000 bed days per year across all Queensland hospitals. The increase in hospitalisations of 60,000 per year represents an average compound annual growth of over 4.6 per cent, which is almost double the rate of population increase. Under these present trends, the number of hospitalisations is due to double over the next 20 years. Already the number of available public acute beds per 1,000 population in Queensland is lower than the national average of 2.3 per cent compared to the national average of 2.5 per cent. Over the next 20 years the number of hospitalisations in Queensland will double, with growth increasing at more than twice the rate of expansion in bed days.

The challenge is then to identify how many people are in our public health system who do not need to be there. Is it the case that they are often there because their condition has deteriorated to the point that they eventually needed hospitalisation or as a consequence of underfunded or non-existent levels of care in the community? Further, an ongoing need exists to expand access to hospital services for Queenslanders to meet hidden or unmet demand for people who are too far away from a hospital or who are resistant to accessing care in a hospital environment. Queensland has one of the most decentralised populations in Australia, the largest portion of the people living in outer regional, remote and very remote areas compared to other Australian jurisdictions—that is, 18.6 per cent compared to New South Wales with 6.9 per cent. The dispersion of the population and the risk factors associated with residents in dispersed locations have a very real impact on access to health services and on health status. Life expectancy varies considerably between Queensland health service districts from 67.4 years in the Torres Strait to 82.3 years in both Metro North and Metro South compared with 81.5 years for all Queenslanders. The figures show a bleak picture for the future unless new and decisive determinations are made to deliver public health services across the state.

Export Week

 **Mr CHOI** (Capalaba—ALP) (11.46 am): There is no doubt that our state has faced some immense challenges in the last 12 months. A summer of sorrow as a consequence of floods and cyclones, the aftermath of the global financial crisis and the European debt concerns are causing confidence to waver. However, Queensland is truly on the road to recovery. The Deputy Premier is leading the charge and some of the announcements, such as the \$10,000 Building Boost, are having a positive impact on the construction industry and thousands of tradies in my electorate of Capalaba. Another important part of our recovery is also spearheaded by the Deputy Premier as the Minister for Trade in encouraging further export of our services and merchandise to our trading partners around the globe. Taking Queensland to the world and rebuilding confidence is a massive part of our recovery effort, and that is why it is worthy of mention in this House today that Queensland celebrated Export Week last week. Export Week recognises, promotes and assists with growing Queensland's export businesses and industries. The Queensland government held a number of activities around the state to promote market opportunities. The week highlights the significance of exporting to the Queensland economy. In fact, last year merchandise exports contributed more than \$48 billion to the Queensland economy. However, there is always room for further expansion and there is a role for governments to develop our international markets. As Parliamentary Secretary for Trade and Multicultural Affairs, this is a role that I truly believe in.


Earlier this year the Premier led a 10-day trade mission to China and the 2011 BIO International Convention in the USA as part of the Queensland government's continued commitment and effort to strengthening the economy. China is the world's second largest economy and Queensland's second largest merchandise export market. Last year China was worth some \$6.9 billion to Queensland and it is essential that Queensland continues to strengthen its links with business and government from investment in tourism and education. Our resources industry will continue to benefit from growing demand from China and India, but recent world events have taught us how important it is to diversify, and the natural beauty that Queensland has to offer is an immeasurable drawcard to tourists. We welcomed close to 200,000 Chinese tourists to the state in the year to June 2011, an increase of 25 per cent on the year before, and we will continue to target this market. I congratulate the work done by the

Minister for Tourism, Manufacturing and Small Business, Jan Jarratt, on moving the new Project China Strategy forward and asking for critical industry feedback. The Project China Strategy will map out our long-term vision to grow our share of the crucial Chinese tourism market, with potential spending by visitors in Australia tipped to reach somewhere between \$7 billion to \$9 billion by the year 2020.

The Deputy Premier and Treasurer recently also announced our next move in developing our international markets. The government's new targeted trade and investment strategy will provide the framework to boost Queensland's exports to \$100 billion and create jobs. The strategy sets out four targets for 2016. These include increase the value of knowledge-intensive goods and services exports by 75 per cent; increase the export value of Queensland's small to medium sized enterprises by 30 per cent; increase the value of capital attraction to Queensland for businesses assisted by the Queensland government by 50 per cent; and increase the export value of emerging global markets by 75 per cent. There is no doubt that growing our export markets drives prosperity and creates jobs. While we need to focus on export markets, we also need to deliver support for businesses here in Queensland on the ground so that they can also develop their potential, create local jobs and show the world just what Queenslanders are capable of achieving.

That is why I believe the Premier of Queensland's Export Awards are so important. The awards publicly recognise the talent of our businesses and the important role they play in developing export markets. I was more than pleased to attend the Premier's Awards a few days ago and was proud that bayside company ListPremier Education won the Information and Communication Technology Award at the ceremony. ListPremier Education has taken its products to the world and has achieved considerable success in overseas markets. They actually said that one of the reasons for their success was the assistance of the Queensland government. One in five jobs is export related and this increases to one in four in the regions. It is great to see a company on my doorstep doing so well. We need to repeat their success in every corner of this state and continue the prosperity and growth of our great state.

Gladstone Electorate

 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (11.51 am): I rise to raise again the pressure impacts of industrial development on the Gladstone electorate. Housing is an issue that I have raised in this chamber many times in the past and I will continue to raise the need for affordable housing. There are very many families who are mortgage stressed and more who are rent stressed because of the increased rents charged. I am told that the average rental is around \$600 to \$650. A family, even on two modest incomes, would be hard pressed to afford that. There is no confidence that that increase will not continue to escalate.


The Boyne Valley Community Discovery Centre Inc. is also facing an issue of pressure, which is a lack of growth in its little township. The school there has a reducing population. I have never supported the closure of a school unless there is absolutely no other alternative. However, there is an alternative in relation to Ubobo. The 50-hectare subdivision rule, which is a joint initiative of the council and the state government, means that agricultural lands surrounding the Ubobo township cannot be subdivided. However, there are nine blocks of land in the township of Ubobo that are owned by the state government that are already subdivided into the housing blocks. The organisation and the people in that discovery centre, who are very good, community based individuals, have made a request that those nine blocks of land be put on the market by the state government. I thank the Minister for Housing and Minister Rachel Nolan for accepting a submission from this organisation this morning. They are very genuine people. I thank both the Hon. Karen Struthers and the Hon. Rachel Nolan for their positive acceptance of the submission in relation to these nine blocks of land. The community has not shrunk; it is just that its members have grown older and, therefore, the number of attendees at that school has reduced. I certainly support that submission.

Again, the other area of pressure is in health. The hospital continues to have services undermined by the decisions made at the Rockhampton level. At the last sitting I raised the reduction in the number of operations for children under four and for young people under 14. That situation has not been turned around. Now I have been advised—this is anecdotal—that the high-dependency unit has lost its status and there is absolutely no reason for that. I am told that there are enough staff and there is enough expertise for the Gladstone Hospital to have an intensive care unit stage 4. They would need a CT scanner. Considering the development that is occurring in my electorate it is untenable that there is not an ICU. It is untenable that people cannot have fractures set. It is untenable that they cannot have operations performed at the hospital to avoid travelling to Rockhampton. My community is absolutely frustrated and is sick and tired of there being no improvement in these services.

I am also told that the general maintenance at the hospital also needs attention. I believe the minister has an interest in rural and regional health, but no action has been taken. I have a CD with some photographs of some of the areas that need attention in terms of general maintenance, and that is all that is required in a lot of cases. It is a matter of the money being available to be put into the hospital so they can repaint or conduct repairs to a building or a room so that it is fit for purpose. More important

is this information that has just come to hand that the high-dependency unit has lost its status. The fact is that we need more than a high-dependency unit; we need an intensive care unit. We need specialists to be funded to come to that hospital to provide the services at that hospital. We need the decision makers in the Gladstone Hospital to support the staff and to stand up and challenge the decisions that are being made at the Rockhampton level and at the Brisbane level to ensure that services at that hospital expand and do not shrink, as appears to be the case. The staff deserve better and so does the community of the electorate of Gladstone.

Queensland Economy

 **Mrs SULLIVAN** (Pumicestone—ALP) (11.56 am): Last week the Hon. Jan Jarratt, the Minister for Tourism, Manufacturing and Small Business, addressed small businesses at a Caboolture Business Enterprise Centre's breakfast. The minister acknowledged my long involvement with CBEC and the government's continued support through funding programs and grants. In fact, it was Jon Sullivan who successfully lobbied the Labor government for seed funding to establish CBEC on crown land.

Caboolture suffered during the January floods. They came on the back of the global financial crisis and a rising Australian dollar. The damage bill from the natural disasters so far is \$6.8 billion. To assist the state, we set up the Queensland Reconstruction Authority to oversee reconstruction activity. Reconstruction, unlike repair, involves engineers and crews completely rebuilding, and this will take years. Despite all that and the LNP talking down Queensland at every opportunity, we still have every reason to be optimistic about the economic future of Queensland.

Our state is rich in mineral resources and global demand is strong. Also, Access Economics, Westpac and the most recent ABS building expenditure figures all showed a recovering economy, fuelled by surging investment. The most recent Deloitte's Access Business Outlook report, released in July, backed up Queensland Treasury forecasts stating that our economy will 'accelerate from a standing start, reaching a sprint inside the next six months'. The Access Economics forecast for growth in Queensland this financial year is 5.6 per cent—well above the national forecast of 3.5 per cent. This partly reflects the rebuilding effort as well as a surge in business investment and a recovery in exports. In addition, the latest DAE Investment Monitor, released on 28 July, shows Queensland is a magnet for investment, clocking up a record \$184.5 billion in known projects for the June quarter 2011.

Queensland has the strongest business investment growth in mainland Australia at 13 per cent and investment for this financial year is forecast to increase by more than 27 per cent—nearly double that of Western Australia. Our expected five per cent growth rate will be amongst the highest in the developed world—higher than that of the USA, the UK and even Germany. This growth is being supported by our commitment to pro-investment policies including the nation's lowest payroll tax at 4.75 per cent with rebates for apprentices and trainees, the lowest stamp duties of any mainland state, a tax regime 30 per cent lower than the national average, Australia's lowest workers compensation premiums and Australia's lowest taxes for business start-up.

Recently, Pitcher Partners, a world renowned financial advisory company, released a report on average taxes paid by SMEs in their first year of operation, which earned the headline 'Beautiful one day, lower taxes the next'. They compared taxes paid by businesses in states across Australia and found that, when combining all taxes, Queensland's small businesses paid the least tax in the country. The LNP should read these facts. Here, business operators have proven to be quick at responding to new market opportunities and technologies to gain a competitive edge. I must mention at this point the great work that the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation—or DEEDI—Caboolture office is doing. I successfully lobbied for this office to assist businesses over five years. It provides a supportive environment where small businesses can easily access appropriate information, tools and advice that provide assistance throughout the life cycle of a business.

It has provided almost \$850,000 for small business projects, including an injection of \$250,000 to the aviation sector. Manufacturing, retail, trade and construction are the most significant employers here. The growth of 6.8 per cent per annum over the past four years demonstrates significant growth, and with the growing population it represents many opportunities for local businesses. On top of that there are several major projects in the region, including the State Equestrian Centre and the upcoming Moreton Bay Rail Link. These bode well for Caboolture's economic future.


The state Labor government is committed to helping grow business. Our Queensland Regulatory Simplification Plan 2009-13 has a target of reducing the compliance burden on business and the administrative burden on government by \$150 million per year by the end of 2012-13. As part of the 2011-12 state budget, the government announced funding for a Queensland Business Commissioner to cut red tape. Mr Blair Davies comes to the role with experience working with other levels of government and industry. He will provide a direct voice within government through liaising closely with peak industry bodies, and I have no doubt that the business sector will benefit greatly.

As I have outlined, the Queensland government offers a wide range of support to help businesses reduce costs, maintain their skills and labour base and position themselves for that next growth phase. There are a variety of grants and resources available to help businesses innovate—and they need to in order to grow, stay ahead of their competitors and reduce costs. Investing in innovation enables businesses to introduce new or improved products, services, processes or methods. Businesses want to innovate but sometimes find it too hard, too expensive or too time consuming. Taking advantage of available funding and mentoring support could save a business valuable time and money and streamline the innovation process. Log on to www.business.qld.gov.au to get facts on planning, marketing, management, exporting, financial planning, environmental awareness and capital raising.

The SmartLicence service offers access to licensing information online, while SmartSkills is a gateway to learning subjects for business starters. To help increase the online presence of a business, the department has specific tools to access. Contact DEEDI on 54312540. DEEDI also presents business webinars which help develop marketing skills.

(Time expired)

Anzac Day, Centenary; Chapel Hill State School; School Leavers

 **Dr FLEGG** (Moggill—LNP) (12.01 pm): I cannot imagine a more nation-defining event than young Australians storming the beaches of Gallipoli in 1915. It has come to epitomise everything that we as a nation in Australia hold as core national values of courage, loyalty, mateship, determination and being prepared to take on something that appears too big and beyond our scope. That is why recently I was delighted to announce the LNP policy for schools in Queensland in relation to the centenary of Anzac, due, of course, in 2015. The LNP is determined to engage young Queenslanders and school students in this vitally important national celebration. That is why we announced that we were prepared to commit \$1 million towards Queensland's schools—all schools in any school sector—to allow students to compete in an Anzac Day commemoration competition that will result in 50 young Queensland students, from all over the state and from all different types of schools and backgrounds, attending Anzac Day ceremonies on the Western Front and in Gallipoli.


I think now is the time to start planning for that most momentous of national celebrations: the centenary of those events that so greatly defined us and what has happened in Australia in the 100 years since those very young men in such large numbers gave their lives in defence of their country. I look forward to engaging with many schools and young people, in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders who, as we all know, have played such an important role in the defence of our shores.

I recently had the opportunity to go back and look at the grounds of the Chapel Hill State School. This is the school that I presented to an estimates committee and raised in the media following the government's failure to deal with safety issues including unfenced watercourses, sharp-cut hazards that were all over the school, numerous dangerous trees, the appalling state of the Tinbeerwah Place entry to the school and steep, unfenced embankments. What a difference a little publicity and pressure makes. In response to that there has been significant work done at the school that will go a long way to making those students much safer than they were. We have already seen very serious, even life-threatening injuries occur within that school. It should not take the opposition raising these matters at estimates committees and in the media for the government to realise that issues affecting the safety of our children need to be addressed. It may be too late for some, but at least now many of those issues have been addressed.

Finally, I draw attention to page 29 of the department of education's annual report. It should concern all Queenslanders that we see such a steady decline in the number of school leavers in Queensland who are either in education or in work. There is a very dramatic graph on that page. If one goes further and looks at the results for Indigenous Queenslanders one finds that 25 per cent of young Indigenous school leavers have either given up or have been left unemployed. If one goes to the 11th annual progress report by the Foundation for Young Australians one finds that Queensland holds one record that we do not want to hold—that is, the highest proportion of young Queenslanders who have no job or are not in education.

(Time expired)

Torres Strait Islands, Autonomy

 **Mr O'BRIEN** (Cook—ALP) (12.06 pm): As I have noted in this House previously, it was a great pleasure to welcome the Premier and cabinet to the Torres Strait in late August this year. As I said publicly at the time, the most important part of the visit will be the outcomes achieved as a result of it. When cabinet visited the islands, the main issue raised with it was greater autonomy. There is a large body of work written about this topic, including a House of Representatives report from 1996. Leading up to the Premier's visit, there was a fair amount of discussion about this on social networks as well as in the local newspaper, the *Torres News*, and on local radio station TSIMA 4MW.

Walking into the community meeting on Sunday, 28 August with the Premier we were met by a vocal protest group insisting the government grant greater autonomy to the people of the Torres Strait. Inside the community meeting the message was the same. Community member after elder after leader stood as one and called on the Premier to support greater autonomy for the Torres Strait. The following day, the Premier and I met with the local leadership of the three authorities in the region: the Torres Shire Council, the Torres Strait Island Regional Council and the Torres Strait Regional Authority. All of these leaders made it clear that there had already been widespread community consultation on a model and that there was a great mood for change in the governing arrangements for the Torres Strait. The Premier told the leadership group that the Queensland government is prepared to support the aspirations of Torres Strait Islanders for greater autonomy but that unless the Australian government supported change there would be no chance of those aspirations being realised. She committed to writing to the Prime Minister to gauge the support of the Australian government in finding a way forward on this issue. I table a copy of the letter the Premier subsequently wrote to the Prime Minister on the matter of Torres Strait autonomy.

Tabled paper: Letter from Hon. Anna Bligh MP, Premier of Queensland, to Hon. Julia Gillard MP, Prime Minister of Australia, relating to views expressed by Torres Strait leaders and residents regarding greater political autonomy [5693].

The letter was sent a little over a month following the Thursday Island community cabinet. The letter concludes by asking the Prime Minister for her support for the formation of a senior tripartite working party between the three levels of government to take the issue of autonomy forward. This letter has been well received by the people of the Torres Strait.

One thing I would like to see is a bipartisan approach to this issue. This is not something that should be the subject of partisan bickering; it should be seen as a chance to recognise the long-held aspirations of Torres Strait Islanders. Federally the Torres Strait is represented by the LNP's Warren Entsch, who knows well that Torres Strait Islanders want this and nothing will stand in the way of their achieving it. That is why it was very disappointing to read the comments of the Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, reported in the *Australian* of 17 October. The article states—

The federal Opposition Leader accused Ms Bligh yesterday of dodging her responsibility to the Torres Strait Islanders.

"I think that the Queensland government is just trying to wash its hands of the problem," Mr Abbott said during a visit to far north Queensland.

"I think the Queensland government needs to ... properly discharge its responsibilities."

Asked whether secession was the answer, Mr Abbott said: "I don't think so, no."

I want to say a couple of things about those comments. Firstly, if the leader of the federal opposition had bothered to go to the Torres Strait, he would have seen a level of services and infrastructure not witnessed in any other Indigenous communities in Australia or, for that matter, in many mainstream communities. Most of those services and most of the infrastructure—whether it be health clinics, schools or housing, for example—has been provided for by this government. Secondly, he would hear from Torres Strait Islanders that autonomy is what they want. This is not a distraction; it lies at the core of their souls. The member for Leichhardt knows that and he should tell Tony Abbott not to stand in the way of Torres Strait Islanders' long-held aspirations.

I took greater heart from the initial response attributed to the Prime Minister. Ms Gillard told reporters in Brisbane that it was a complex and sensitive issue that could not be rushed. She said—

Clearly, this is a major decision that will change things for the people of the Torres Strait forever. It is a big, big change.

She continued—


As a big change, it needs to be thought through and considered, respectfully and in dialogue with local people. We obviously would need to have discussions between government but most importantly with local people about their vision for the future.

Of course, I would like someone from the Queensland branch of the Liberal National Party to take a policy position on this matter. I guess I will continue to wait. This is an important issue for people in my electorate and I want to thank the Premier for showing real leadership in taking it on and driving forward the aspirations of the people of the Torres Strait.

DISASTER READINESS AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 11 October (see p. 3012).


Second Reading

 **Hon. S ROBERTSON** (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Energy and Water Utilities) (12.11 pm): As the Premier is unavailable at present, she has asked me to move and speak to this motion on her behalf. Therefore, I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I note that yesterday the portfolio committee provided its report on the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill 2011 and that its sole recommendation was that the bill be passed. Of course, the government is pleased to accept that recommendation. On behalf of the Premier, I take this opportunity to thank the committee for its expeditious consideration of and reporting on the bill. I note that the committee has provided a substantive report that deals with the amendments in some detail, based on public hearings held with departmental officers and affected stakeholders.

The bill is an omnibus bill that includes amendments to water, disaster management, transport and planning legislation. As the Premier outlined to the House in her explanatory speech, the bill has been prepared to implement the state's legislative response to the interim report of the Floods Commission of Inquiry and puts in place other improvements to the disaster management framework for Queensland. Therefore, the bill is being progressed as a matter of urgency to ensure that the amendments contained in the bill are in place to support the state's disaster preparations in readiness for the coming wet season.

 **Mr SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.12 pm): I rise to make a contribution in the consideration of the bill before the House, which is a bill for an act to amend the Disaster Management Act 2003, the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) Act 2007, the Sustainable Planning Act 2009, the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994, the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995, the Water Act 2000 and the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008. I commend the committee for the work that it did and the report that it has produced in relation to this bill. As the minister indicated when speaking on behalf of the Premier, the committee has made only one recommendation, which is that the bill be supported. The opposition will be supporting the passage of this bill through the House. I commend that report and I commend the community groups and organisations that participated in the committee process and made a contribution to the consideration of this bill. They raised a number of points that are very pertinent and are of concern to the opposition. While we support the passage of the bill, I want to highlight some of the issues that need to be addressed. I will do that as I progress through the consideration of the bill.

Of course, the bill is before the House because of the disasters that struck Queensland last summer. Last year, Queensland yet again lived up to its reputation as a state of extremes. After years of drought, in January this year nature delivered our worst flood in over three decades, followed very closely by the huge cyclone, Cyclone Yasi, that struck North Queensland. Unfortunately, nature caught Queensland and this Labor government unprepared. The government was unprepared for something that should have been predictable, given Queensland's climate of extremes. It should have been predictable, but it was also predictable that the government lacked the capacity to respond appropriately.

Labor in government had failed to plan for such a major flooding event. It had failed to take appropriate steps to prepare Queensland, even though it had been warned by the Bureau of Metrology. Instead, it focused on a panic response to the drought that it had also failed to foresee and prepare for. Labor could not differentiate between the predicted extreme wet season and the drought that cost it so dearly and that, philosophically, Labor seemed to believe would never end. Over the years in this place we saw many instances of that when we debated the water crisis that struck South-East Queensland because of the failure of this Labor government to plan. In this House there were many instances when Labor members stood up and made contributions to debates that indicated that they were convinced that the drought would never end, that they were convinced that somehow the drought in South-East Queensland was confirmation of some philosophical position that they had in relation to global warming, climate change or something, and that it was never going to rain again. I particularly remember the member for Toowoomba North criticising some of my shadow ministers and me for looking at dam sites in the Brisbane Valley. He said that it never rained there, that it would never rain again and that any such dam sites would be ridiculous. That was the sort of nonsense that permeated the thinking of the government. It was unable to differentiate between the drought situations and the flood situations that come and go in cycles across Queensland, just as they have done for the past 200 years that records have been kept and just as they will for the next 2,000 years if people are lucky enough to live here for that long. The cycle of drought and flood will continue, and a responsible and aware government will be prepared for that cycle as it happens.

However, instead of preparing the Wivenhoe Dam for a flood event, Labor focused on constructing the white elephant that is the Tugun desalination plant. They were not able to make the transition in their mindset, despite the warnings of the Bureau of Meteorology. Instead of reviewing the flood mitigation manual to ensure Wivenhoe and Somerset were ready in the event of a major incident, Labor was still building a pipeline to nowhere, to link a dam that should never have been proposed and was never going to be accepted by the community.

This bill implements recommendations from the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry's interim report. Its objective is to 'improve the state's disaster preparedness ahead of the next wet season'. The next wet season is fast approaching. Already we have seen the first major storms of the

season sweep across parts of South-East Queensland and heavy rain in North Queensland. While concerns have been raised regarding some of the provisions of this bill, it is essential that Queensland is prepared as it appears we may be facing another season of above-normal rainfall.

The LNP will be supporting the bill. The Bureau of Metrology has briefed cabinet on the likelihood of another wet season. This morning we saw the Bureau of Meteorology announce an update on that long-term forecast for the coming months that predicts another La Nina event, albeit much weaker than the one last season. While not predicting a repeat of the last wet season, the Bureau of Metrology did see an increase in the likelihood that the coming months would see flooding occur in Queensland. While the LNP has fully supported the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry process and its recommendations, the fact that the wet season is now on us reinforces that this bill is being considered in this place in a timely manner.

The provisions of the bill that will improve the quality of disaster management plans across local governments are welcomed. I welcome the Premier's advice in her introductory speech that the recommendation of the inquiry that local government plans be published will also apply to state and district disaster management groups. This inclusion of representatives of the Australian Defence Force and the Australian Red Cross in the planning and preparation for the next wet season by the State Disaster Management Group was a sensible recommendation of the inquiry in light of the critical role they have in responding to the events. I note that it is further proposed to add the Bureau of Meteorology and Surf Life Saving Queensland to the membership of the State Disaster Management Group.

While these groups will bring valuable knowledge to the table, it is also critical that the State Disaster Management Group does not become unwieldy and unnecessarily bureaucratic and is able to respond to incidents in a timely manner, especially incidents that are removed from the area where the State Disaster Management Group meets. That is especially important for people in regional Queensland and in North Queensland. We must always guard against a tendency to centralise functions best managed and performed at a local and district level.

While the State Disaster Management Group structure is certainly being improved by this bill, it is timely to reflect that that structure should never take away the authority or the ability for local people to respond to local situations. In a state like Queensland, it should always be remembered that one size does not fit all. In emergency situations, like so many other situations, the greatest asset is local knowledge. Local people who have lived and worked and built their businesses in their local area know far more than any bureaucratic structure about what is required to respond to emergency situations which quite often develop very quickly and require a quick response. That quick response is best coordinated at a very local level. It is vital as a whole state that we prepare for natural disaster events and that the disaster management plans are properly coordinated. But it is equally vital, if not more so, that we recognise the necessity for local communities to manage their own affairs.

There is a great example of that that I can point to from the January disasters. That is what happened in the small town of Theodore that I represent. Theodore was one of the towns that was most badly affected by the floods. Theodore was the first town in Queensland that had to be evacuated by helicopter. It was a flood event that developed over a period of time. It was managed on the ground by the local community. That local management was headed by local councillor, Vaughn Becker. He spent an enormous amount of time in Theodore. He told me stories about sleeping on a piece of cardboard on the stage in the shire hall as he monitored the rapidly developing situation. The fact that Vaughn Becker was there and the community had respect for their local community leader and were able to have confidence in the knowledge not just that he had but that he was able to coordinate from a range of local people meant that that quite extraordinary evacuation of Theodore was able to be carried out in a way that no government department would ever have been able to do. No government department would ever have been able to do what Vaughn Becker and the local people in Theodore were able to do. It is an example that government should take notice of right across Queensland.

We need to recognise the local knowledge. We need to recognise the skills that people like Vaughn Becker have—and there are Vaughn Beckers in every community. They know and understand the river. They know the people who have the local knowledge. It is that local management and that local knowledge that is the most critical element in managing the emergency situations that we saw last January. While we need to build the state-wide structure for sure, we need to make sure that all of the agencies are involved in an appropriate way for sure, but most critically we need to ensure that the local knowledge that local people have is recognised as the most valuable element in the whole response equation.

The other issue that is dealt with in the bill is the issue of dam safety and dam management. The critical nature of dam management decisions became clear to all Queenslanders earlier this year when, as one, people in South-East Queensland held their breath and watched Wivenhoe and Somerset dams fill. It has since become clear, through a whole protracted debate, that the government's eye was not on the ball when it came to preparing our dams for a future flood event. In 2007 a Water Commission report alerted the government—

Mr Lawlor interjected.

Mr SEENEY: The inane interjections from the member for Southport reinforce what I said before; that is, that this was a government that could not differentiate between a drought and a flood. It could not differentiate between an El Nino event and a La Nina event. The member for Southport does what all the silly backbenchers have tried to do since and take comments that were made in a drought situation and apply them to a situation—

Government members interjected.

Mr SEENEY: That stupidity still resides in the government. It still has not learnt what would seem to be basic common sense. We need a different dam management practice in a La Nina event than we do in an El Nino event. How stupid does he have to be not to understand that? How dumb is the member for Southport that he cannot understand that you need a different dam management strategy when we have a flood than when we have a drought?

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms van Litsenburg): Order! Member for Callide, take your seat! That was unparliamentary. Would you please withdraw it.

Mr SEENEY: I am not sure what you are referring to, but I am happy to withdraw. I say to conclude the point that still in this government there is clearly an inability to understand that there is a responsibility to manage our dam assets differently when representatives of the Bureau of Meteorology come along to cabinet and say that we are going to have the worst wet season for many years than when representatives of the Bureau of Meteorology come along to cabinet and say that we are in the middle of an extreme drought.

It would not seem to me to need a very high degree of intelligence to understand that those two different situations require a very different response from the government. But even today, as we consider this legislation we see demonstrated by the member for Southport, the member for Cook and a whole of range of members opposite that the government still does not understand that. That should cause concern to the people of Queensland.

There is evidence that this issue is now driven by emotive nonsense. I saw in one of the weekend papers this banner headline, 'Drain the dam now'. That plays on people's natural emotive fears that a flood might be repeated. There is a responsibility on the people who administer these things, there is a responsibility on government ministers to ensure that these decisions are made according to the information available, according to the scientifically based information that is available.

One of the things that was comprehensively ignored in the management of our dam assets during the last flood was the information that was available from the weather bureau. There was absolutely no provision in the operating rules for the dam operators to take into account the long-range weather forecasts that were being given to the government. There was no provision to take into account the El Nino-La Nina cycle. There was no provision for the operators to take into account even the seven-day or 10-day weather forecast or even the three-day weather forecast. Those shorter weather forecasts are critically more important to the operation of the dam.

It is natural that, like any forecast, the shorter the forecast interval the more accurate the forecast. All of those things need to be taken into account but, in particular, the shorter time range weather forecasts should have been taken into account, and they clearly were not. It is obvious today that government members who have been trying to interrupt my contribution have still not learned that lesson. They try to play stupid, cheap political games by taking comments that were made in one situation and applying them to another situation. That is clearly nonsense.

There has been an enormous amount of discussion and debate about the operation of the Wivenhoe Dam system, because that was the critical element that led to the major flood in Brisbane. The mismanagement of that system was one of the elements that contributed to the disastrous flood that the city of Brisbane, Ipswich and areas downstream from Wivenhoe had to suffer. I am pleased to see that this bill seeks to address some of those things, but I think it is worth going through some of the history.

In 2007 a Water Commission report alerted the government that Wivenhoe and Somerset dams did not satisfy the ANCOLD 2003 recommendations for acceptable flood capacity and dam safety—remembering that Wivenhoe is somewhat unique in that it has that dual role of flood mitigation and water storage. But still the government did nothing—until now, well after this year's major flooding event. The flood manual was found to be deficient in critical aspects including its priorities. It seemed the Labor government had got distracted from ensuring that Wivenhoe Dam fulfilled its role as a flood mitigation tool. It was still struggling with, still bedazzled by, the drought situation that had preceded it.

The 2009 version of the flood mitigation manual had some critical changes from its 2004 predecessor. It added provisions that required decision makers to 'retain the storage at full-supply level at the conclusion of the flood event' and to 'minimise impacts to riparian flora and fauna during the drain-

down phase of the flood event'. That is the sort of muddle-headed thinking that had overtaken the operation of this critical asset. The management of the dam was being influenced by concern for impacts on the riparian flora and fauna rather than the other major impacts of mismanaging the dam. It went on to add—

As the dams are the primary urban water supply for South East Queensland, it is important that all opportunities to fill the dams are taken. There should be no reason why the dams should not be full following a Flood Event.

Yet again this shows that the government failed to plan for the future, instead focusing on fixing its past mistakes that led to our critical shortages during the recent Queensland drought. There was no capacity to differentiate between a season that was part of a drought cycle and a season that was not just predicted to be wet but was demonstrably a very wet season.

The Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry interim report was damning about the minister's performance. The inquiry found that the minister did not seek appropriate advice about the level for the Wivenhoe Dam to be drawn down to. The inquiry report states—

It should also be noted that the only source from which the Minister sought advice was the Water Grid Manager, which in turn consulted with Seqwater. No advice was sought from anyone within DERM, notwithstanding the interest that this department and other arms of government had (or ought to have had) in the topics of dam safety and flood mitigation.

It was also damning about the failure of the minister to make decisions about reductions in dam levels. The interim report states—

There is no record of the Minister's having made this decision or telling anyone about it—then or at any time. He was required to provide the Commission with an account of all discussions on the topics of possible alteration of the full supply level and changes to the level of Somerset and Wivenhoe dams in which he participated between 1 September 2010 and 30 March 2011. He said in evidence that he 'would have' discussed this matter with his Director-General, but this possibility was not raised in his witness statement. No explanation was forthcoming for this apparent failure to comply with the Commissioner's requirement. His Director-General, John Bradley, could not confirm that the Minister made this decision on that day, or at all.

In other words, the minister did not do his job. He failed to do his job. This was despite the Bureau of Meteorology clearly warning that a major flood season was on its way and the evidence for that being directly available to anyone who wanted to either look out the window or follow the nightly weather forecasts. The minister even put out a press release foreshadowing the issue but he failed to act, and that failure was a major element in the price the people of Brisbane paid. The interim report went on to find—

... it is apparent that the Minister was expecting the relevant advice to come from people who were busy managing the dams at the time. For that reason, so the logic seemed to run, the potential advisors should not be pressed too hard for a response to his initial inquiry. It should be remembered that the only entity from which advice had been sought directly was the Water Grid Manager. It had no operational role in managing the dams ...

So it was the minister's job, but he, and the rest of his Labor government, failed Queenslanders, and the interim report I believe showed that clearly. The interim report states—

It seems to the Commission that, given the competing interests between which a balance must be struck, the ultimate decision is one for the accountable Minister. The Minister accepted in his evidence before the Commission that he was the only one who could effect a reduction in full supply level.

Of course it is a decision which should be made on advice, but it is not one which can or should be abdicated to agencies whose functions are prescribed by statutes which omit any reference to a responsibility of this kind.

The inquiry therefore made a number of recommendations. Recommendation 2.2 states—

It should be accepted that control over temporary alteration of the full supply level of Wivenhoe, Somerset and North Pine dams is solely the function of the Queensland Government acting through the responsible Minister.

I note that the government has now taken this recommendation on and this bill provides for a regulatory framework to enable the minister to effect a temporary alteration to the full-supply level of a dam. It provides clarity in the regulatory framework for such decisions to be made.

The LNP welcomes this provision. However, this provision at its heart will only work if the minister and cabinet are able to do their job and make the necessary decision. It will only work if we have a minister and a cabinet that can differentiate between a La Nina and an El Nino season. It will only work if we have a minister and a cabinet who are prepared to take the advice of the Bureau of Meteorology and factor that advice into their decision-making practices. It will only work if we have a minister and a cabinet who have the capacity to understand the complexity of this issue.

It has been demonstrated in this parliament this morning that there are a considerable number of members in the current government who totally lack that capacity, even given the experiences of last summer. So, while the legislation provides the correct regulatory environment, I do not think the people of Queensland should have any confidence that anything has changed sufficiently within the state Labor government to ensure that the assets are better managed than they were in the last flood event in January.

There are some other implications. This bill introduces new provisions to implement the recommendations of the interim report requiring dam operators to give information to local communities situated downstream. I note that this applies to referable dams contained in the act. I note that the LGAQ has advised that some local governments will be facing substantial costs as a result of this provision.

In addition, the QFF stated that, while only five dams are located on privately owned rural properties, that is likely to increase 'as DERM widens its search into grazing areas' to properly classify all of the referable dams. They further warn that addressing these issues will come at a significant cost to ensure compliance. While we in the LNP opposition strongly support action to improve dam safety for downstream residents, provisions requiring real-time monitoring may be excessive and impractical for some rural properties if their dam is included as referable.

Once again, it is a situation that requires appropriate action for the appropriate situation—a concept that this Labor government has consistently failed to understand. It is all about an appropriate outcome, rather than striking a set of rules that are applied to everybody across the state irrespective of the need for that particular regulatory regime. While we support the changes in the bill relating to referable dams, we do so with a note of caution and an expectation that they do not become a bureaucratic burden in situations where no good outcome is generated because of them.

I turn now to the provisions in the bill relating to the transport act. This is one of the areas where I as a local member with an area affected by the January floods had to deal with the most emotive situations from my constituents. While we will support the changes that are being made today, I do not think they will overcome the emotiveness of the situations that will develop in the next inevitable flood event. The only thing that will do that is some common sense from people on the ground—and so it is with so many pieces of legislation and so many regulations. No matter what we do in this parliament, some common sense is required in the application of the regulations, and no more so than in this particular area of road closures and the management of traffic and access on those roads in particular circumstances.

Let us look at what the bill does first. The bill brings in provisions to reduce the incidence of people driving on flooded or flood affected roads. Under this provision, it will become an offence to drive past a road closed sign. In addition, the Department of Transport and Main Roads transport inspectors will be able to stop vehicles to enforce restricted road use notices and require drivers to produce their driver's licence. Currently, these inspectors can stop trucks and other heavy vehicles. This has been one of the most sensitive issues during recent flood events.

Road closures are undoubtedly critical for ensuring the safety of drivers who do not know the roads and do not know the capacity of their vehicles to deal with the flooded conditions. Road closures are critical to ensure that there is a reduced likelihood of motorists driving through and into dangerous floodwaters. However, they are also critical to ensure that the assets are protected. The closure of roads, especially to heavy vehicles, is critically important to protect the integrity of the assets and ensure that heavy vehicles are not driven on flood affected roads and do not destroy the integrity of the road for the long term. There have been plenty of examples of that where, in a short-term rush to get somewhere, a heavy vehicle operator destroys the integrity of a road that is required by the local communities for long periods.

However, the use of road closures where roads are closed unnecessarily or where it cuts off access to properties inappropriately can increase frustrations in an already stressful environment. From the perspective of a local member, it certainly does increase frustrations in the local environment. It is an area where local knowledge and flexibility is critical to the decision-making process. This legislation will create a number of provisions that will allow people to travel on roads that have been closed. There has been an increasing tendency for both the police and council officers to close roads more quickly than they have in the past because of litigation issues and liability issues and because, inevitably, those officers are stretched for time. They cannot stay in the one place for any extended period to monitor a situation and close the road when it becomes dangerous, so what tends to happen is that they try to anticipate the floodwater rising or a situation when the road will become unusable and they close the road and move on to the next problem in their long list of problems they are facing at that time.

It is incredibly frustrating then for the locals—the people who have been using the roads for generations—who feel that somehow or other they are being denied access to a road which they believe they can make a judgement about, and they also believe they can make a judgement about their own safety. It becomes even more incredibly frustrating when those people are trying to get back to their properties to take action to mitigate the effects of the flood. I have seen examples like that, where people have been trying to get home to their property to take some actions to mitigate the effects of the floodwater on their property yet they have been stopped by a road closed sign and an overzealous officer who will not let them past. In my experience, this has given rise to situations that have bordered on civil disobedience. In those highly emotive situations, it has given rise to some rather ugly incidents that were regrettable to say the least.

There is also a necessity to differentiate between the capacity of the driver and the vehicle to handle a particular situation. I understand completely the case that has been put to me by officers who were in charge of these situations, where they have to make a decision based on all road users. They have to make a decision based on the tourist driving a Hyundai or a small four-cylinder car, and then that affects the local property owner who has a large four-wheel drive or a truck that can obviously handle a different level of floodwater. I understand that the officers in charge have to make those decisions and close the road to protect them and their agencies against the liability that might arise if a small four-cylinder car and its occupants get into trouble, but they too have to understand the frustration that causes to local people who know the local roads and who have a vehicle that is capable of handling a very different level of floodwater and in most cases have done so for years and years and years. They are being stopped from driving through small amounts of floodwater to get to their properties in some instances so they can either get to work or carry out flood mitigation activities.

This is a difficult area. The only solution to it is some common sense. The only solution is for the people on the ground to exercise a degree of common sense and judgement and not be bound by overly bureaucratic rules. This happened in my electorate around Theodore, the town I was talking about before, where one incident particularly enraged the local people. The locals were stopped from using the access road, what we refer to as 'fruit salad corner', into Theodore and down to the Dawson River. There was a brand-new bridge across the Dawson River but they were stopped from using it because there was a bit of water coming over the side and laying on the road surface.

The road was closed but the minister flew up from Brisbane to inspect the flood situation in Theodore and was driven in a convoy of four-wheel drive vehicles down the road that the locals were prevented from using. It does not take much to understand the reaction of the local community to that sort of situation. They have four-wheel drive vehicles too. They had been prevented from using that road but the minister and his cavalcade of bureaucrats were able to drive down the road that had been shut and that they had been prevented from using for some considerable time. That is the sort of nonsense that happens. That is the sort of nonsense that destroys the credibility of any disaster management situation and disaster management regulatory regime. It is our responsibility to make sure there is a regulatory regime in place to protect people's safety and protect the publicly owned assets—the roads and the bridges—but it is also our responsibility to make sure that the regulatory regime is administered with some basic common sense, which is incredibly hard to properly define.

We could never in this place draw up a set of rules that adequately covers every given situation that arises in those flood situations. It is an impossible task. You could never do it. What we have to do is give the departmental officers at the front line—at the point of contact—the tools they need to protect public safety and protect public assets but also give them the flexibility they require to exercise some common sense to give them the discretion to ensure that the community is not overly subjected to restrictions which make no sense and produce bad outcomes on the ground, and there have been plenty of instances of those. That is one of the big challenges in managing these emergency services in all communities, but particularly in the smaller rural communities where there is a shortage of people on the ground. There is always going to be a shortage of departmental officers. It is all very well for them to come along and stick up a road closed sign and block the road off and then go off somewhere else, as they must, to deal with some other situation and leave the road closed for a prolonged period of time.

The same also happens with bridges that have been underwater. Another frustration that a number of my communities had was the requirement for bridges that had been underwater to be inspected before traffic could go across them. I understand that there is a liability issue there. I understand that there is a responsibility there similarly to protect public safety and to protect the publicly owned asset. I am sure that all of the lawyers on the other side can talk about that at length, but the reality has to be dealt with as well. The reality is that there were circumstances where communities had been cut off for five and seven days and then when the water went down and they were able to get across the bridge there were police officers stopping them from going across the bridge until such time as a bridge inspector was able to be found somewhere and brought in to inspect the bridge. It led to enormous frustration, and there needs to be some discretion that is able to be applied by local council officers and local police officers to take account of that local situation. There needs to be a recognition that there are the skills in the local community and there is the local knowledge about these situations, particularly when these situations occur and recur over a period of time. It is not hard to imagine that there are plenty of situations where bridges go underwater every couple of years, or every time there is a decent wet season water goes across a road in my electorate and a whole range of different places and locals have developed the local knowledge to be able to ascertain when it is safe to go through that water and when it is not. I again say that there is no single solution except to allow some common sense to prevail and to allow officers on the ground to exercise some discretion and to recognise the local knowledge and the local expertise that exists.

As I indicated at the beginning of this contribution, we will be supporting the passage of the legislation. There are a number of areas where I have indicated concern. One is certainly in relation to the management of the dams and the second is the management of transport regulations in relation to flooded roads. Both of those depend on the capacity of the government to understand the complexity of

the situation. The solutions to both of those depend on the capacity of the government to administer this regulatory regime in a fit and proper way. I have a degree of confidence that the regulations are right and moving towards a situation where they will fulfil the purpose. I do not have that same confidence that the government has the capacity to administer them in a way that will produce satisfactory outcomes for the communities that will inevitably have to deal with these types of emergency situations again as they are threatened by floods in the future. That is as inevitable as the sun will come up tomorrow. The great cycle that determines flood and drought across Queensland and throughout South-East Queensland will repeat itself. I hope that the lessons that are apparent from the management of the flood event last January are learned by this government. I fear from the response here today that we cannot have much confidence that that is the case, but the legislation before the House is certainly a step in the right direction. I commend all of those people—all of those Queenslanders—who have worked in the reconstruction effort. It has been an enormous effort to bring the publicly owned assets of Queenslanders back to a level where community life and commerce can resume after the January floods, and there is an enormous amount of work to do, especially on rural and regional roads, I might add. I would be remiss if I did not mention the enormous amount of work that is yet to be done on rural and regional roads throughout my electorate and the local government areas that are encompassed by that electorate.

I know the great burden that that has put on local councils. I know the great level of frustration that those councils have had to endure trying to get access to the NDRRA funds—the money from the Commonwealth that should have been available to local councils to fix those local rural and regional roads—that have been held up by an overly bureaucratic process that has frustrated councils and that has been the subject of some discussion in this parliament over a period of time but now, thankfully, they are starting to flow. There is a huge job to do in completing that reconstruction task, and I commend those people who are involved in that huge task of restoring those assets. In conclusion, the opposition will be supporting the bill. We hope that the concerns that we have raised are recognised by the government in the implementation of the provisions of the bill.



Ms BATES (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (12.56 pm): I rise today to make a short contribution to the debate on the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill 2011, which will implement the recommendations of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry interim report and improve the state's disaster preparedness ahead of the next wet season. The Premier and Minister for Reconstruction introduced the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill on 11 October 2011 and the House referred the bill to the Finance and Administration Committee, of which I am a member. The committee was required to report to the House by 24 October. This provided the committee with nine working days in which to consider the bill. The committee held a public briefing with departmental officers and a public hearing with some of the stakeholders affected by the bill. Whilst the committee recognises the importance of having these amendments in place before the next wet season commences, it was unable to call for submissions in order to fully explore the implications of the bill which affected stakeholders. I also want to take the opportunity to recognise the contribution to this bill from the members of the committee and particularly to the chairman, the member for Ipswich West, for the manner in which he chaired the public hearings. The LNP will be supporting this legislation.


The bill amends the Water Act 2000, the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) Act 2007, the Disaster Management Act 2003, the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994, the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995, the Sustainable Planning Act and the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 to make it clear that the chief executive can include in dam safety conditions a requirement about giving general flood information to residents immediately downstream of dams. It is this act that I will be directing my comments to. The bill amends the act by including a requirement about giving information to the local community situated immediately downstream of a dam about the likely or actual release of water from or flow of water through the dam as a result of flooding. This is applicable for referable dams and it was pointed out that the majority of these dams are owned by either state government entities or local government entities. The commission found that time is of the essence for warnings to local residents who are immediately downstream of the dam. The commission also found that the community as well as local governments and disaster management agencies should be involved in the creation of emergency management procedures, particularly in deciding who requires warnings about dam spillway overflows, whether they are public or private dams. Further, it is important that the communication procedures, once set, are known to all of those who will be involved.

The commission made the following recommendations: that dam operators should plan to contact people identified by their own emergency action plans about dam outflow in sufficient time for them to be able to respond to that information; dam operators should ensure each emergency action plan includes a clear statement as to the frequency of, and circumstances in which, warnings will be issued to people listed in the emergency action plan; dam operators should assess the effectiveness of using SMS and/or email as a bulk instantaneous communication to all people on the notification list while individually contacting those whom it is essential to inform immediately; and the operators of each dam should, upon request, provide to any person on the notification list in the emergency action plan an explanation of these arrangements as to the type and frequency of communications required by that plan.


With regard to the cost implications, Seqwater advised the committee that there will be cost implications for it relating to the provision of community notifications under these guidelines. It advised that the final cost will ultimately depend on how many people require notification and the frequency of flood releases. The LGAQ advised the committee that the biggest cost to local government dam owners is telemetry devices and extra hydrological studies and could be as much as two per cent rate rises in large electorates such as Warrego. The other concern regarding cost was the cost to local farmers with dams who would be required to set up early warning systems to advise those landholders downstream. The Farmers Federation outlined its concerns regarding the cost on landowners. The inquiry revealed that the notification depended on one form of communication, that being the telephone and internet capabilities.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Order! It is now one past one and the House is going to break for lunch. I ask all members to remain in the House for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's AGM, which will be commencing immediately.

Sitting suspended from 1.01 pm to 2.30 pm.

 **Ms BATES:** The LGAQ advised the committee that the biggest cost to local government dam owners is telemetry devices and extra hydrological studies. They said that this could see rate rises of as much as two per cent in large electorates such as Warrego. The other concerns regarding cost related to the cost to local farmers who have dams who would be required to set up early-warning systems to advise those landholders downstream. In a submission to the committee, the Farmers Federation outlined their concerns regarding the cost to landowners. The inquiry also revealed that notification depended on only one form of communication, that being telephone or internet capabilities. This will only work if all lines are available and are not washed away, as occurred during the floods. It also assumes that the dam owner will actually be at home to notify others. Therefore, it relies on the human factor, which may not be enough.

These issues and the cost of implementation remain concerns, and the LNP would like to see more detailed costings on the implementation for private dam owners. Further emergency responses such as sirens need to be considered. My concerns arise from the methods of communication, which could be cut, and the reliance on farmers to actually be home to enable notification to take place.

 **Mr WENDT** (Ipswich West—ALP) (2.31 pm): I rise to support the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill 2011. The objectives of this bill are to amend a number of acts in order to implement recommendations of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry interim report, of which we are all very aware. That particular report came about as a result of the floods in January. There are probably not too many electorates across Queensland in which more homes were affected, particularly in South-East Queensland, than my electorate when it came to flooding. My electorate is bounded by a number of rivers—Bremer River, Brisbane River and Lockyer Creek—all of which had significant flooding which therefore severely impacted on the constituents of my electorate. The member for Lockyer is also in the chamber. I am very aware of the difficulties he experienced during the same period.

The amendments to the acts will provide a regulatory framework that allows the minister to effect a temporary alteration to the full-supply level of a dam with an approved flood manual after having sought advice through the chief executive and from relevant entities. As you would know, Mr Deputy Speaker, this key recommendation came through the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry. The control over temporary alterations of the full-supply level of Wivenhoe, Somerset and North Pine dams was solely the function of the Queensland government acting through the responsible minister. In view of this, the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill addresses this recommendation by proposing a new statutory process which will allow the responsible minister to temporarily vary the full-supply level of dams. This will apply to the region's key dams of Wivenhoe, Somerset and North Pine.

The bill provides that the minister may decide to review the full-supply level for a dam based on considerations including, for example, meteorological forecasts and the public interest. If the minister decides to initiate this process, he or she must seek the advice of the chief executive, who in turn must consult other relevant water entities. I think that is an appropriate course of action. The chief executive must consider a range of matters including advice provided by the dam operator; the extent to which the proposed temporary full-supply level is likely to mitigate the impacts of a potential flood or drought; possible impacts on water security and the safety of the dam; and other positive or negative effects such as impacts on public safety and environmental, social and economic impacts downstream of the dam. The full-supply level of the dams has been considered by the minister once already this year using an administrative process to request information and advice from relevant water entities. The bill will establish a clear regulatory framework under which this process will occur in future.

In addition, the bill addresses a series of recommendations from the interim report relating to dam operators providing warnings about dam outflows to residents immediately downstream of the dam. The bill allows dam safety conditions to include requirements about notifying the local community about releases or flows of water from the dam as a result of flooding. That is not necessarily always the case. In fact, I can advise today that the dam would usually release around 450 megalitres a day. I have been

up there on a number of occasions in recent weeks. I can tell honourable members that, as of today, the outflows are going from 450 to 900 megalitres per day. That is required to dilute the conductivity levels in the mid-Brisbane River zone. That is the zone below the dam wall and down to Mount Crosby.

There are some high conductivity levels which have resulted from recent inflows from the Lockyer, which comes down from the region of the member for Lockyer and the Black Snake Creek area. Of course, that creek's headwaters are located at the township of Marburg and flow down through Glamoran Vale, Wanora and so forth. In this case, the dam owner will determine the appropriate methods of communicating this advice depending upon local circumstances such as the availability of particular technologies and the resources of the dam owner and residents. Draft emergency action plan guidelines have been provided to all referable dam owners which outline how the enhanced communication arrangements may be implemented. As you would expect, these documents emphasise the need for dam owners and local disaster management groups to negotiate practical arrangements that suit their circumstances.

These are important amendments to water legislation that have the collective effect of implementing clear communication arrangements and a clear decision-making process when it comes to our dams. That is extremely important. In my particular region, those townships that are directly below the walls of Wivenhoe Dam—and I am talking about the Lowood and Fernvale townships—are probably the first locations to receive these outflows from the dam. During the past few days I have attended a meeting with the action group at Fernvale, and I can tell the House that they still have some fears in relation to outflows from the dam. The Premier was able to visit with me, and we talked to a number of homeowners in the area only about two months ago. It was again pointed out to the Premier on that particular occasion that a number of people are still nervous about the amount of water held behind the dam walls. On that issue, I think it is worth noting that Somerset Dam, which leads into Wivenhoe Dam—it is above Wivenhoe Dam—is currently at 100 per cent capacity. You also have to remember that Somerset Dam has a capacity of only 380,000 megalitres whereas Wivenhoe Dam, which is currently sitting at 81 per cent, has a capacity of about 1.17 million megalitres. Of course, the smallest one of the lot, North Pine, is sitting at around 97 per cent and has a capacity of about 214,000 megalitres.

As honourable members can see, there is quite a bit of water behind the walls. The integrity of the dams is something about which people are spreading rumours as well. At the meeting I attended last week there were concerns expressed about the integrity of Somerset Dam. On the following day I contacted Somerset Dam and I received from them, via email, an assurance about the integrity of that particular dam wall, which I had no doubts about whatsoever. Unfortunately, rumours tend to generate around particular issues. I can tell you that that is not the case.

Mr Rickuss: I have had the same phone calls.


Mr WENDT: The member for Lockyer says that he has had the same phone calls about the integrity of the dams. About four weeks ago I took the opportunity to travel inside the Wivenhoe Dam wall. That was the day the federal coalition's dam task force came along. On that day we had Barnaby Joyce, Andrew Robb and one other there. I made sure they were fully aware of the integrity of both our dams, how the supply worked and how the pipeline system worked in conjunction with our desalination plants and our recycled water plants. I think they were pretty impressed with what they saw on the day. I was pleased to have the opportunity to explain a few details about how particularly Wivenhoe Dam works. For those who do not know, it is not a matter of just adding a few metres of concrete to the top of a dam wall. I have five small dams on my own property. To raise a dam wall by a metre or two, particularly if it is a clay and rock dam wall, you actually have to extend the wall on the bottom side by three or four—if not five—times that degree. An immense amount of earth would be required to increase the Wivenhoe Dam wall. For those who do not know, it is about two kilometres long.

I turn to the committee process as it relates to this bill. The bill was introduced by the Premier on 11 October. I think the committee did an admirable job in progressing the bill through the committee process. We had expert advice on the bill from departmental people, as well as public submissions and a public inquiry. This all occurred within the space of about 10 working days. In the public briefing we had officers from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Environment and Resource Management, the Department of Community Safety, the Department of Transport and Main Roads and the Department of Local Government and Planning. They were able to brief the committee on 14 October, which I think the committee found very useful. We were able to ask some hard questions of them. In addition to that, at Parliament House on 19 October, which was Wednesday last week, the committee had a public hearing and for that particular hearing we heard from stakeholder groups which included the Queensland Farmers Federation, the Local Government Association of Queensland represented by Greg Hallam, the Royal Automobile Club of Queensland, the Queensland bulk water supply authority trading as Seqwater and, of course, SunWater. Unfortunately the Queensland Farmers Federation could not attend on the day and therefore provided some written correspondence which detailed their concerns about some of those dams which are not government owned and whether, in fact, this legislation was going to require private dam owners to have specific details about how those

below the dam wall should be informed about possible releases and the like. I can tell members that that is the case, but I can guarantee we are going to be practical about the approach we adopt. People have to be aware that releasing any water from a dam has consequences downstream.

On the issue of the committee, can I point out that the committee itself did, as I said, an admirable job. I particularly appreciate the deputy chair Ray Stevens, member for Mermaid Beach, who was always able to listen to and appreciate where we were going with the committee, as did all of the other members. Can I also point out that our committee research team of Deb, Lyn and Jo, I think, have gone above and beyond what most research teams would be experiencing at the moment. The number of hours they have done is incredible. I take the opportunity during this particular exercise to thank those members of the SES, the local councils, our fire and ambulance, police, volunteers—all those who have contributed not only to the review itself but also during the period of the floods. It was an incredible time we went through and I hope we never see anything like it again.

I believe this Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill, even though it has been brought rather quickly to the House, has a great deal of value. I am certain that it will improve the opportunity for people downstream of dams in particular to be safer and have more confidence in what is going on. With that, I commend the bill to the House.

 **Hon. D BOYLE** (Cairns—ALP) (2.42 pm): As a member of the Finance and Administration Committee may I let members of the House know that we are ably chaired by the member for Ipswich West. I am sure that I am not alone as a member of that committee in letting the House know that it is a tremendous pleasure and a privilege in this new system to be in the position of inquiring into bills before the House, discussing the bills with concerned stakeholders or members of the public and understanding from the Public Service what work they have done and what is the rationale that has led them to the particular wordings of clauses or elements of a bill before us.

There is no doubt that this was an urgent bill and therefore the committee did not have the time to go over and over it in detail, but neither was it necessary. I remind members of the House that the Premier and Minister for Reconstruction, when she introduced the bill, reminded us that the well consulted and highly accessible Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry brought down an early report in August of this year that had a great number of recommendations, and it signalled that it would be beneficial if the government was able to act on some of these before this next wet season. It means, therefore, that this is the bill that contains most of the amendments necessary to achieve those recommendations made by the floods inquiry, but it also means that the recommendations came after very thorough public consultation. In fact, there were very many members of the public who had been so seriously impacted by the floods and the disasters of last summer that we know the recommendations from the flood inquiry were well based in terms of public experience, as well as the experience of the relevant authorities in the state and local governments that were involved both in the management of the disaster events as well as in the clean up afterwards. In these circumstances, any further inquiry undertaken by a parliamentary committee would have been excessive.

I particularly want to recognise today the amendments that are being made to the Disaster Management Act. There are three recommendations from the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry interim report that go to this particular act and to changes to it. The first of these is in relation to recommendation 3.1, which provided that the State Disaster Management Group should include representatives of the Australian Defence Force and the Australian Red Cross in its planning and preparation for the next wet season. There is no argument with that. It is a good recommendation. It is something that has generally been done around the state, but what this amendment to the act will do is make sure that there are no circumstances anywhere in Queensland where those very important groups are not included and not given recognition on the key disaster management group. Beyond this recommendation the government has also identified that Surf Life Saving Queensland and the Commonwealth Bureau of Meteorology should also be represented on the State Disaster Management Group. The collective knowledge of these agencies will significantly strengthen the ability of the SDMG to perform its functions at both the planning and preparation and response and recovery stages of disaster management.

The second amendment to the Disaster Management Act bears on recommendation 6.1 of the interim report. This states that local, district and state disaster management groups should include essential service providers in their disaster planning and preparations and in their meetings at an early stage during disasters. This means that there will be translation from the State Disaster Management Group through to local groups, ensuring that local representatives from these key essential services are also included at the local level. There is no doubt, of course, that one example of such an essential service provider in North Queensland is Ergon. I will take a moment to again say to the House what a spectacular and excellent response we had from Ergon, including in the preparations leading up to Cyclone Yasi as the warnings were coming through, participation in the local disaster management group and then in managing the huge workload to get electricity supplies back up and running in all of North and Far North Queensland. It did a magnificent job and I recognise in particular the district director of Ergon for Far North Queensland, Geoff Bowes, and his leadership during this time.

Ms Grace: The same with Energex in Brisbane.

Ms BOYLE: I take the interjection. I believe Energex has done the same, according to the member for Brisbane South. In order to increase accessibility and ensure that the community is informed, the bill amends the Disaster Management Act to require all disaster management groups—that is, state, district and local—to publish their disaster management plans on relevant websites. In fact, the recommendation from the interim report, recommendation 3.6, recommended that local disaster management plans be made available on local government websites, but it is the government's view that we need to make sure there is clear articulation as well as clear access between the three levels of disaster management planning and therefore that all levels will be obligated to publish on relevant websites.

Further improvements are being made to the disaster management framework to streamline the process for extending a declared disaster situation by allowing the Premier and minister to issue the approval for an initial period of seven days. This provides enough time to assess whether a further extension beyond this time frame is required and to commence the administrative processes associated with making a regulation.

The bill includes an amendment to clarify that one of the functions of district disaster management groups is to review and assess local disaster management plans. This amendment will enhance oversight of the plans at the district level. Collectively, the intent of these amendments is to ensure that the lines of disaster coordination, from local, regional and state levels, are strengthened and that all bodies with the appropriate disaster management expertise are engaged in this structure when a disaster occurs.

As a resident of Far North Queensland, I must say that during the period of cyclone Yasi—in the lead-up to it, through the warning period and since—there was tremendous preparation, as one would expect. It is our usual experience that somewhere between three and five cyclones will come near our coast. We have had many years of practice, through the state agencies, the SES and councils, preparing for cyclones. I was pleased to be invited by Mayor Val Schier of the Cairns Regional Council to join her at the local disaster management centre and sit in on the local disaster management group's meetings. There is no doubt that we were and are well prepared for cyclones.


However, it is now no secret that we were not as well prepared as we could have been for a tsunami or tidal inundation. In Far North Queensland the real lessons for our essential services, disaster management groups and councils is better preparation for possible flood inundation. Not only is Cairns a very flat city for its first kilometre inland but so, too, are many of the smaller communities to the north and south of Cairns. Therefore, there is an expectation that the councils, through our local disaster management plans, will reflect on the lessons we learnt in relation to tidal inundation and the preparation for it and refine the public communications that go with that.

After the event some people complained that the flood maps for Cairns and other parts of Far North Queensland are not as good as they should be. I commend the councils, particularly the Cairns Regional Council, for the speedy way in which they have taken up the challenge to review their flood maps and to reconsider how they are made accessible to the public and, particularly, the words that go with them. It is all very fine to be able to access a map online, but if there is no clarity around it in terms of what the legend means, what the different colours mean and what behaviour is appropriate for those in different coloured zones, it falls far short. I have no doubt that, with the improved flood mapping and communications protocol that the council and other significant groups are working on, we will be better prepared for the next cyclone season and future years, particularly in relation to the risk of tidal inundation.

I am concerned already for people in the Far North and I suspect that I should be concerned more broadly for all Queenslanders who were impacted by the events of last summer. As many honourable members would have heard, this past week we have had very heavy rain in Cairns and the district. We have welcomed that rain. It has been nice to see the landscape green again; it is looking very lush as a consequence of the rain. In periods the rain was quite heavy, but it was beneficial by and large. Yet with that experience, very many people who were impacted by last summer's events have become anxious. For the Far North it was a signal that the wet season and cyclone season are nearly here. Unsurprisingly, from a psychological point of view, it has reawakened the traumas of last season. It is to be expected that for anyone who was traumatised the next wet season will bring back memories of last season and the fear that such events could happen again.

Therefore, all state government and council agencies, as well as other essential services, need to be impeccable in communicating with people about what the plans are, what the actions will be, if warnings are given how they will be given and how we will be informed about them so that those who are anxious about the coming season will have clarity within their own personal and family circumstances about the actions they should take to protect themselves and their families in the first instance and their property thereafter. They need to know that their fears are normal and that those

fears must be minimised through the provision of reliable and repeated information that will provide them with some comfort. There is no doubt that seeing the government implement the flood inquiry's recommendations will give people in such communities across Queensland some comfort. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory—LNP) (2.55 pm): This afternoon it is with much pleasure that I rise to speak to the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill 2011. Regardless of where floods occur, every flood is different. They are like bushfires or any other natural disaster event: no two are the same. I compare the floods in Emerald in January 2008 with the floods in Emerald in January 2011. They were totally different. In 2008 we had a near-dry dam and in 2011 we had an overflowing dam and flooding rains at the headwaters of the Nogoa and Claude rivers, which affected that settlement and communities further downstream.

It is a fact that out of everything bad comes something good. I want to put on the record my condolences and sympathies for those families that lost loved ones during the January floods in Queensland this year. I congratulate the government and all parties involved, especially those working in the electorate of the member for Lockyer, in trying to redeem and restructure the situation so that people are never again subjected to such a terrible turn of events. We cannot bring back loved ones, but certainly we can better protect communities.

I believe the report of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry is a very good report. People can be critical, but unless you have something constructive to say I do not think you should say anything at all. We can all be critical about the height of the water in dams and we can all ask, 'What if that happened?' or 'What if this happened?' However, it has happened. Now we have to make certain that if such things ever happen again we manage them better than we did this time. We all remember the Brisbane floods in 1974. The dams have been built. We know of the terrible drought that the people of the south-east corner were subjected to in recent times. At the same time, we have scientific experts who can advise us accordingly. Wivenhoe Dam was built to intercept that sort of water and to be a safeguard as well as a water storage facility for Brisbane. However, nobody ever predicted the events that occurred in Toowoomba and the Lockyer. Hopefully, never again will we witness that in this state or nation.

I want to put on the record my views about the events of yesterday. I congratulate the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the Lord Mayor of Brisbane for the way in which they welcomed to Brisbane Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness Prince Philip. More importantly, I congratulate them for the time afforded to flood victims to meet with Her Majesty, who was able to listen to their stories. Those people come from all different walks of life and from different levels of society, but it was great to see that they were recognised yesterday and were able to meet with Her Majesty and express a few words or hear what she had to say. I think that will be closure for some of these people. We have to be realistic about how we address these issues in the future.

The interim report of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry is a good report. We could probably find flaws in it but, given the quality of the people on the commission, I think we are getting a fair dinkum analysis of what has happened and maybe what we should do in the future.

This bill improves the operation of disaster management groups by recognising the importance of and including the Australian Defence Force and the Australian Red Cross as part of the State Disaster Management Group. After consultation with key stakeholders, it is proposed that the Bureau of Meteorology and Surf Life Saving Queensland also become members of the State Disaster Management Group.

I go back to the early stages of January 2011 when we witnessed the Premier appoint Major General Mick Slater to head the task force to rebuild Queensland. What a wonderful man Major General Slater is. It is people of his stature that I believe made a marked difference in the reconstruction of this state. He is a man you can approach. He is a man people can talk to. He is a man who listens. I hope that Major General Dick Wilson is going to provide the same level of acknowledgement of the task ahead as did Major General Slater. Due to the quality of the people on the task force we have seen some beneficial outcomes.

I heard the Leader of the Opposition say this afternoon that, when we talk about issues in local areas, it is paramount that we recognise the knowledge of locals, especially the older citizens in the community. Going back a few years, when some infrastructure was built along the river in Emerald one of the senior citizens of the town said to me, 'Vaughan, that is going to go under water. It did in 1950. It did in 1956. It will do it again now.' It did. It happened in 2008 and it happened in 2011. That is proof that we have to heed local knowledge and be guided by locals. In the future, somebody's life, somebody's business or somebody's property could be saved from the type of disaster we were confronted with this year.

There are many issues that we could talk about this afternoon, but the one I want to address in the time available to me is the issue of road transport and the strategic vision for the future of Queensland. I am pleased that the Premier is in the House. I am pleased that there are other ministers

in the House. The Bruce Highway is the main artery running up the coast of Queensland. We saw a lot of heavy traffic that had to get to North Queensland going around through Morvan and Augathella, up to Barcaldine, back in to Emerald, up the Gregory Developmental Road to Charters Towers and into Townsville. That proved the importance of the upgrade and duplication of the Bruce Highway.

Main Roads tells me that the upgrade of Panorama Creek at Rolleston will cost in excess of \$100 million for four kilometres of flood plain. The bridge over the Nogoia River at Emerald and the Cape River crossing between Belyando Crossing and Charters Towers have to be upgraded. I believe that if those three major obstacles were upgraded we would have seen better outcomes when it came to our emergency services trying to provide food and supplies to communities further north. I think we have to recognise that. When it comes to long-term planning for more infrastructure in this state, we have to recognise this very important issue.

I congratulate Queensland Rail personnel, Department of Transport and Main Roads personnel and local council personnel for the way they expedited getting our rail lines operational, especially in the coalfields, to get commercial traffic moving so quickly after the events of January this year. I was blown away by the time in which they did that. I think due recognition should be given to people who are fair dinkum about what they do for their involvement. I do not think these people get enough recognition.

Mr Wendt: Hear, hear!

Mr JOHNSON: I take the interjection from the honourable member for Ipswich West. At the end of day, they are the people who keep communication moving. Our police and emergency services people play an integral role. I acknowledge Ian Stewart for the work he did as deputy director-general and Inspector Mick Keys of the Longreach police for the work he did. I recognise Councillor Rob Chandler, the mayor of Barcaldine Regional Council, and his team for their work. I recognise Councillor Peter Maguire and his team at the Central Highlands Regional Council. They were across the issues. I do not think those fellows found a bed during those couple of weeks. I believe that this legislation will make things a lot better when we have a disaster in the future. I support the legislation.

Mr STEVENS (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (3.05 pm): I rise to speak on the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill 2011. The policy and initiatives contained in the bill have come directly out of the interim report handed down by the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry. This bill will implement the recommendations of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry interim report and will introduce initiatives to improve Queensland's disaster preparedness before the next wet season.

I would like to comment on the very short and fraught time period we have had to deal with this bill, which was introduced on 11 October. The committee held meetings on 14 October and 19 October. It has had a very short time frame in which to report. I understand the importance of the bill and of its being enacted in time for the wet season. As we have already noted, in the northern parts of the state the wet season has started very strongly. The committee report states—

The committee recognises the importance of the proposed amendments being put in place prior to the next wet seasons. However, the committee has been unable to fully explore the implications with affected stakeholders given the short reporting time frames.

I understand the need for the haste in bringing this bill into this House, but I think another three weeks in which to deal with the matter would have given the committee time to fully explore all of the matters. The commitments of some members made it very difficult for them to take on board all of the issues and to meet with all the stakeholders.

Queensland experienced the wrath of Mother Nature on a massive scale over the last summer period. Disaster preparedness is critical for us to weather any future storm season and potential flooding that might occur. With some people still waiting to return to live in their homes, many people deciding not to return and others having lost everything, it is a reminder of the destructive form that nature can sometimes take.

I am a great supporter of the focus on disaster preparedness, which can significantly improve a variety of issues in a disaster and in its aftermath. Fortunately, this past summer the Gold Coast, which is obviously the area that I am very involved with, missed out on all of the disasters that hit other parts of the state, but we have had our share in the past and I am sure we will have our share in the future. I am well aware, through the local council and disaster management groups that run down there, of the importance of preparedness at this early stage. I will be supporting the bill coming into effect as quickly as possible.

Proper planning can ultimately prevent the loss of life, the loss of property and the psychological heartache that the community goes through in and after these disasters. I would like to make special mention of the emergency services, the police, the army, all of the charitable organisations that assisted and the thousands and thousands of volunteers who gave so much in such disastrous situations. You are to be commended, all of you. I certainly take my hat off to you.

While I understand that nothing could have prevented the voracity and unpredictable nature of what happened in the Lockyer Valley and Grantham and in areas affected by Cyclone Yasi, there are certain procedures and initiatives that can be implemented, as recommended by the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry, to help in these horrific situations.

In this bill, amendments will be made to water, disaster management, transport and planning legislation. The most significant change that has been proposed in this legislation is the amendment to the Water Act 2000 and the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) Act 2007 to allow for the minister to effect a temporary alteration to the full supply level of a dam with an approved flood manual and only after having sought advice from the chief executive of the appropriate entity. This will mean that the minister is able to alter the full supply level of a dam to avoid flooding and allow for the full supply level of dams to be temporarily reduced in South-East Queensland. Control and decisions about the full supply level of dams shifts from water agencies and entities to the minister and the Queensland government on advice. We will then see the minister take the ultimate responsibility. In future, buck-passing hopefully will be eliminated, and the minister and the government at that time will take full responsibility for matters that arise out of inappropriate action or otherwise in a flooding period.

The minister must receive advice from Seqwater, the water grid manager and the Queensland Water Commission as to the flood mitigation impacts and the security of water supply and also the Department of Environment and Resource Management before making a decision. The minister can decide to review full dam levels in the light of public interest or weather forecasts. We have seen reports already this year that the weather forecasts will probably indicate that there may well be a repeat of not the same level perhaps but serious levels of damage in the summer season ahead.

The amendments to the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 will require general flood information to be disseminated to people who live immediately downstream of dams. I take it that that information would be transferred as quickly as possible. It requires dam operators to give general flood information to residents immediately downstream of dams regarding an emergency plan. This applies to all 106 Queensland dams, whereas currently dam operators are only required to give that information to the chief executive. So this process should open up public access to information that may readily affect them. If dam providers do not provide the above information, they will be penalised at 200 penalty units, unless they can show good reason for not doing so.

The bill seeks to amend the Disaster Management Act 2003 to improve and strengthen disaster management planning and preparation, including amending the membership of the State Disaster Management Group that proposes publication of disaster management plans on the website. There is also the ability to extend declared disaster situations. The Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill 2011 also amends the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994, the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 and the Sustainable Planning Act 2009.

The sad part about the legislation from my perspective is that it fell short in terms of allowing for bipartisan support and inclusiveness of opposition members of the parliament in matters arising out of the floods—the warning systems and all of those issues that need bipartisan support to address them in the best way possible for those affected communities. The government of the day takes responsibility for the matter—and rightly so—but it would make things a lot easier if the opposition members of the day were included in all matters relevant to the flooding issues—flooding awareness, flooding planning, disaster management and all of those issues—after the fact as well, rather than just the government being the only one in charge of all of the information and all of the procedures going forward.

I will now move on to the recommendations of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry interim report. I sincerely hope that the Premier will be careful in her use of the interim report of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry and not use it as a political tool for electoral advantage instead of concentrating on managing the area of flood mitigation and dam management before this summer's wet season. I do understand the political reality of the disasters previously in terms of the skyrocketing popularity of the person in charge, as with 9-11 for then mayor Rudy Giuliani, the mayor of Christchurch and certainly the Premier of Queensland following the disastrous summer season we had. It was very, very well thought out right across-the-board in terms of her media appearances and media matters in relation to assisting those people who had been severely affected. I do understand those matters and that will always be the case whatever befalls—

Mr Shine: The mayor of Brisbane.

Mr STEVENS: The then mayor of Brisbane—I take the interjection from the member for Toowoomba North—one Campbell Newman also did an excellent job at the time of the flooding and the disasters. He was very much involved in the decision-making process of the floods in Brisbane, as the mayor should—and that is properly and rightly so. I would think that, should we have a repeat of that same disastrous season, then perhaps as a prospective leader of the state he can transfer those lord mayoral responsibilities in acting so properly then across to the Premier's duties, if that should be the wish of the people come March next year.

I fully support the Premier on expressing concern for the people of Queensland last summer, but the prior inaction and lack of proactive and preventative management of the dams and any potential disaster that could occur should have been addressed before the event. This legislation will go some way to addressing those matters that were not put in place prior to the last wet season.

The recommendations of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry interim report include: the temporary alteration of the full supply level of Wivenhoe, Somerset and North Pine dams is solely the function of the Queensland government acting through the responsible minister; a simplified framework for temporary alteration to the full supply level of the dam; and advice on this has to be sought from Seqwater, the water grid manager, the Queensland Water Commission and the Department of Environment and Resource Management. When you get all of those people—the camel, as it were—making a decision on the matter, I hope that the correct decision comes forth at the end of the day, because it will be the minister of the day who bears the brunt of the responsibility of making a decision based on all of that advice. These recommendations will be implemented by amending the Water Act 2000.

Other amendments in the bill will reduce the incidence of people driving on flooded or flood affected roads; require the carrying out of repairs to community infrastructure as quickly as possible after each disaster; require every local government to publish a copy of its disaster management plan on its website; streamline the process to erect signs to prohibit road crossings; allow the chief executive and Commissioner of Police to issue written permission to cross closed roads—for example, to deliver supplies to flood affected communities or to allow roadworkers to travel past restricted road notices to repair damaged roads. It also allows transport inspectors to ask drivers to produce a licence at any restricted road access point. Before, only heavy vehicle drivers were required to produce a licence to officials.


In relation to costs, apparently the Department of Environment and Resource Management will receive additional funding, and costs for disaster management, transport and planning legislation will be met within current budgets. I ask the Premier: what other programs will this money, which is required to cover these costs, be taken from or be diverted from? Perhaps the Premier can provide her answer about the costings in her summing-up of the legislation.

I predict that the Premier and her Labor government may make good use of this new legislation in the early months of next year, I hope. Certainly the people of Queensland will be demanding a better response delivered by this government than previously occurred with the lesser degree of preparedness for the summer of 2011. I also admit that the media act will transpose for the Premier into her very difficult period leading into the March 2012 state election.

With recent reports that the Bureau of Meteorology has predicted that we will have this summer a La Nina event, which contributes to above average rainfall, the government has to take immediate notice. Rainfall severity associated with a La Nina event all depends on the size of the La Nina event. The larger the event, the greater the rainfall and last summer was the strongest and largest we have seen in living memory. Preparation for this year's predicted La Nina event is paramount. The Premier needs to ensure the protection of community and businesses and she needs to do all she can to prevent the loss of life in this coming summer. It is absolutely necessary that we are ready and that means reducing the water levels of the dam—in particular, Wivenhoe—if that is needed. We cannot have a repeat of last year's disastrous management of the dams and water flow into our communities which caused so much devastation, property loss and, ultimately, the tragic loss of life.

The role of government is to foresee as much as possible and put in place preventative measures as much as it can to protect the community at large. There are always proactive and preventative procedures, certain measures and policy formation and implementation that can be introduced before these types of events happen. While I understand the force of Mother Nature last summer was overwhelming, improving procedures by reviewing them on a regular basis is a preventative action that can be put in place now. We have no idea what this summer season will bring—whether it is a one in 100-year storm, a one in 200-year storm or a one in 300-year storm. All of those different opportunities must be dealt with and we must put the right level of thought and practice into preparing for this very dangerous upcoming season.

As deputy chair of the Finance and Administration Committee, I feel that I have to highlight these important issues that were raised in a very, very short period. I would like to congratulate my fellow hardworking members and the chairman of that committee which dealt with this matter in a very, very short time frame. I probably did not give as much assistance on this particular bill as I would have liked, for reasons of time and other commitments. I hope the bill will serve to improve the preparedness and the capacity of the government of Queensland to deal with the upcoming season and any disasters that may befall us.

 **Mr KILBURN** (Chatsworth—ALP) (3.22 pm): I would like to make a short contribution to the debate on the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill 2011. Before I start, I would like to congratulate the Premier on her leadership during the storms and cyclones earlier this year and the decisive way in which she handled those disasters not only for a period of a week, like some people in some areas had to deal with things, but for an extended period of over six weeks where she was continuously there for the people of Queensland providing information and leadership. She did not just show leadership during the floods; she also showed leadership in her decision to quickly set up the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry. I thought that was a great decision.

Emergency workers and emergency management people have a regular system whereby, after any type of event or incident, they have a program where they look through what happened, at what was done and at what could have been done better. In the fire service, that is called a lessons learned process. One of the things about that process is that in order to encourage people to talk openly and honestly about what happened you try to avoid portioning blame and pointing out people's faults and instead you look at what was done and how it can be improved. Perhaps that is something that some members of the opposition could take on board.

I would like to commend the government for acting so quickly in response to the commission of inquiry's interim report. I also commend the bipartisan committee for their quick deliberation on the bill and the fact that there seems to be bipartisan support. This government has a long history of improving and modernising disaster management in Queensland. It has been going on for quite a while.

We also have a long history of investing in, modernising and improving emergency response capabilities through the numerous emergency services organisations we have. I think this constant change and modernisation in large part contributed to the amazing response that we had in this state from all of the emergency services response agencies during the flood. I honestly do not think any state in Australia or many places in the world could have responded to the level of emergency that we had in this state for the extended period of time and in the remote areas we had it as well and as effectively as the Queensland Emergency Services workers and the Queensland Emergency Services organisation. I think it is something that people in Queensland should be immensely appreciative of, and we all should be incredibly proud of every single member of the emergency response organisations that look after this state.

One thing that did come out of the commission of inquiry that I was a little bit concerned about was some of the comments regarding the Queensland Fire and Rescue Services swift-water rescue capability and some recommendations that improvements that could be made. Members of the public should not mistake that for a criticism of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service.


We do not have to go back too far to remember the days—and I remember them very well—where we did not actually have a dedicated technical rescue organisation in the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. It was done basically on shift. As a comparison to what happens now, I remember going to swift-water rescue incidents where a firefighter would tie a manila rope around his belt and jump into the flooded river and hope to get the person and bring them back to the shore. That was based on the fact that we really did not have enough knowledge about what we were doing. It was only when we were trained that we realised how incredibly dangerous it was. It was not only firefighters who did that; I know that police officers would also respond to swift-water rescue incidents and have to do the same thing—simply through a lack of knowledge. In a very short time, we now have highly trained and dedicated emergency rescue people in not only swift-water rescue but vertical rescue, urban search and rescue and confined space rescue. In fact, our urban search and rescue team is one of the few teams recognised by the United Nations as an international response team for urban search and rescue throughout the world.

So whilst it was identified that there is some room for improvement and that some extra resources could be put into swift-water rescue, I think the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service management should be congratulated for the fact that many years ago they identified this need and they have gone a long way to improving this situation. There are now over 120 highly trained swift-water rescue personnel throughout the state, and I acknowledge that they have recently committed to improving that number. In fact, at my local pool at the Clem Jones Centre last week there were 20 or so firefighters doing some swift-water rescue training in the pool—as strange as that may sound.

We have come a long way and I think we should all recognise that. We need to continue to work, and this bill does that. It continues to improve the disaster management framework which we operate under. The change that I would like to talk about quickly is the amendments to the Disaster Management Act and the amendment to allow representatives of the Australian Defence Force and the Australian Red Cross Society to be members of the State Disaster Management Group. I think that is a good idea.

Whilst there was always an opportunity for the State Disaster Management Group to bring in people to that committee, I think it is good that they have been legislatively recognised to be on that committee, and this is for a number of reasons. It means that those organisations that are named will have to ensure that they have people who understand how the State Disaster Management Group works, that they train their staff to fit in and that they are able to participate. It also means that they get to participate in a more formal way in the regular State Disaster Management Group training exercises which are held throughout the year and throughout the state. This means that we improve the interoperability between those organisations. There is also provision in the legislation that those groups can be put onto the local disaster management groups. Once again, it is the same thing: local disaster management groups could bring people in as required, but it is good to see them being placed on there in a more formal manner.

Another amendment is that local disaster management groups must consult with people who may have information or skills that would allow them to perform their services, and I think that goes a little way to what the member for Gregory was talking about earlier with regard to ensuring that local disaster management groups take into account the skills and expertise of local people and people with knowledge which may be of benefit to those organisations. With those few words, I commend the bill to the House. I commend the government for its quick action in bringing this bill to the House in preparing the state even further and for tweaking the Disaster Management Act to ensure the best possible outcome. I can assure the member for Mermaid Beach that members of all of the emergency services are fully geared up and fully trained and preparing well for the upcoming storm season.

 **Mr DOWLING** (Redlands—LNP) (3.30 pm): Today I rise to speak on the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill 2011. This amendment bill is an omnibus bill which seeks to amend the Water Act 2000, the South East Queensland Water Restructuring Act 2007, the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008, the Disaster Management Act 2003, the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994, the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 and the Sustainable Planning Act 2009.

Unlike many previous commenters, I hope that we never have to use this legislation. I hope that Queensland does not run foul of the weather patterns that we have had in the last 12 months or so. This legislation has been brought before the House on the eve of the wet season, the storm season and the cyclone season. It is legislation brought in in response to the interim report from the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry presented on 1 August, and it does seem to get to the heart of many of the recommendations, even though it does fitter around the edge of some. However, my concern is that we could see a repeat of the recent cycle of weather extremes with the threat of a wet season and storm season, including cyclonic activity, that we faced last year and earlier this year.

In relation to the Water Act 2000 and the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) Act 2007, this legislation is supposed to provide a framework, some certainty and some clarity for the responsible minister to operate within. The principal tool is for dam management in a crisis under these provisions, with the ability to vary the dam levels, the dam capacity and the 100 per cent capacity. There is scope to vary that water level. That level can be moved higher, increasing the capacity for a specific dam, or it can be lowered, because the legislation does not strictly say that it has to be one or the other. This provision, however, is only applicable after consultation and using the approved flood manual through the chief executive and the other relevant entities. It seems that this process is almost a case of 'back to the future' when we consider the process the minister followed last time and compare that to the new process. It is much of the same. The minister now needs to follow the process prior to being empowered to make any decision to act in relation to the potential looming disaster. First the minister needs to liaise with and receive advice from Seqwater, the water grid manager, the Queensland Water Commission and DERM. The minister then needs to liaise and get direction or advice from the chief executive through and with those various entities listed prior to making any decision.

In some respects, this legislation could be seen to mirror the circumstances that led to last year's appalling decision-making processes—or the failure to make decisions—all over again. I recall the minister being caught almost napping. He was left all at sea. He sought advice on the dam levels, only to be ignored. The minister left it on the backburner. He put it off or put it to the side—'parked it' was the expression he used, from memory. I suspect that in this current climate it is unlikely that we will see those same circumstances, but it does strike me as more a case of a committee than any real change in position or strength in a government's ability to respond. As I said at the outset, I hope that we never have to rely upon it.

I also see gaps in the information flow. While the explanatory notes to the legislation talk in terms of utilising the Bureau of Meteorology, in my assessment there need to be much clearer roles and much clearer partnerships between all of the players in vogue here—that is, the Bureau of Meteorology, dam engineers, the SES and the like. In some circumstances, these decision-making priorities can change by the minute and by the hour—not enough time certainly to call a committee. This legislation also calls for operating manuals and flood mitigation manuals for other dams, and there is no doubt that that is a valid recommendation; however, the minister will be the one who is accountable, and what a welcome change—a minister being held accountable!

This amendment bill also addresses the issue of downstream warnings and sheets responsibility to dam operators for communicating with downstream communities if or when the need arises to lower dam levels. This can be problematic—and it is recognised within the legislation and the briefing notes that it can be problematic—given the committee mix, the geographic location and the communication tools available such as mobile phones, landlines, emails et cetera. There is also the secondary question about the timing in circumstances where catchments can fill quite quickly with significant rainfall events and emergency plans need to swing into action. These response times need to be very carefully considered and there needs to be significant local input, as has been said by many speakers on both sides of the House.


The commission also recommended that dam operators should be, upon request, providing persons requiring notification or advice with evacuation plans or emergency plans—and that is probably a good strategic move looking to the future. It also called for the publishing of disaster management plans on websites, be they local, district or state plans. Oftentimes they are complex documents. Local authorities and the responsible bodies that I have been involved with have largely already been down that path in that they already promote and publicly make available documents relating to readiness for storm and emergency evacuations. However, one thing we need to be very mindful of is that these documents can be quite wordy. They can be complex documents. We need to ensure that the information on the website is in simple language and plain English. We need to ensure we limit the jargon.

The legislation also relates to amendments in terms of transport infrastructure—that is, quicker response times to signpost roads that are subject to flood and empowering local people to make decisions on the integrity of road surfaces. Again, it has been said by many members that we need to ensure there is local input. As we know, Queensland is a big state and, therefore, one size does not fit all. Local knowledge is vital and serves the community well. My time on local government and the disaster management plans in place for Redlands are testimony to that. Each area has its own specific needs and its own specific priorities. And then of course there is the differential between the types of emergency that we are talking about. But it is critical that the locals are able to manage it and that they have the flexibility to manage their issues locally.

The issue of early warnings has so far not been picked up. When I visited with communities across Queensland I found that the early-warning system along the inland waterways was the biggest issue. It was raised by people constantly. I understand that the measuring devices around the waterways are different in type. There are some that measure the depth of a river, some that measure rainfall, others that measure flow and others that measure actual water quality. We need some consistency. Through managing those types of entities properly we will get a better advance-warning system, and that is critical.

Then there is the issue of who owns the devices or who is responsible for them. Again, that issue was raised with me right across communities in South-East Queensland when I toured flood affected areas. Some are managed by local government, some by the Bureau of Meteorology, some by DERM and some by the departments of agriculture and primary industries. There is also a need to coordinate these devices so that the community gets consistency of information. That enables farmers, through the internet and through email, to monitor rivers and creeks to get their early-warning systems in place. It enables the man on the land to move stock, to move equipment, to save family and to make quality, informed decisions. That is certainly what I heard as I travelled through Dalby, Cecil Plains, Chinchilla, Theodore, Roma, Charleville and all points west. This issue was raised during the hearings. It was also raised during estimates. However, I have not seen it addressed in this legislation. There has been some addressing of the early-warning systems but only as they relate to controlled release of water in South-East Queensland dams and nominated dams. Based on my consultation, this may well have been an opportunity lost.

In the time remaining, I also recognise the service and the role played by local government and the role played by emergency services and their ability to respond to their local community needs quickly, efficiently and effectively. I recognise all of the community disaster management groups, who performed admirably. I commend them on their work within their respective communities.

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (3.40 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill 2011. Our recommendation as a committee is for the bill to be passed. In that respect, it is clear that there is bipartisan support across our committee in relation to that. The bill is an omnibus bill that amends a number of acts: the Water Act 2000, the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) Act 2007, the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008, the Disaster Management Act 2003, the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994, the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 and the Sustainable Planning Act 2009. It is worth taking a moment to consider the amount of effort put in by the committee to address this, given the number of acts that were being amended and the breadth of the work that needed to be done to cover the various issues that needed to be addressed. It is also worth noting that this bill is the first to be debated that has been reviewed by the Finance and Administration Committee. Our support staff did an exceptional job in pulling the whole thing together.


The bill is regarded as an urgent bill due to the wet season being upon us. Among other things, the amendments are intended to make it clear that the chief executive can include in dam safety conditions a requirement about giving general flood information to residents immediately downstream from dams. I would like to reinforce some comments made by the member for Mudgeeraba in relation to the need to give that information. Of course, giving that information is extremely important. It is absolutely imperative to be able to give that information to people living downstream. There are 108 referable dams that need to be addressed. Some of those dams are owned by mining companies, others are owned by local governments and some are privately owned. In fact, eight, or around seven per cent, of the dams are privately owned. It is absolutely imperative. We spent quite a bit of time

discussing this type of system. We discussed whether any consideration had been given, for example, to having in place the old siren when something very untoward, unexpected or different to what is normally expected is happening. At the end of the day, if everything else is wiped out, maybe we could fall back on those old sirens that are cranked out—spinning the siren—to let everyone downstream know that something is happening.

Towards the end of one of the public hearings that we held we asked the question of various witnesses about the issue of cost and so forth because the Queensland Farmers Federation had indicated some concern in that regard. The LGAQ representative was quick to point out that there were some concerns from the perspective of the councils. There are quite a few council owned dams around the state. The example was given that the individual electronic warning devices that may be considered to be used in alerting communities downstream come with a cost, and it is an ongoing cost. The example that was given was of the need for a council to put in place 20 sites. Each one of these electronic devices is estimated to cost something like \$50,000. So we have a spend of about \$1 million just to put in place the actual devices. Of course, it is the local members of the community—ultimately, the ratepayers in the community—who are responsible for meeting that cost. Then there is the ongoing cost of looking after these devices. There is no point placing them out in the bush, leaving them and hoping to goodness they will work next time something untoward happens. There is the ongoing cost of putting somebody on the roads in a four-wheel drive. There is the cost of the equipment, the cost of the four-wheel drive itself and the cost of the person's salary and living away from home allowance because some of these devices are very remote. One particular council indicated that it could add two per cent to the base rates of that local community. That was of concern to us. It was interesting that it was brought up. I hope it can be addressed. We have to be cautious that we do not penalise individual councils beyond their capacity to manage the cost of these individual devices.

Another area of concern that was discussed related to repairs of roads. Of course, community infrastructure, roads and other facilities come under this bill. The question was asked about repairs to private roads as opposed to public roads. On occasions there would be situations, especially out west, where a local road is written off, wiped out and unable to be traversed. No amount of repair can be done to it because it is going to be under water for the next few weeks, months or whatever. It may very well be that the only way through is via a private road on one or more of the larger properties around that particular area. The question was asked whether the bill would cover the repair of private roads in emergency situations. Following some communication from the department, we are now satisfied that, where the life or health of a person is at risk, then an exemption is already in place to allow for emergency repairs. Certainly it was worth asking the question just to be sure, and that is what the committee system is all about—going through these issues, checking them off and ensuring that all of these possible scenarios that may not be thought about are covered.

Other matters have been well and truly addressed by other members of the committee. I congratulate the chair on the way he conducted the committee in relation to this particular matter. Of course, other members of the House have well and truly addressed many of the other issues. I will leave my comments at that other than to reiterate what I said earlier. I thank our committee researchers for their outstanding effort—and I am sure they were burning the midnight oil—in making sure that this bill was ready to go. I think it has taken something like 11 days, if we exclude weekends, to turn the whole thing around, including two hearings. As I said, a lot of work has been done by our committee research team. I congratulate them. The bill is about protecting people and property. I think this bill does go a long way towards that end.

 **Mrs MILLER** (Bundamba—ALP) (3.49 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill 2011. This bill implements recommendations of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry interim report. It also addresses some of the issues I raised in my submission to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry on behalf of the constituents in the electorate of Bundamba. My submission, which is titled 'Constituent issues and questions: Bundamba electorate' was also delivered to the Premier and the Deputy Premier. In part 10 of my submission I raised the issue of the role of different levels of government in disaster management. I am pleased to report to the House today that section 19 of the Disaster Management Act 2003 will be amended to insert a new subsection (f) to include an officer of the Australian Defence Force and to also insert a new subsection (g) to include an employee of the Australian Red Cross Society. Furthermore, in section 6 of my submission to the Floods Commission of Inquiry I raised several issues concerning the local disaster management plan. I asked in section 6.2—

Why was the Ipswich City Disaster Management Plan not available on the website,

As a direct result of my lobbying, section 60 of the act will be amended. It states that a copy of the plan must be available for inspection by members of the public at the head office of the local government, in my case the Ipswich City Council. It also must be available on the Ipswich City Council website and at other places the CEO of the local government considers appropriate. May I suggest to the CEO of the Ipswich City Council that in all flood prone areas of Ipswich these plans should be made available at police stations, churches and schools as well as appropriate neighbourhood houses. It was

absolutely ridiculous, in my view, that my electorate officer, Steve Axe, had to pay \$25 for a copy of the Ipswich City Council management plan, then wait a few days after showing the city solicitor a copy of the relevant legislation. Thank heavens this matter has now been legislated to ensure that it does not happen again.

In sections 1.2 and 11.2 of my submission on behalf of the constituents in my electorate I asked whether the Ipswich City Council had reviewed its local plans required pursuant to section 59 of the Disaster Management Act. I am pleased to advise the House today that I have been advised that there are now three full-time staff employed by the Ipswich City Council working on this plan and other emergency measures. I am pleased that the council has listened to my calls for action and I am very pleased that they have taken appropriate action to employ these people.

In sections 3.3 and 6.2 of my submission I raised issues in relation to flood mapping and I questioned why, prior to the flood in 2011, the flood maps were not available on the website. I am pleased to advise the House today that the Ipswich City Council now has the flood maps available on its website from the 1974 and 2011 flood events. Now, just like Brisbane City Council had prior to the 2011 flood, Ipswich city residents can look up the maps on its website.

In sections 5.2 and 6.2 of my submission to the commission of inquiry I also raised issues in relation to early warning methods of notification of a flood event—for example, by SMS or where there is no electricity, no phones and no mobile phones. I am pleased to advise that I have been told that the council is currently examining these technologies, including SMS, tweeting and other technologies for future use in the event of another disaster.


In section 9.2 of my submission on behalf of the electors of Bundamba I raised several issues and suggested that community organisations such as the SES, Neighbourhood Watch and ambulance committees and, indeed, ultimately every household, receive information and training on disaster management and action plans. I believe that an important step for the Ipswich City Council to undertake would be for an information package to be developed and printed and delivered to all flood affected households and community organisations. Such an information package should be in several languages, including Pacifica languages. The information package should also, in my view, be in a waterproof container and placed in the house where all householders understand its contents and know where to find it.

I will not go into any great detail in relation to town planning matters and the fact that over the years the Ipswich City Council has allowed homeowners, developers and businesspeople to build just about anything on the flood plains following the 1974 flood, including units, clubs, child-care centres, houses et cetera, as that is still being reviewed by the Floods Commission of Inquiry. In fact, many homeowners and businesses have raised these issues direct with the Floods Commission of Inquiry. Can I say that I certainly hope that the commission addresses these issues in some detail.

Only yesterday I was at Goodna State School at its NAIDOC ceremony. I met up with many residents who had been affected by two floods, one in 1974 and the other one in 2011. They told me that they do not know how they would cope with a third flood at any point in time. The key issue as the member for Bundamba is to have the best professionals in disaster management employed at federal, state and local government levels and to let the professionals have the power to make the appropriate decisions at the time of any event. Professionals should be employed for their expertise. We need to have confidence from the community in their ability to do the job. There should be no place, in my view, for armchair experts at any level of government.

Finally, in relation to the legal costs of the Ipswich City Council for the Floods Commission of Inquiry, many people are a bit bewildered as to why the council contracted Clayton Utz and a host of solicitors and barristers costing, I understand, somewhere near \$1.5 million, particularly when the Ipswich City Council has a city solicitor already employed. I have been advised that the legal bill may be in excess of \$2 million. I am sure that this money could have been better spent on kerbing and channelling along Brisbane Terrace and the side streets in Goodna that had floodwaters over the roofs of the houses. Many people in Brisbane take kerbing and channelling for granted, but in Ipswich it is not necessarily the norm to have such basic services in those older suburbs.

I am very pleased that there have been effective outcomes from my submission to the Floods Commission of Inquiry, which was also sent to the Premier and Deputy Premier. I am pleased that the government and the Ipswich City Council have moved on the issues that I raised, even though there was an hysterical attempt to pillory me at the time. Let me make this clear: I fight for what is right for everyone in my electorate. I raise the issues without fear or favour. This legislation shows that fighting for what is right results in the right thing being done. Well done, Premier, and our Labor government. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mrs KIERNAN** (Mount Isa—ALP) (3.57 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the debate on the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill which amends three water acts, a transport act, the road rules and the Disaster Management Act. From the perspective of the Disaster Management Act, the bill amends it to strengthen and streamline disaster management planning and preparation, response and

recovery, including through amending the membership of the State Disaster Management Group, requiring publication of disaster management plans on websites and streamlining extensions of declared disaster situations.

The flood events earlier this year revealed the success of the new arrangements and the high degree of cooperation between the Queensland Police Service, Emergency Management Queensland and other agencies throughout the event. This view was supported by the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry which, in its interim report on 20 August 2011, stated—

... thus far, no changes are required to the fundamental structure of the disaster management system before the next wet season.

Amendments to the Disaster Management Act 2003 commenced on 1 November 2010. The amendments clarified which agencies are responsible, the different phases of disaster management and improved Queensland's ability to respond to a disaster. Further technical amendments made to the DMA commenced on 21 February 2011 when the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Act 2011 was given assent. In response to the floods commission interim recommendation 3.1, the disaster management legislation will be amended to include the Australian Defence Force, the Australian Red Cross, Surf Life Saving Queensland and the Bureau of Meteorology as members of the State Disaster Management Group.


Disaster management groups will also be required to consult with relevant essential service providers, such as telecommunications and electricity suppliers, during planning and preparation in the early stages of a disaster. This is in line with the commission's interim recommendation 6.1. The act will also be amended to require the publication of disaster management plans on relevant websites to implement the commission's interim recommendation 3.6 and clarify the operation of disaster declarations and streamline the process for extending declarations in certain circumstances.

Training on the implementation of the amendments and how the disaster management arrangements have changed was delivered across Queensland for persons involved in disaster management in July and August 2010. A total of 587 people attended those training sessions in Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Mount Isa, Longreach, Rockhampton, Brisbane, Beenleigh, Maryborough, Charleville, Roma and Toowoomba. Forty-two local governments were represented at the training sessions. The QPS developed two courses in preparation for the 2010-11 storm season. One course was conducted on 19 October 2010 and another course was conducted on 26 October 2010. EMQ has developed an introductory course for local disaster coordinators. Sessions were held across all regions, again in 2010. A great deal of preparedness was undertaken in 2010.

Given that 44 participants attended those courses, the Queensland floods inquiry's recommendations have placed greater emphasis on disaster management training. EMQ has now developed the Queensland disaster management training framework in consultation with QPS, local governments and the Local Government Association of Queensland. The framework identifies training pathways for officers involved in disaster management arrangements and was approved by the director-general of the Department of Community Safety on 16 June this year. Since the 2011 floods and Cyclone Yasi, EMQ has delivered Queensland disaster management arrangements training to disaster management stakeholders across the state, with over 1,030 participants completing the training since February 2011.

In response to the inquiry, the Queensland government has provided additional funding and resources that will enable the delivery of disaster management training to be accelerated and delivered to a wider audience across the state before the next wet season. Emergency Management Queensland has produced and distributed a disaster review and assessment workbook for local disaster management plans. The tool has been provided to district disaster coordinators to review local disaster management group plans before the start of this year's wet season. In my own electorate and region, I know that groups already are preparing for the next wet season.

Certainly we all have learned a great deal from the summer of disasters and sorrow. Indeed, today there is a heightened sense of awareness of our weather patterns and, most importantly, how we can build resilience in our communities. I know for sure that that is the case in many of the councils and communities that I have the privilege to represent, and I feel absolutely certain that it is occurring right across Queensland. I commend the Premier for bringing these amendments to the House.

 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (4.03 pm): I rise to speak to the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill 2011. Even though it feels as though the floods and the cyclone happened such a long time ago, one only had to watch the raw emotions on the faces of the people who met the Queen this week to know that it is still very much a part of the pain that they carry. Indeed, for many of them, the repairs are still in progress. There was talk of a storm up north recently where a significant number of houses still have tarps on their roofs. Facing another storm season with potentially high winds and driving rain like that is not a position that I would like to be in. It is very sad indeed that people are facing such a situation in the 2011 storm season.

The bill amends a number of pieces of legislation that directly relate to potential disasters. The Water Act, the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) Act and the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act, in particular, relate to the release of water pre deluge to manage and mitigate against flooding. In my electorate the Awoonga Dam is not a flood mitigation structure; it is a water supply structure for both domestic and industrial use. However, the raising of the dam has created circumstances that impact on segments of the community during significant rain events. The raising of the Awoonga Dam wall was critical, given the industry that is being located in my electorate. The dam wall was raised and the capacity of the dam increased substantially. However, with the raising of the dam wall, the road to the Boyne Valley was relocated in a number of places to accommodate the higher water backed up in the dam.

The raising of the dam wall has also created an issue with the flooding of the Boyne Valley Road near Nellie Simpson Road. It used to be that three low-level, single-lane bridges would flood but once the waters went down people would be able to travel again up and down the Boyne Valley. There are schools in three of those communities and a small health clinic at Builyan that services all of the valley, particularly the sawmills. There is one store and a pub. Those are the facilities of the Boyne Valley. The people need to be able to commute along the road to access them. The problem is that, even though the water will go below the deck of bridges such as the Degalgil Bridge and the Boyne River Bridge and they are able to be trafficked, the road remains impassable because of the dam water up at Nellie Simpson Road. It means that that community is flooded in for longer than it needs to be, simply because of the rain that has fallen from the sky.

In the Boyne Valley, a community of several hundred people living in the collector area are certainly frustrated that, as a result of the raising of the dam wall, they are flooded in for longer and cannot get out as the water backs up at Awoonga Dam. Similarly, the community on the western side of Pikes Crossing is disadvantaged because the low-level causeway remains flooded for longer. When the dam is full, the water overtops and Pikes Crossing remains underwater for a longer period than in the past. While those issues do not go anywhere near the terrible sadness that occurred around Toowoomba and the floods at the beginning of this year, they are no less life-threatening in the sense of people being isolated, which is very frustrating for the community.

It is incredibly important that in times of danger and risk the ability of the state government and the organisations that are charged with responding is relatively unfettered. This bill makes several amendments in relation to the Transport Infrastructure Act. One is the ability to stop vehicles travelling on a road where it is likely they will cause damage to the road. It gives an officer the ability to prevent that person from using the road. I have greater concern and would seek some information about the temporary restriction on the use of a state controlled road. A person driving past a restricted road use notice erected or displayed under subsection (1) will be in contravention of the notice and that person may face a maximum penalty of \$20,000. I am not in any way condoning people breaching a 'road closed' sign where there is danger and I am certainly not encouraging people to travel through flooded waters—that is ridiculous—but I am concerned that during and after the flooding events of Christmas 2010-11 there were reports of officious officers who were blocking rural landowners from accessing their own stock to check for feed and the safety of their stock. There was one particular email that I know all of us got at least once, if not more, about—


Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: I never had any indication that it was not fair dinkum. I am using it as an example that there can be times in emergency circumstances when landowners have to do these things, but they know the area very well and are experienced in traversing the region, whether it be roads or stock routes or whatever. This would mean that those people would incur a maximum penalty of \$20,000. The legislation says that they have to have a reasonable excuse, but that is a reverse onus of proof. Therefore, the person has to be able to prove that they have a reasonable excuse or that they had written approval.

I want to know how harshly this provision is going to be applied and why the penalties are so high. The maximum penalty is huge. It is certainly not commensurate with a normal road infringement notice. I would be interested in the Premier's response to my concerns regarding that part of the bill. It is a reverse onus of proof.

As a previous speaker said, Queensland is a very decentralised state. In the main, I believe people act responsibly in disaster situations. It also must be acknowledged that Queenslanders help one another. Queenslanders do at times put themselves at disadvantage or indeed at risk to ensure the safety and wellbeing of other people, particularly children and women. This \$20,000 fine could be levied on people who, in their own minds and hearts, are acting responsibly and are responding to a difficult situation. It could be that an overzealous officer could use this new clause in the legislation and disadvantage them significantly. I would like the Premier to respond to my concerns and put some flesh around that new clause to indicate what flexibility will be built in to allow for what is, I believe, a genuine attitude of care and compassion on the part of Queenslanders in periods of disaster and need and to ensure that people who are doing the right thing and are well meaning are not greatly disadvantaged financially.

I hope that we do not have to use this legislation at all. I hope we get good rain this year, but not rain that causes a disaster. However, if we do, I commend all of those who work in the emergency services sector, irrespective of whether they are paid or volunteers. They are the lifeblood of this state at times of emergency. I certainly thank them on behalf of my community for the amazing work that they do.

 **Mrs MENKENS** (Burdekin—LNP) (4.13 pm): I am very happy to make a contribution to the debate on the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill. This bill could in all honesty be described as the 'just in time bill'. It is just in time for the start of the Queensland wet season. It does give rather little time for local governments and other stakeholders to implement the new provisions that are outlined in this legislation.

This bill was treated as an urgent bill, which was obviously necessary. But it is disappointing that this very important piece of legislation has to be panic driven through this parliament. The Finance and Administration Committee was given just over a week to consider this bill. Considering the time line, it must be commended for the excellent report that it has produced.

The Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill is an important piece of legislation. As the Leader of the Opposition has stated, members of the LNP will be supporting it. This bill amends seven different acts to achieve its aims which are to implement the recommendations of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry interim report to improve the state's disaster preparedness.

In the past my electorate of Burdekin has been in the middle of quite a few severe storm paths. This area may not have the normal rainfall of further north, but it certainly has its fair share of cyclones and floods as well as, of course, droughts, which are at the other end of the spectrum of disasters.

There are many aspects to natural disasters. Bowen has been in the path of four cyclones since 2009—Hamish, Ului, Anthony and Yasi. They have impacted in a huge way on the coral fin fish industry. Whereas the devastation normally credited to natural disasters tends to be on the mainland, these cyclones have impacted on the reef structure, which has seriously affected the coral trout catch in that area.

Reduced catches of coral reef fin fish have put a strain on individuals and have put a huge strain on the industry as a whole in the Bowen region. Catch rates have been dramatically reduced. This has left those involved crying out for help. The call for government assistance has gone unanswered. This industry has been advised that it does not meet the strict natural disaster assessment criteria for financial assistance.

I highlight this issue because no disaster preparedness can actually be put in place by fishermen to protect the reef and the natural fishing grounds from cyclone damage. Those professional fishers affected have been totally left out in the cold when it comes to any form of government assistance. In fact, the minister, Craig Wallace, is on the record as saying that the fishermen should look after themselves. This minister has shown how little he really cares for the fishermen of North Queensland and his total disregard for this industry by his comments in *Townsville Bulletin* just last week. He stated—

Disaster response strategies would inevitably fall back on the fishermen themselves. Like any business, they need to have the wherewithal to respond to the extreme or severe weather events as part of their operation. Accordingly, fishers need to take reasonable actions and make investments to secure their operations.

Does the minister realise that there are fishermen in Bowen who are having great difficulty even feeding their families after the devastation of their fishing grounds? There are fishermen there who cannot even put food on the table let alone go out and set up outside investments to secure their operations. Excuse me, this is just ridiculous.

Let us look at the big picture. The big picture is that the local fishing industry does require support. There is no way we want to see the retail market full of overseas caught fish because the government has forced the fishing industry out of business. I do not want to see fish caught overseas on my plate when I go to the shop. That is the bottom line.

I note the shadow minister's question this morning to the Premier asking why key areas of Queensland are still waiting to see cyclone shelters. I am delighted to see that the first sod for the shelter in Proserpine is about to be turned. This is very good news. It is extremely welcome and we certainly appreciate and acknowledge the generosity of the United Arab Emirates in making this possible.

Earlier this year the state government announced 10 new shelters to be built along the North Queensland coast from Port Douglas to Yeppoon in the next two years. We note that the full details of the rest of these have not been released and construction plans are taking a long time. However, this government, as usual, has been extremely selective in where these shelters are to be placed. The Bligh government has totally snubbed the residents of the Burdekin shire. The Burdekin shire is the only council area along the northern coast that has not been allocated a category 5 cyclone shelter despite

being smack bang in the middle of past severe tropical storm paths. What we are seeing is Labor's blatant disregard for the safety of Burdekin residents. Burdekin residents are being left to fend for themselves. It just goes to prove how little Labor really cares.

The Burdekin Shire Council is the only coastal local government area south of Cairns not included in the list of locations for shelters. Everyone is very disappointed given the expert way our local disaster management group operates. Although Ayr and Home Hill were not in the direct eye of Cyclone Yasi, it was still a traumatic experience for many locals there. These locals experienced at that stage a category 3 cyclone and the winds. Cyclone Aivu, which created devastation in Home Hill on 4 April 1989, is still very fresh in the minds of many Burdekin residents.


I was really pleased to see that Bowen scored one category 5 shelter, so there will be at least one shelter in my electorate. If a cyclone hit North Queensland while the Burdekin River was in flood, residents on either side of the river in Ayr and Home Hill would be very vulnerable. The nearest category 5 cyclone shelters will be in Bowen and in Townsville. What good is that going to be with the Bruce Highway constantly cut off due to flooding to the north and south?

The Department of Public Works' excuse for why there is no shelter planned for the Burdekin electorate is that it is a flood prone region. The public works minister, Minister Finn, is on record saying that the best option for residents is to travel to Townsville or Bowen as the Burdekin could be swamped in a large cyclone. If they are swamped, how are they going to get out? But that is another story. He claims that the difficulty in the Burdekin area is that locations cannot be found that have suitable flood immunity. He says that land above the Q500 flood level is very difficult to find in that area and claims that the department was unable to find a suitable, safe space in order to construct the cyclone shelter. This is ridiculous. Of course there are large areas that are flood prone, but there are plenty of areas that are yet to see flood. A little bit of imagination and a few loads of dirt and gravel would soon place a structure well above any possible Q500 flood level. I am disgusted at this complete disregard of the Burdekin shire residents and the weasel word excuses. The Bureau of Meteorology is again predicting, sadly, worse than average cyclones this season, and North Queenslanders are still waiting for those cyclone shelters that were first promised in 2006 by Labor.

Disaster management, as has been acknowledged by quite a few speakers, is best done at the local level. The work that the local disaster management groups, led by the council, do is excellent. These groups draw on the local knowledge and, with the support of state and federal resources, are able to act in the most timely fashion. I regularly attend the meetings of the Burdekin counter disaster committee when it is called into action. I never cease to be impressed by the professionalism of the team. In fact, the Burdekin group has been acknowledged by Emergency Management Queensland as being one of the best groups in North Queensland. I salute their efforts and those of the many other council areas who do the same.

Of course, the Burdekin is no stranger to floods, with the wonderful residents of Giru regularly being inundated virtually every year. In fact, it was one wet season some years ago that Giru went underwater nine times before the state-wide media even noticed this wonderful community. Their resilience is amazing, but their preparedness is mostly due to the excellent work of the local SES volunteers. As soon as the alert that the Haughton River will flood is out, these members doorknock every house in Giru to warn them of the impending floodwaters. Sometimes it is in the middle of the night, but these are the sorts of grassroots actions that save lives and property.

I support the Leader of the Opposition's comments on this legislation and certainly hope that this season will not see a recurrence of what the state has just been through.

 **Dr DOUGLAS** (Gaven—LNP) (4.23 pm): We live in a world where every day is a mixture of uncertainty, heartache and great joy. It is the simple things that we sometimes overlook that bring us the greatest happiness. Sadly it is times of great adversity and disaster that makes one aware of that truism of life, such were the messages that came from Queensland's most recent awful cyclones and floods—that is, at the human level of a natural disaster. At a higher level, this bill has the aspirational goal of implementing the lessons learnt from the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry—effectively one set of lessons learnt by tragedy; the other implemented to prevent future tragedy.

We in the LNP intend to support this bill. We will be watching to see if actions match the words. One thousand doses of prevention is far less a burden than one fatality. The flood in January had 32 fatalities and two people remain missing. Those 34 lost souls clearly must not be seen to have died in vain.

Before discussing the specifics of the bill, I wish to address the issue of blame, if only because it seems to have been avoided in the speech by the Premier. Honourable members, we are all to blame and may I add that, having said that, we will not move forward unless we all accept that. Personally, I do not believe in blame. It is essentially the last resort of the scoundrel. By accepting responsibility one can then progress towards a better system that builds in the safeguards that, firstly, saves lives; secondly, saves communities; and, finally, secures property.

I am concerned that this bill seeks to dodge the harder solutions because Labor appears to believe that it has successfully dodged the harder questions. At the top of that list must be why the Wivenhoe Dam was primarily used by Labor not for flood mitigation but for water storage. Secondly, if Labor truly believed that Brisbane would never flood again after the '74 floods, allowing for the high-density, infill development under the SEQ plan, then why would it now seek to alter the current arrangements, centralising responsibility for dams levels back to the minister? The third difficult question left unanswered and therefore not addressed is: what is the Labor government offering residents and landholders affected by the severe floods beyond public statements vilifying flood insurers, councils, property owners who rent out properties and those with whom they do not agree? The answer is nothing at all. There is utterly nothing in this bill that tells me Labor shoulders any responsibility. In fact, it defers all responsibility to stakeholders including many charities. Only the federal government is not mentioned, most likely because it is a Labor government and critically because it will pick up the vast bulk of the huge \$9 billion to \$15 billion cost.

Whilst I respect the roles of the two longstanding members on the committee and former members—and I congratulate them for their efforts—of supervising the funds raised for the Premier's relief fund, the funds took much too long to be released for those in desperate situations. The lessons of all major recent disasters conclusively show that in recovery governments have a critical role in master planning, relief funds, rebuilding homes, rebuilding businesses, rebuilding communities and assisting to rebuild people's lives. Often it is said that there is a two- to three-year stagnation of both economic and social activity that occurs after these disasters. So we need to keep it up for that length of time. If we do not learn the lessons of our history, we are condemned to repeating those mistakes.

The published review *Response to Disaster* in 1979 by Professors John Western and John Price, paid for by the government, gave us a clear guide of what we must do after the '74 floods, and here in Queensland we did exactly that. What we were told does not work and probably made things worse. Secondly, the most successful reconstruction plan in First World countries occurred in Kobe in 1993 after the earthquakes. We here in Queensland should have followed their sage wisdom. For those who may not know, Kobe is our key Japanese trading partner and Queensland is Japan's greatest trading partner.

The greatest outcome of the disasters in early 2011 in Queensland is that ordinary Queenslanders totally disconnected from tragedy by virtue of not being personally affected gave of themselves and volunteered in their thousands to assist anonymously in the clean-up and rebuild—not for payment, not for church, not for redemption but because they wanted to help. Sadly, it did not rate a mention in the speech by the Premier. But overwhelmingly it was the greatest single act that changed the fortunes of this disaster. It was not missed overseas. Every single overseas visitor who I have come into contact with on the Gold Coast has spoken to me personally about when they saw it. To a person, they doubted it would ever happen in their own countries. I note that even the Governor, Ms Penny Wensley, and her husband did so privately in their own manner. So, rich and poor, young and old, fit or sick—each gave just a little of themselves.

This alone is the greatest lesson of how to prepare for a disaster and how to look after a disaster when it occurs—think locally; act locally. Trust the population. They get it right. They cut through the obstacles, and they are willing to carry or share the load or the burden when that burden for an individual is too great. I understand why the Premier failed to state this in the bill, because in part it is difficult to regulate a call to arms of sorts or in part it is assumed. To defend that decision on the basis of economic hardship decisions for the state is avoiding shouldering that responsibility and carrying the burden that you need to carry, and it compounds the public sorrow.

In making that assumption, the quid pro quo must be that the government needs to move in distancing itself financially from the problem of needy families who cannot access insurance or sufficient insurance to cover their losses. It follows that those who are uninsured or who have suffered the greatest catastrophe in one's life—that is, the loss of their home—need assistance. Japan showed a method to return these homes and buildings to private ownership and complete that cycle of disaster recovery to rebuild communities. We could do the same in Queensland. That is what should have been in this bill. What I am asking for is that the government consider amending this legislation further.

The current bill amends the Water Act, the water supply act, the Disaster Management Act, the Transport Infrastructure Act, the transport operations act 1995 and the Sustainable Planning Act 2009. It does not include a Darwin type rebuilding legislative approach, and I would ask why it does not. The relocation and reconstruction of the Grantham community must be one of many templates that we as Queenslanders need to legislate for for the future. This framework needs to be extended laterally and vertically. It is to be congratulated. It should have been in this bill. As I said, this bill must be more about acting locally, thinking locally and working together.

The general tenet of the bill seems to address more of Labor's dilemmas and not enough of the public's dilemmas, and these priorities are wrong. I justify that statement with the excessive amount of both discussion and legislation relating to the roles of the Queensland Water Commission and the water grid manager in both the bill and the explanatory notes.

Irrespective of what came out of the water inquiry hearings, people's homes were flooded, they received little or no warning and we are not doing enough to help them. I support all the changes listed in the bill, but we must deliver more for them beyond trying to prevent some natural disasters because that may be just too difficult. Perhaps they cannot be stopped.


We need to amend this bill to give Queenslanders the tools we need right now with another La Nina Southern Pacific cycle building. I ask that we just copy, en bloc, legislative steps from the Japanese Kobe response and copy the New South Wales Waratah bonds and issue what I would call 'Cooktown orchid bonds', because that is the emblem of our state. We need to get them out early, before the 2012 recession that is coming, and offer a reasonable rate of return for Queensland investors and superannuants. Now that Doug McTaggart is retiring, I would ask that he go on the board along with anyone else who has the aptitude to head this group. We need to tell Queenslanders that their money will be spent on rebuilding their homes and businesses, and we need to do so promptly.

We need to build the infrastructure that the mood for change currently supports. This could include levies in Ipswich, a new dam on the Coomera River, the lowering of the water levels on all of our flood mitigation systems in preparation for the summer that is coming and a major review of the South-East Queensland plan regarding flood-prone, infill, high-density development along the Brisbane River—especially where the flood levels are shown to be inaccurate, which people found out to their peril during the most recent troubles.

I think the bill is timely. It is in part appropriate. I have raised these deficiencies—which I have raised before—because I am a strong believer in being prepared and investing in prevention. I think there is plenty of evidence about dwelling construction and there is evidence that we need to change. If we are going to build homes, we cannot build them exactly the same as before so we do not get the same types of problems as we have seen. There are plenty of examples of that.

The inquiry and the committee's response and recommendations have given us a great deal of direction as to what do in the future. I am very concerned about the delay in the construction of evacuation shelters, in particular with regard to the Parklands showgrounds on the Gold Coast. It is the high-point evacuation centre and it is up for redevelopment. I wonder if there are many lessons that we still have to learn about preparing for disaster. With 11 million tourists on the Gold Coast, we need to be prepared.

(Time expired)

 **Hon. KL STRUTHERS** (Algeria—ALP) (Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women) (4.33 pm): I rise to speak in favour of the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill 2011. The natural disasters through December 2010 and January 2011 just kept coming and coming—testing every little bit of patience, resilience, courage and strength of affected individuals and disaster recovery workers and volunteers, testing every little bit of planning and preparation of local governments, disaster management groups, local councils and NGOs around the state and our own government. They all stood up and passed the test. In fact, as I travelled around, many people said to me things like—and these are their words—'Thank God we had gone through the amalgamations of local councils because that gave us the strength to act in a much more coordinated and effective way.' I heard that not only from local government members themselves but also from SES workers, police and members of disaster management groups. They all knew that that had placed a much better foundation around the state for coordinated and effective responses to this massive and unprecedented disaster.

The bill will put in place improvements to the disaster management framework and it includes amendments to water, disaster management, transport and planning legislation. The bill will also improve operations of disaster management groups by recognising the importance of having stakeholders represented on and consulted by various disaster management groups. My own Department of Communities deserves high praise.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Ms STRUTHERS: I take those interjections. As I travelled around and spoke to community members and met my staff and NGOs working together, there was high praise for Department of Communities staff. Well over 3,000 staff were deployed to various recovery centres and evacuation centres. I see the member for Hinchinbrook nodding; thank you for that. I know that he appreciated those efforts in Tully, Innisfail and other parts of North Queensland. The department opened and operated 42 community recovery centres and deployed over 3,000 staff. Many of them did not work in front-line jobs and had not been dealing with that sort of work at all. Many of them were in financial and corporate roles within our agency. We also had support from other agencies across government. Everyone was chipping in.

As at 19 October, the department had provided over \$46 million in personal hardship assistance to about 55,000 people around the state. Our community service organisations were at the forefront—the Red Cross, Lifeline, the Salvos. Everyone was out there in force, including the local community


centres. The member for Lockyer knows the valuable work provided by those community centres in the Lockyer Valley, Toowoomba and other parts of the state. They have all been working hard to ensure people get back on their feet.

The Premier made it very clear early on that this was as much a physical recovery as an emotional recovery. In April this year, we announced a \$39 million recovery and wellbeing package under the national disaster relief arrangements, which were funded in large part by the federal government. This package has funded the employment of 24 community development officers to help restore and develop community networks and community leadership to manage impacts of the disaster, identify community needs and drive the implementation of priority recovery and resilience-building projects. That is code for getting prepared for future disasters. The package has also provided \$17.8 million to local non-government organisations to deliver assistance, counselling, mental health support, respite and referrals to organisations. We are working with local communities and councils to identify the role that NGOs, including the smaller ones, can play in future recovery efforts.

We are also undertaking an analysis of communities, their socioeconomic status and their capacity to help us prepare better for future disasters. We have learned a lot of lessons and we have had input from our human and social services committee that has been a subcommittee of that whole Reconstruction Authority effort. I have had informal reports and messages given to me about how we might do the social recovery side of things better next time, and that is going from a general view that this was done extremely well.

One issue that was raised is what to do with pets. Early on, when the crisis was peaking, people did not really know what to do with farm animals and pets. Very practical things like that mean a lot to people and to their emotional recovery. People have suggested that we have very clear policies, through the local disaster management groups, about whether pets can stay in evacuation centres too, because there was a 'maybe' and a 'maybe not' in some of them. I was at the RNA in Brisbane, and there was a discussion early on about whether pets could be kept there. That was a perfect place for pets—that is where pets and farm animals join us for the Ekka every year—but other places were not so well prepared for that. People raised those sorts of issues. They are practical but very important issues. The issue of the better management of evacuation centres has come through those reports and that feedback. The important role played by local community centres as well as the big NGOs has certainly been raised with me on many occasions.

I want to again put on record my thanks to all of those NGOs, local community centres included, and my department for the mighty effort they have made and continue to make. There has been a lot of hard work from a lot of people throughout the year. We are determined to continue to support people. Although most people have been very resilient and they have really battled on and soldiered on, there is a lot of grief and loss continuing, and that was evident yesterday when I joined the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh in meeting victims of the flood and members of NGOs. Many people were expressing to the Duke, whom I was accompanying, that things were tough for them. They had lost loved ones and they had been through their darkest days, and that grief takes a long time to recover from. But our commitment continues. We are here for the long haul.


 **Ms CROFT** (Broadwater—ALP) (4.39 pm): This afternoon it is my pleasure to rise to speak in support of the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill. The objective of the bill is to amend a number of acts in order to implement the recommendations of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry interim report and to improve the state's disaster preparedness ahead of the next wet season. As part of the bill's suite of improvements to Queensland's disaster readiness, I want to speak about the amendments to the transport legislation that are proposed to streamline the amount of information required to be included in signs that are used for road closures. This is an important aspect of this legislation. This afternoon many members have mentioned that following the disasters our police, Emergency Management Queensland and other stakeholder groups provided feedback about how they could have made their efforts better and how they could have improved things and how they could have possibly improved the safety of people in those communities.

Currently, the legislation governing restricted road use signs requires a significant amount of information to be shown on these signs. The amendments in this bill address this problem by ensuring that only essential information needs to be included on these signs. To include all of the currently required information on the sign in a way that drivers can read easily means that signs require time to be produced and, because of their dimensions and weight, significant time to install. The amendments will mean that signs will be easier for the public to read and easier for the department to install in urgent circumstances. The bill also provides flexibility in enforcing road restrictions by allowing the chief executive, the Police Commissioner or their delegates to grant approval to drive past a restricted road use sign. This could arise, for example, when a flood affected community requires a critical delivery of food or water. However, an approval will only be granted where the need for approval outweighs any safety risk that the person will face.

The amendments also provide transport inspectors with new powers to allow them to better assist police in enforcing road closures and road restrictions during disasters. This is obviously a very important move. Obviously no-one could have predicted the catastrophic events that were faced by Queensland earlier this year. The Leader of the Opposition suggested that the government was not prepared. I do not think that that is a very reasonable statement by someone who wants to be in government. It can be acknowledged by many people in this House on both sides that the events of early this year could not have been known. Many communities were prepared to the best of their ability and obviously with those kinds of events and those kinds of experiences people develop a better understanding. Allowing transport inspectors new powers to assist the police will certainly assist in such times. Obviously the police, particularly when there are call-outs everywhere, are very busy and are required in different kinds of circumstances. Therefore, extending transport inspectors' powers is very important. The amendments provide inspectors with the powers to stop all types of vehicles, including cars, to enforce these restrictions. Importantly, inspectors will be able to take a proactive role in stopping vehicles before they enter flooded roads. As I said, giving the inspectors these powers will help protect the travelling public and enable police to be redeployed to other critical tasks.

Another important amendment proposed by the bill relates to the Sustainable Planning Act. The act currently includes emergency exemption provisions which allow development without a relevant approval because of an emergency endangering the life or health of a person or the structural safety of a building. The 2011 natural disasters in Queensland highlighted the need to expand the scope of the exemptions to enable emergency repairs to be carried out to community infrastructure other than buildings. The amendment will clarify the provision to ensure that emergency exemptions clearly apply to emergency repair work to community infrastructure such as roads, bridges and pipelines. This will obviously enable emergency repairs to be undertaken to reconnect, make safe or restore the community infrastructure and services, including access, as quickly as possible. That is particularly vital for communities to enable normality to return as quickly as possible to those affected communities.

The Gold Coast was not affected by the events of earlier this year, but I know a number of police personnel, emergency services workers and SES volunteers were deployed throughout the state to help. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge their efforts, particularly the SES volunteers who do a fantastic job. People do not realise how much effort they put in, but as volunteers they are meeting each week to learn new skills and to improve their capabilities. They do a tremendous job. I also want to endorse the Minister for Community Services's comments in relation to her department. There were staff from the Gold Coast who were deployed to work in many affected areas. From working in that kind of situation they gained valuable experience and also learnt a lot individually. I have spoken to a number of those officers who work in the Department of Communities who genuinely enjoyed the opportunity to help out in that regard. I want to congratulate those staff as well. I also want to take this opportunity to commend the chair of the Finance and Administration Committee, of which I am a member, on his ability and indeed the work that has been undertaken to prepare the report on this bill. I also want to acknowledge the efforts of the research staff from the Finance and Administration Committee, and I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr MESSENGER** (Burnett—Ind) (4.47 pm): In rising to speak to the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill 2011, once again on behalf of the people of Burnett I offer my heartfelt condolences to all of those Queensland families who lost loved ones in our summer of sorrow and I congratulate all of the heroes—the official ones in our emergency services, the Volunteer Marine Rescue, the surf-lifesavers, the Neighbourhood Watch volunteers and all of those people and the unofficial ones who have not been recognised who put their lives on the line to rescue their mates and sometimes complete strangers but always their fellow Queenslanders and visitors to Queensland.

I take the Premier's point that the natural disasters experienced in Queensland over the 2010-11 wet season were unprecedented. The only time I can remember so much flooding was in 1974. If you then talk to some people around the district, they will tell you that 1942 was also a bad season. I also take the Premier's point in her second reading speech that as we approach the coming disaster season we must maintain our efforts to ensure that Queensland is prepared to respond to disaster events in the future. For that reason and on behalf of the people of the Burnett I offer my support for this bill which amends seven acts—the Disaster Management Act, the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) Act, the Sustainable Planning Act, the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994, the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act, the Water Act 2000 and the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008.

Many of my communities are now preparing for the upcoming season. I was at a meeting at Turkey Beach the other day. That community was talking about putting in a community hall. The community got together and decided that that community hall should be relocated to a place that is more suitable and less susceptible to natural disasters, tsunamis and flooding et cetera. So as a community they got together and decided to build a cyclone rated shelter. I will be working with the local government in Gladstone to ensure that their community has a suitable cyclone rated shelter.

The recent unprecedented natural disasters also caused catastrophic financial hardship for many of the families and small businesses of the Burnett. While being very welcome, the government assistance packages—the loans, the grants and the hardship payments—failed to properly provide the funds needed to prevent many small businesses and families going broke or declaring bankruptcy. Many natural disaster victims would prefer to access their own superannuation funds over government handouts, but no provision exists under current legislation to guarantee this. Page 2 of the Australian Prudential Regulatory Authority early release form states—

If your fund trustee/RSA provider says they will not allow early release under any circumstances, then there is nothing APRA or any other Australian Government agency can do to force them to pay out some or all of your benefits.

Previously, I have publicly called on the Premier to request that the Prime Minister support retrospective changes to laws governing superannuation so that victims of natural disasters who are suffering severe financial hardships are given the right to access their own super funds. It is not an issue that we are able to deal with under this legislation. I understand that it is federal legislation that needs amendment. Nonetheless, I think that support for this initiative from the state will have a dramatic impact on the federal legislation. We really need to allow those people who have been affected by natural disasters to be able to access some, all or part of their superannuation funds so that they can recover. There are a lot of people who, for their own reasons, do not want to take government handouts. Many of those people and small business owners exist and live in the Burnett.

The member for Cairns quite rightly brought to the attention of this place the magnificent response that the crews from Ergon and Energex provided to these natural disasters. They worked tirelessly. The first type of equipment that they grabbed was their gumboots and they were out there traipsing through mud that stuck to everything and stank. They did not worry about it. Sometimes they were literally up to their necks in it trying to restore essential power.

Every level of those organisations from the management down to the workers in their gumboots was well resourced and they performed magnificently. However, I ask this important question of the House today: if Ergon and Energex were ever privatised or sold off to foreign owners would they be able to maintain that level of response? It is one of the issues that will have to be dealt with in the future because there are those in this place who would see Energex and Ergon privatised and sold off. I know that the LNP certainly has not given a guarantee that, should it become the alternative government, it would stop that likelihood. I would like both sides of this place to give that guarantee. I do not think that the foreign owners or the shareholders—whoever owned the controlling interests in Ergon and Energex—would display that much care for properly resourcing those companies so that they could respond, as they have done magnificently, to natural disasters.

After speaking to many emergency service volunteers at that time, I wrote to our Premier and Prime Minister requesting that our state and federal leaders both make strong public statements guaranteeing to financially and legally support all of our emergency service volunteers who, in the line of duty, were the subject of adverse legal action. This issue arose when a serious legal crisis came out of a Burnett River yachting incident. A front page article on 1 January this year supported my view and that of many volunteers that the crisis was largely caused by unnecessary bureaucratic red tape. The article succinctly summarised the crisis as this. It states—

Desperate yachties said they had been left to fend for themselves all week as Volunteer Marine Rescue ... had its hands tied by legal issues and officials from Maritime Safety Queensland ... were nowhere to be seen.

I was given a copy of the instructions sent prior to the Burnett River flooding crisis from senior officials of VMR Queensland which put our very brave and dedicated local volunteers in an impossible situation. The official administrative instructions read—

Under the Civil Liability Act, our members and organisations have protection; ONLY if we do not act with reckless disregard and ONLY if we are acting with respect to the protection and or preservation of human life.

A drifting unmanned vessel certainly poses no threat to human life, other than to our Volunteers, especially in a flood situation.

In short, our local marine rescue members were told, along with every other marine rescue volunteer in Queensland, that they were not to touch unmanned marine vessels which were drifting in flooded rivers. The reason they were given the order was allegedly that legal action was being taken by a yacht owner against VMR Queensland after their volunteers, at the direction of Water Police, had intercepted a runaway yacht in a river—it was not the Burnett—and it was tied up. Allegedly, a couple of days after the VMR interception the yacht owner turned up and found that the vessel had sunk and promptly began legal action against VMR Queensland for the loss of property. If the information I have received is correct, a number of issues need to be addressed very quickly before this next summer which, hopefully, will be disaster free.

Firstly, while the threat of legal action is only against volunteers or the organisation Volunteer Marine Rescue, it may set a legal precedent for all volunteers in emergency services such as the SES, the rural fire brigade et cetera. At the very least, while that issue is being fought in the courts it will no doubt be in the minds of every emergency service volunteer that they could be the subject of legal action and, therefore, risk losing their family assets. This doubt over volunteer legal liability, as we have witnessed in the horrendous experience of the Burnett River yachties, has almost contributed to the loss

of lives. While the natural disaster was the primary cause, undoubtedly volunteers' uncertain legal standing contributed to the destruction and loss of more than 25 yachts that were moored in the Burnett River. A timely statement by the Premier and also the Prime Minister before the commencement of summer guaranteeing unqualified legal and financial support for any volunteer who is sued in the performance of their duty would add to their certainty.

Mr POWELL (Glass House—LNP) (4.57 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the debate on the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill 2011. As previous speakers have pointed out, this bill amends a number of acts. I want to focus particularly on the amendments to the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994 and the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 that are designed to reduce the incidence of people driving on flooded or flood affected roads and, more particularly, the amendments to the Sustainable Planning Act 2009, which will ensure that repairs to community infrastructure other than buildings—for example, roads and bridges—that are damaged because of an emergency such as a natural disaster or accident can be carried out as quickly as possible to restore the functionality and safety of the infrastructure. I am pleased to hear that. That is very good news in terms of wanting to make sure that our key infrastructure, particularly our roads, is repaired quickly and functionality and safety are returned. There are a couple of examples of roads in the electorate of Glass House that continue to go unrepaired. That is certainly leading to an increasing amount of frustration for constituents across the Glass House electorate. We still have a slip on the Maleny-Kenilworth Road. That is the main road connecting the communities of Kenilworth and Conondale with Maleny. That one slip has been there since the floods in January this year. It is still under traffic signalling by way of traffic lights.

I was recently approached by a constituent who suggested that, given that the line of sight is very clear in both directions, at the times that they are not actually repairing this road—which tends to be each and every day these days—replacing those traffic lights with give way signs would facilitate far quicker egress through that land slip.

Mr Rickuss: That seems a common-sense approach, doesn't it?

Mr POWELL: It certainly is a common-sense approach. I take that interjection from the member for Lockyer. If we are going to have to wait nearly 12 months for these repairs then let us have a bit of common sense. If drivers can see in both directions let us replace the traffic lights with give way signs. We still have a slip on the Maleny-Stanley River Road, again another important connection between Woodford and Maleny. We still have a slip on the Kilcoy-Beerwah Road at Peachester. Recently at the centenary celebrations of the Peachester State School I was approached on countless occasions by constituents who are getting pretty well fed up and frustrated with the fact that the road is not fixed. The common line was, 'When is our road going to be fixed?' It is nine months now since the incident. There is no action whatsoever being taken to repair this road. There is a barricade around it. The longer the Department of Main Roads takes to fix this the further it is deteriorating.

When one refers to that amendment that talks about ensuring that repairs to community infrastructure, for example roads and bridges, that is damaged is carried out as quickly as possible to restore the functionality and safety of the infrastructure, one asks the question, 'What is going on with these roads?' The most frustrating example is the ongoing closure of the Palmwoods-Montville Road. This road is fully closed. There are no single-lane operations. This road has been closed since March 2010. I would like to ask how many other state controlled roads have been completely closed for more than 18 months. It is frustrating that every time we ask for an update we get told the same thing. The goalposts keep shifting. It is always a case of 'we are still doing design work'.

My latest correspondence, received on 26 July, states—

The Department of Transport and Main Roads would like to update you on the progress of road works on Palmwoods-Montville Road.

As you are aware, the road has been closed since early 2010, when a 200m section of road slipped downhill. Following flooding in January 2011 this same section of road slipped further.

In January 2011, 32 slips were identified on Palmwoods-Montville Road, requiring varying degrees of repairs, and contractors have been working to repair numerous slip sites along the road. The contractors have recently been moved to other projects—

Obviously not other projects in the seat of Glass House. As I said, we are happy to be patient and acknowledge that there are others with far higher priorities than us. The letter continues—

until additional design work is finalised on the slip sites which require major stabilisation works to address the January 2011 damage.


The slip sites, including the 200m section closing the road, have required extensive geological investigations, testing and surveying to determine the most appropriate design solution for the restoration of each of the 32 individual sites. The design for these sites is continuing and is expected to be completed by the end of the third quarter of this year.

My understanding is that the end of the third quarter was the end of September. We have still not had any update. I jumped on the website today and, interestingly, those same words still sit there on the website. I again ask the question: has TMR even done the design work it said it would do and, if it has, when is it going to let the community know, when is it going to let me know and when is it going to get on to actually repairing this road? It is a serious matter. The Palmwoods-Montville Road is a serious tourist

route. The community of Montville has a number of tourism operators, all of whom rely very heavily on the South-East Queensland market. They are bed and breakfasts; they are restaurants. It is a very iconic town that relies on the South-East Queensland tourism market and yet people are unable to get there because their satellite navigation device is telling them to go up Palmwoods-Montville Road. I admit that people tend to take their directions from their satellite navigation device in their vehicle over the directions that Transport are giving them. Transport have put up detour signs along Hunchy Road and Razorback Road, but it is pointless if we cannot get those updates through to the satellite navigation system so that people are aware of that alternative route. In the meantime tourists are turning around and going back down to the coast rather than spending time up in the hinterland.

The question is how much longer do we have to wait? How much longer do these tourism operators have to suffer the consequences of the fact that this government is unable to repair this road? Is it going to repair this road? In the same time frame, the Sunshine Coast Regional Council has actually managed to repair two significant slips on the alternative route of Hunchy Road and Razorback Road. They have been sizeable slips and it has had to do considerable work. The council has used those new concrete blocks to shore up the slope and then are resurfacing the road. It has been able to do two slips on that road in the same time that we are still sitting here waiting for this section of road to be repaired. I accept that it is going to be very expensive, but surely that is what natural disaster funding is all about. Surely the state government and Main Roads have made requests to the federal government for the funding required to repair this road. I do ask that it be done quickly. Until it is done, the communities of Palmwoods and Montville will suffer, particularly those that rely on tourism in the long term. It is just not acceptable that we continue to have to use a council road as the main route.

I am pleased to see that in future through these amendments there is an effort by the government to ensure that these kinds of repairs happen quickly. I would ask the Premier and the Minister for Main Roads for their urgent intervention in each of these instances but particularly in the instance of the Palmwoods-Montville Road. I hope to see design work done very shortly and construction actually commence before we hit yet another wet season. Who knows, even further sections of the road might end up sliding down the hill.

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (5.05 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill. My contribution to the debate will focus on three aspects of the bill. The objectives, amongst other things, are to implement recommendations of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry interim report and improve the state's disaster preparedness ahead of the next wet season; amend the Disaster Management Act to strengthen and streamline disaster management planning and preparation, response and recovery, including through amending the membership of the State Disaster Management Group; require publication of disaster management plans on websites; streamline extensions of declared disaster situations; and amend the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 to ensure that repairs to community infrastructure, other than buildings, for example roads and bridges, that is damaged because of an emergency, such as a natural disaster or accident, can be carried out as quickly as possible to restore the functionality and safety of the infrastructure.

Unfortunately, my electorate of Hinchinbrook has been the scene of more than its fair share of natural disasters in recent years, whether it be Cyclone Larry in 2006 or the major flood event that occurred in the Hinchinbrook shire in 2009 or, of course, Cyclone Yasi that occurred earlier this year in February. Unfortunately, the functionality and the effectiveness of disaster management legislation is particularly pertinent for the constituents of my electorate.

In the first instance, in relation to the amendments that will implement recommendations from the Floods Commission of Inquiry regarding flood preparedness, I want to talk about the correspondence I had with the Premier after the 2009 record flood event in the Hinchinbrook shire. I wrote to the Premier on that occasion and I requested a number of things that were specifically related to improving the resilience of the local community to flood events when they occurred. I acknowledge that a couple of items on that list have been achieved. I am very grateful and I acknowledge those items. But a number of important initiatives have not been achieved. In the first instance I indicated to the Premier that the length of the airstrip at Ingham needed to be extended and the airport needed flood-free access. The Premier herself visited the Herbert River district on a number of occasions during the natural disaster events that I mentioned and she has landed on that airstrip on a number of occasions, so she would appreciate the need and the vital strategic asset that that aerodrome is in the event of a natural disaster in that area. Unfortunately, when we have a fairly substantial flood event in the Herbert River district we get a situation where that airport is actually inaccessible via the Bruce Highway. The SES and other emergency services have a devil of a time accessing the strategic asset that is the airstrip at Ingham.

Flood mitigation projects in local waterways and the improvement of local drainage infrastructure are initiatives that have become very important after Cyclone Yasi. Allocations have been made to clean out waterways because of the amount of debris that has gone into them, preventing them from functioning properly. In 2009 I advocated for funding to be made available to ensure that the infrastructure in relation to waterways and drainage was improved in that area. The old chestnut in the Hinchinbrook shire is flood-free access over Palm Creek. The state government keeps insisting that it is a local government responsibility to provide flood-free access over Palm Creek during a flood event.


However, it is actually state government services, including the police, the ambulance, the Fire and Rescue Service and the State Emergency Service that must replicate their capacity on both sides of Palm Creek during a natural disaster that causes them the most inconvenience. It is unfortunate that those issues have not been addressed.

The second matter in relation to the amendments to the Disaster Management Act that I want to address is the very encouraging amendment being made to include the ADF on the state management committees for natural disasters. On 2 September last year when we debated the Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, I noted that the government had not taken the opportunity to make any reference whatsoever to the ADF in that legislation, which was the overhaul of disaster management legislation. At that time, because we have had experience of how important the ADF is and the critical role it plays following natural disasters, I made the point—and was criticised by the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services at the time for suggesting—that it should be involved formally in that legislation. On 8 March this year, after Cyclone Yasi, in this House I gave a speech in a matter of public interest debate where I again called for the ADF to be involved in the formal committee structures associated with our disaster management legislation. Again, I was criticised by the minister for making those observations.

It is very satisfying that in the amendment bill that we are debating today the first steps are being taken to formally include the ADF in our state disaster management committees. It plays a critical role that, up until this point in time, was based on conventions. That is true, and the ADF has previously performed exceptionally well on the ground after natural disasters when it has been called upon. However, twice in this House previously I have made the point that it would have been much more beneficial if our disaster management committees at the local level and even at the district level had input from the ADF. I am pleased that on this occasion we are taking the step to include it at the state level, but I would like to see some formalisation of its involvement in local disaster management groups and district disaster management groups, because the relationships, the responsiveness and the effectiveness of those committees would be enhanced by a formal relationship with the ADF at that level.

The last issue that I want to canvass relates to the amendments to the Sustainable Planning Act. A while ago the then Deputy Premier consulted with local governments in relation to the draft national standards for the construction of buildings in flood hazard areas in Queensland. Section 2.7(b) of that draft national standard has come to the attention of some local authorities in my electorate, because it proposes to stipulate that floors of enclosed habitable rooms must be no more than one metre below the defined flood level. The Hinchinbrook Shire Council responded to the previous Deputy Premier, who is still the Minister for Local Government, in this regard and indicated that the local government by-laws in the Hinchinbrook Shire require habitable rooms of dwellings to be constructed no less than 300 millimetres above one in 100-year flood levels. If a national standard requiring floors of non-habitable rooms to be no more than one metre below the defined flood level is established, the significant negative impacts of such a requirement would be that the large amounts of infill that would be required in areas like the Herbert River district to meet that standard could result in a number of adverse outcomes, including the diversion of floodwaters into neighbouring properties. All of the issues that we experience when we have these flood events could be exacerbated if we implement that draft national standard for the construction of buildings in flood hazard areas in Queensland. That is a worry that the Hinchinbrook Shire Council has expressed to the Minister for Local Government and I think it is a very pertinent issue.

The nature of architecture in North Queensland is such that the owners of the homes take precautions not to have habitable rooms on the ground floor. They have practical plans to remove all of their belongings from the bottom floor to the top floor when a flood is on its way. If we require those landowners to have the non-habitable rooms above the one in 100-year flood height, significant amounts of infill could have very significant adverse outcomes for neighbouring properties. You could have a perverse outcome where the impact of flooding on neighbouring properties is exacerbated by a draft national standard along those lines. I implore the government to give consideration to flexibility and to an understanding of local circumstances when it comes to that national standard for construction. I am very pleased in relation to a number of other amendments in this bill.

 **Mr WETTENHALL** (Barron River—ALP) (5.16 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill 2011. In part the bill seeks to implement a number of the recommendations of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry that handed down its interim report on 1 August 2011. Whilst many of those recommendations related to issues in relation to the management of dams, particularly in South-East Queensland following the floods in that part of this state earlier this year over the summer period, a number of the recommendations relate to some wider issues in terms of the management of natural disasters throughout the state. It is to those that I will particularly refer. I thank the members of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry and all of the people who gave evidence to that inquiry. I acknowledge the good sense of requiring an interim report from that inquiry prior to the coming summer season, for obvious reasons. The recommendations go to improving our preparedness for another wet season when, as we know, our state can experience extreme weather events and that is what this legislation is aimed at.

Firstly, it is a significant improvement to the arrangements to expand the membership of the state disaster management group to include representatives of the Australian Defence Force and the Australian Red Cross. In the course of the debate other members have made reference to the important role that members of the Australian Defence Force played, particularly in the recovery phase after the floods and cyclone. Those of us resident in Far North Queensland witnessed firsthand the fine job done by members of the Australian Defence Force in assisting communities in the immediate aftermath of Cyclone Yasi, which wrought widespread devastation and havoc throughout the area that it struck between Cairns and Townsville. I acknowledge their efforts and I acknowledge the good sense in including them in the state disaster management groups because of the experience they have gained over decades in assisting communities to deal with natural disasters.

It is also quite proper and appropriate that the Australian Red Cross is given membership of the State Disaster Management Group given the critical and vital role that it plays in assisting communities. I will say a little more about the Red Cross in a moment. It is also quite appropriate that the Bureau of Meteorology and Surf Life Saving Queensland have membership of this group. Both organisations are well known to Queenslanders. Their skill, expertise and experience in dealing with natural disasters is going to aid the work of the State Disaster Management Group.

I also commend the requirement in the bill that disaster management plans, at all levels—that is, state, district and local level—be published. One thing we know for sure is that, throughout Queensland, but particularly in those areas that are vulnerable to natural disasters, people want access to reliable information about how their communities are going to be managed during times of natural disaster. With the benefits of modern technology, having those disaster management plans made available online is certainly going to arm members of our communities with the information they need about how natural disasters are going to be managed in their communities. That is going to help them not only prepare for natural disasters but also recover from natural disasters. That can only enhance the overall effectiveness of the arrangements throughout the state. So all three disaster management groups will be required to publish their disaster management plans on their relevant websites. That is a very welcome improvement.

I might mention that, following Cyclone Yasi, the Cairns Regional Council has issued revised, improved and much easier to understand maps that indicate which areas in the Cairns Regional Council area are vulnerable to flooding but particularly storm surge. As I have mentioned in the House on many occasions previously, there are a number of coastal communities in my electorate that are particularly vulnerable to storm surge. It is vital for those communities to have accurate, reliable and accessible information about the level of their vulnerability to storm surge at various different levels. It is absolutely vital. I commend the Cairns Regional Council for publishing that information this year. It is a significant improvement on the information that was available last year.

Whilst on the subject of the Cairns Regional Council, I want to acknowledge the role that the mayor, Councillor Val Schier, played during Cyclone Yasi.

Ms Boyle: She did a great job.

Mr WETTENHALL: I take the interjection from the member for Cairns. The mayor of the Cairns Regional Council, Val Schier, with the experience that she had in managing disasters, did a very fine and capable job in leading our community through one of the worst natural disasters that has struck the Cairns Regional Council area. Whilst some other people were writing in local newspapers about the mayor's hairstyle—


Ms Boyle interjected.

Mr WETTENHALL: I take the interjection from the member for Cairns. While the LNP candidate for the seat of Cairns was writing about the mayor's hairstyle, she was getting on with the job of managing a very serious crisis. She did it very capably. I want to acknowledge the role that she and her officers played during that crisis. What she did was ably lead the local disaster management group and ably lead her community.

There are some other provisions in the bill that I want to briefly mention that are very important. They are the new powers that are given to more effectively manage flooded roads. Every wet season in Far North Queensland we have roads that become flooded. Sadly, we have people who attempt to cross those flooded roads in their vehicles. Sometimes, as we witnessed over the summer period, that happens with tragic and fatal consequences. Beefing up powers in this legislation to allow the more effective enforcement of road closures and giving officers the power to enforce those through offence provisions is very important.

Only last week when we had heavy rain in the Cairns area we had reports of people attempting to cross flooded roads and being washed off. That happens for a number of reasons. There are some people who are ignorant of the risks. There are some people who are not ignorant of the risks but take

those risks regardless. There are some people who make poor decisions and poor judgements in times of stress. The provisions of this bill that will enable more effective signage and closure of roads that are flooded are very important. Ultimately, it is going to save the resources of the people who manage our disasters and will also save lives. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Ms van LITSENBURG** (Redcliffe—ALP) (5.25 pm): I rise to support the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill 2011. This bill sets out to further secure the people of Queensland inasmuch as any government can in a land that is regularly at the mercy of violent summer storms. We need to thank the Premier and ministers for their capable management of the floods and cyclones during the summer. The Premier's move to provide a pool of money for victims and her analysis of the issues around the storms that have produced these amendments have been commendable.

Queenslanders are survivors, as we saw in the summer just past, and they do what it takes to support each other, as we saw with the mud army. That helping hand was not there for just a few weeks right across the community but was there for months and months. Groups were raising funds and getting things done even in July and August of this year. I know in Redcliffe that many groups were committed to supporting their fellow Queenslanders with clothing, furniture or other practical assistance even though they had not been vastly affected by the flooding themselves.

This bill sets out to prepare Queenslanders and the state to be even more ready than we were last summer. It amends a variety of acts and addresses many of the issues highlighted in the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry interim report. In consultation with relevant agencies and professionals, the minister will make the decision whether to alter the level of dams when it is necessary. This is vital because Queenslanders look to the government and the minister to take leadership, as the Premier did, with regard to these vital matters.

Those living below the dam will be pleased that this bill includes provisions to ensure they will be informed about outflows. This will mean that they can ensure animals are on higher ground if outflow levels are likely to inundate ground near the river. The minister's ability to make this decision will ensure the discussion is had in a timely manner and that safe time lines are set for the processes. After years of drought, it was a difficult decision to make to release precious water from the dams last summer. It will be easier to make those decisions on the weather facts to hand considering both possibilities of flood and drought. Judging whether to release or hold water is not an exact science.

These amendments include expanding the stakeholders who are to be part of the State Disaster Management Group to include the Australian Defence Force, the Australian Red Cross, the Bureau of Meteorology and Surf Life Saving Queensland. I know that the Redcliffe coastguard is also happy to be part of this group as they are often the first response group on the northern part of Moreton Bay.

The other provisions of this bill allow for greater local decision making about disaster declarations, road closures, signs, issues about driving through floodwaters and urgent repairs during disasters to facilitate better management of the affected areas. I would like to thank the Premier for this bill because it reflects the findings of the commission and fearlessly adds flexibility and clear lines of leadership that will ensure the response to disasters in the coming season will be more effective.

This bill does not preclude future repeats of last summer's disasters, but it ensures that our responses and management limit the damage done to the lives of Queenslanders and get their lives back to normal in the shortest possible time. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Rickuss, adjourned.

MOTION

Connecting SEQ 2031

 **Mr EMERSON** (Indooroopilly—LNP) (5.30 pm): I move—

That this House condemns the Bligh Labor government for releasing another glossy brochure called 'Connecting SEQ 2031 plan' that promises \$227 billion in unfunded projects with no commitment to deliver any of them.

At the weekend we saw the latest con on commuters by this failed Labor government. It was the release of the government's glossy brochure Connecting SEQ 2031. The first con actually happened 10 days ago when we saw the release of the latest TransLink Tracker—the government's own report card on public transport—which does give some sort of clarity to the Connecting SEQ 2031 plan, because that TransLink Tracker showed just how poorly this government is performing in this crucial area.

With Queensland's population growing, you would think that it would be a given that the number of trips being taken by public transport should also be growing. But what did the TransLink Tracker reveal? Instead of the number of trips being taken by public transport increasing, it revealed in fact that the reverse was happening under Labor. The TransLink Tracker showed that in the last quarter there

were 1.7 million fewer trips taken by train, bus and ferries than for the same period the previous year. So in April, May and June this year there were 1.7 million fewer trips taken by public transport compared to April, May and June last year.

But what was Labor's reaction? Did they admit they had failed? Did they admit they had let down commuters? Did they admit they had to do better? No, no and no. What Labor did was what they always do—try to spin their way out of this abysmal result and failure on public transport. To do that they tried to con Queensland commuters. Who did Labor blame for this falling number of trips being taken by public transport? Not themselves of course. No, they blamed the floods. This is what the transport minister told the media about the decline in patronage numbers.

Ms Palaszczuk: Yes, it's true.

Mr EMERSON: Let me quote her, 'The decline in patronage was simply due to the flood impact.' The minister is saying, yes, that that is exactly what she said. 'The decline in patronage was simply due to the flood impact.' So, according to the minister, it was all due to the floods. But of course Labor was just trying to con commuters, because that drop of 1.7 million trips was in the months of April, May and June this year compared to the same time last year. Now I do not know what planet the transport minister has been living on but it is clearly not South-East Queensland. April, May and June were flood-free months. In fact, it took the interim CEO of TransLink to admit that Labor's massive hikes in train, bus and ferry fares was a factor in the fall of patronage. Fares are a factor, he told ABC Radio. What Mr Longland was talking about were those massive hikes in public transport fares under Labor.

What have those hikes been? There was a 20 per cent increase last year if you had a go card and a 40 per cent increase if you used paper tickets. This year there has been another 15 per cent increase. So over the last two years commuters have had to pay at least 35 per cent more to catch a train, a bus or a ferry. That does not include the scrapping of yearly, monthly and weekly tickets. These are the fare rises that TransLink admits, but the transport minister refuses to admit, are driving down patronage. That is why the TransLink Tracker showed affordability crashing to a three-year low. All these fare rises are just to pay for Labor's financial mismanagement and the \$100 million a week interest bill on that massive debt that Labor has given Queensland.

Let us not forget that Labor has promised to increase fares three more times—a 15 per cent increase each time over the next three years—to keep paying for that interest bill. In fact, Labor will double the cost of public transport fares over a five-year period. But the transport minister insists that it is not the fare increases but the floods, as she has done again tonight—those floods in the flood-free months—that have seen the patronage fall. But that was just the first con on commuters by Labor in the last week or so. At the weekend we saw the latest con on commuters by Labor, because at the weekend we saw the release of Connecting SEQ 2031. Queenslanders did not need another glossy report to tell them that the Bligh government had failed to deliver on public transport. But this brochure does a pretty good job at detailing Labor's failures over the last 13 years.

So let us have a look at a few of the highlights of this 144-page report on Labor's public transport failures. Let us start at page 1. There we see the smiling face of the transport minister and her vision to double the share of journeys being undertaken by public transport from seven per cent to 14 per cent by 2031. What the minister does not say is that, when Labor came to power 13 years ago, the number of journeys being taken by public transport was seven out of 100. So 13 years later under Labor the number has not changed. It was seven out of 100 journeys when Labor came to power in 1998 and it is seven out of 100 journeys now. Nothing has changed—remarkable. The only thing that has changed is that, when Labor came to power 13 years ago, the target date to double public transport shares of journeys was 2010. So Labor has not been able to change the percentage of journeys being taken by public transport. All this con of a document does is move the target date 20 years further on, from 2010 to 2031.

So let us have a look at another page of this report on Labor's public transport failures. Let us have a look at page 50 under the section titled 'The growing public transport task'. So here is Labor claiming that it will continue to grow public transport patronage. There is even a graph showing the rise in patronage up until 2008-09 and the confident claim that patronage will continue to grow. So here we have the graph going up to 2008-09 and the claim that patronage will continue to grow. One might wonder why the graph stops at 2008-09 when the patronage figure is 180.2 million. There is a simple reason this document stopped at 2008-09, and that is that the year after that patronage started to fall. It did not increase like the glossy report handed down at the weekend says it would; it went in reverse. It was not just in 2009-10 that it went backwards. The same thing happened the following year. It went down to just 178.6 million in 2010-11—in fact, a fall of more than three million trips. So, while this report claims patronage will continue to grow, the facts are that for the last two years patronage under Labor has gone backwards. So we are starting to see a trend of fraud on commuters and a glossy brochure that ignores the facts and does not tell the truth.

Let us go to page 55 of the document. We get to the Cross River Rail project. Here we have an \$8.2 billion project that is unfunded and designed to deal with a rail capacity crisis in 2016 but will not be completed until 2020. So it is supposed to deal with a capacity crisis in 2016 but will not be completed until 2020.

Mr Ryan: What are you going to do? It's on the never-never with you.

Mr EMERSON: I take the interjection from the member for Morayfield because he talks about 2020 but we will have a crisis in 2016. Let us have a look at the document. Let us not talk about that; let us talk about—


Government members interjected.

Mr EMERSON: They will love to laugh about this because they know they are trying to con Queensland commuters. Let us go to what the minister said on ABC Radio about Labor's Cross River Rail project. Here we have Neil Roberts—

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member will refer to the minister by his correct title.

Mr EMERSON: When ABC's Madonna King asked Police Minister Roberts about cross-river rail and whether under Labor there was a promise to build it but not necessarily any money to build it with or a date in which it would be built, what did the minister reply? He said, 'In a nutshell, that's correct, Madonna.' So there we have it: Labor police minister Neil Roberts admitting on 612 ABC Radio that the Bligh government's Cross River Rail project is another Labor sham with no money and no start for construction.

(Time expired)

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (5.40 pm): I rise to second the motion moved by the member for Indooroopilly. This is a fascinating document and I think it would probably be appropriate to rename it. It is called Connecting SEQ 2031, but perhaps calling it 'Conning SEQ towards 2031' might be a more accurate description of the document. This document is quite weighty, it is really glossy and it would probably make a good paper weight. What it will not do is solve the problems for Gold Coast commuters and their transport woes. From that perspective, it is absolutely useless. This is an unfunded \$227 billion document put on the people of Queensland to con them into thinking that this government is actually going to do something.

The cross-river rail has already been raised and the fact is that it has been pushed out from 2016 to 2018 and now to 2020. It is unfunded in any case, so what is the point in even discussing the matter? What does this do for the Gold Coast rail 'Bombay Express'? If we do not have that cross-river rail by 2016, what will this government do for the 'Bombay Express' with its current plans? We are going to see more and more people who simply will not get on the trains to come to Brisbane. They will clog up our roads because they are sick to death of the overcrowded trips to Brisbane.

What about goals for passenger numbers? This document talks about doubling it from four to eight per cent, or whatever the figures might be. This document has these aspirations and this capacity that the government wants to try to achieve, yet when we look at the TransLink Tracker we see some figures that are a little bit odd. We have got dropping numbers, yet the TransLink Tracker tells us that in March 2010 the morning and evening peak services were at a level whereby five of the eight services in the morning and three of the nine services in the afternoon were overcrowded. Yet a year later, we have a situation where six of the eight trains in the morning and six of the nine trains in the afternoon are overcrowded. If you do the sums, that is a 20 per cent increase in overcrowding in the morning and a 50 per cent increase—

Mr Lucas interjected.


Mr CRANDON: These are your figures; these are your government's figures and here they are in black and white. They contradict one another, and it is time that the minister owned up and said what the issues really are and where the numbers do not stack up. We have this question mark over the statistics and the figures. Why are people hopping on the train at the moment during peak hour? Maybe they are trying it and maybe they will give it up again. I do not know the answer. The answers are in the government's figures and we look forward to hearing from the minister to tell us where the correct figures are.

I turn to the bus network in the northern Gold Coast. The government stopped the funding for the planning of the northern Gold Coast bus network. I am not talking about the buses; the government stopped the money for the planning for the northern Gold Coast and it is in an absolute diabolical mess. As for the 19 items in this document for the Gold Coast—this con document for South-East Queensland—it happens that 10 of them are in my electorate. Looking at each of those 10 items and knowing that they are completely unfunded, I have got to say that this is simply a wish list.

Ms Palaszczuk interjected.

Mr CRANDON: I wish it was going to happen, but it is not going to happen, Minister, because you have not got the wherewithal. You produced a giant document of 120-odd pages to sucker and con the people of the Gold Coast and South-East Queensland. In the last 20 years, this government has underperformed in relation to delivering services to the people of the Gold Coast. In the next 20 years, all the government has is a completely unfunded wish list for the people of the Gold Coast. I will make sure that they know what the government's story is.

(Time expired)

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Multicultural Affairs) (5.45 pm): I move—

That all words after 'House' be deleted and the following words inserted:

'endorses the detailed transport plan titled Connecting SEQ 2031 which has been delivered by the Bligh Government; and

Notes that this plan provides the vision for transport over the next 20 years for South East Queensland.'

What we have seen from the shadow transport minister is a complete lack of understanding when it comes to transport and public transport in South-East Queensland. For the first five minutes of his 10-minute speech, he talked about the TransLink Tracker. The TransLink Tracker is a completely separate document to the plan that the Minister for Main Roads and I released on Sunday—Connecting SEQ 2031. This is a transport planning document for the future. This Labor government knows that the growth in South-East Queensland is going to double over the next 20 years. It is going to be more than the size of Sydney and we need to cater for that growth. We need to plan now and make sure that we can deliver what is needed over this time.

I make no apologies for what the Labor government is delivering in this state—absolutely no apology. For the shadow minister's benefit, I am more than happy to talk about our achievements and our proud record of delivery, including the construction of 25 kilometres of busways in South-East Queensland. In August, we opened the Eastern Busway at Langlands Park at a cost of \$465 million, delivering 100,000 weekly seats. We have completed the construction of new rail lines to Varsity Lakes and Richlands. We have established the TransLink Transit Authority, which has overseen an increase in public transport patronage by 45 per cent over the last five years. What we also have is the largest integrated ticketing system in the world, with 10,000 square kilometres. Who has that been delivered by? A Labor government, and we will keep on delivering.


A government member interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is correct. What did we do in June? We did the largest timetable overhaul whereby we delivered 150,000 extra weekly seats. We are delivering for public transport; that is what this government is doing. What else did we do as part of our Connecting SEQ 2031 plan? We also developed another comprehensive plan that the shadow minister may want to look at—the Queensland Cycle Strategy. Again, there are no comments from those opposite.

I find it absurd that the opposition can come in here and criticise our detailed planning vision for the next 20 years when what have they put forward? They have put forward a document which has largely been plagiarised from the South-East Queensland Council of Mayors. They did not even mention the Moreton Bay Rail Link. They failed to mention a signature project—the Moreton Bay Rail Link. What did Campbell Newman do when he found out that it was not mentioned in this plan? He rang up the Moreton Bay council and left a voicemail message to say that he forgot to mention it in his plan. That is a disgrace. He could not even put a signature project in his plan.

We are getting on with the job of building in South-East Queensland. We are getting on with the job of delivering. With regard to the Moreton Bay Rail Link, there is geotechnical work underway. We are funding the Gold Coast rapid light rail project—a billion dollar investment on the Gold Coast delivering for the people in South-East Queensland. That is 13 kilometres of light rail and a signature project. It is the first regional light rail project in Australia—being delivered by a Labor government, and do not forget it. Let there be no mistake: it is going to be delivered by a Labor government and I am going to be there for the opening.

What did we see on Sunday? The Premier, myself and the member for Bundamba turn the sod on the second stage of the rail link to Springfield. That is what we are doing—delivering the Darra to Springfield train line two years ahead of schedule. We are delivering a comprehensive plan. What we have seen is that those opposite are bereft of any ideas. They have no policies. They have no alternative vision for this state. They have nothing! They have absolutely nothing! Labor will deliver for transport in South-East Queensland. They have nothing!

 **Hon. PG REEVES** (Mansfield—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport) (5.50 pm): I rise to second the amendment moved by the minister and oppose the motion moved by the LNP. The LNP's motion is yet another example of failing to recognise that great planning for future growth is about protecting and improving the lifestyles of local residents. As the state member for Mansfield, I am focused on issues such as transport and roads which improve the lifestyles of the residents of Wishart,

Mansfield, Upper Mount Gravatt and other parts of the electorate that I represent. The Bligh government has a proven track record of transforming the road and public transport networks for residents in the electorate of Mansfield. The links servicing key hubs like Upper Mount Gravatt have been improved dramatically over the years and continue to be upgraded to cater for growth and public demand. As a lifelong resident of the Mansfield electorate, I have seen the improvements that have been delivered by Labor. Some might not be aware, but as the No. 1 ticket holder for the South East Busway, like others, I have enjoyed the benefits that have come from this world-class transport system. A bus ride from home to work in the city today takes less than half the time it did before the busway was built. And who was it that built the busway? Labor built the busway, just like it was Labor that delivered the upgraded Gateway Motorway, including a second Gateway bridge.


Mr Lucas: No Howard money!

Mr REEVES: I take that interjection from the member for Lytton. Anyone who has made a trip to the airport from this part of Brisbane recently knows that it takes only about 20 minutes from their home to the terminal at any time of the day. This has been a major project aimed at keeping Brisbane moving and enhancing everyone's quality of life, and protecting people's lifestyles means focusing on the other needs that arise from these massive projects such as dealing with noise. I ensured that the Bligh Labor government installed three kilometres of noise barriers on the fast-tracked extension of the Gateway Motorway widening project from Miles Platting Road to Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road. We are not just using noise walls; we are using a special type of low-noise asphalt that will play a big role in reducing traffic noise as part of this project. This asphalt has already been used on the Gateway upgrade north of Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road.

During my time as the state member for Mansfield Labor has revolutionised transport in my community. We are working on a safer and improved Mount Cotton Road, with tenders for section B of the \$83 million Redlands corridor upgrade program soon to be awarded—another project being delivered by Labor. We have developed a partnership with the federal Labor government to pave the way to widen Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road to six lanes between Broadwater and Gardner roads—yet another project going to be delivered by Labor. Of course, as a government, Labor has had a massive focus on public transport, particularly buses. We are boosting 62,000 new weekly seats on route 180 as part of a massive upgrade that will see the 180 service run at least every 10 minutes in peak and every 15 minutes off peak between 6 am and 11 pm seven days a week; more buses for route 111 from Eight Mile Plains to the CBD; and for routes 170, 174 and 175 from Garden City to the CBD. We are also delivering a new route 590 from Garden City via Carindale to Airport One seven days a week. These are the types of benefits that residents of the Mansfield electorate have enjoyed because of the state Labor government. All of these transport services and road networks were planned for and delivered by Labor.

Mr Crandon: You're pouring money in there and ignoring the Gold Coast!

Mr REEVES: I take that interjection about pouring money into the Mansfield electorate. I know that we have done that, but we have done that everywhere because we are focused on public transport—unlike him! He has never caught a train in his life! Massive investments like these take planning and are delivered. What is the LNP doing today? Criticising the Bligh government for having a transport plan to take South-East Queensland to 2031. Given the track record of the LNP when it was in government at the federal level under John Howard where it failed miserably to deliver anything tangible in transport or roads for the Brisbane southside—nothing, zilch, not even planning money; it would not even give planning money for the Gateway Upgrade Project—I am proud to be part of the Bligh government which plans and delivers in spades for the residents of my local community all of the time every time. Who builds the busways? Labor does!

 **Dr FLEGG** (Moggill—LNP) (5.55 pm): Recently I saw a photograph circulated that was taken from space of the Korean Peninsula. It showed the southern part of the peninsula illuminated by the lights of countless cities while the northern part of the peninsula was in total darkness. There was nothing at all. The only thing I have ever seen that quite rivalled that photograph from space is the map of transport projects for Brisbane when one looks at the western suburbs of Brisbane where there is just darkness. This expensive document that those opposite have circulated is just one more example of this government—that has had 20 years but has delivered nothing—getting up and saying to Queenslanders, 'Oh, but we have a plan. Let's try to convince Queenslanders before the election that maybe we have a plan. Let's get them to think, "Well, perhaps we might do something."' It is too late. Queenslanders are not going to fall for that again. We have had health action plans and water plans. We have had a plan for almost anything at all.

The document in question makes very interesting reading. I am sure not very many people got through to page 139, but if they go past the glossy photograph of the minister and the Premier, past the misleading and incomplete information, past the \$227 billion of unfunded projects and then to page 139 they would see it there at the top of the page. Let me read it out. It states—

Connecting SEQ 2031 does not in any way represent an infrastructure commitment by the government and in no way binds the government to deliver any particular piece of infrastructure.


The government is condemned by the words of its own glossy brochure. It is already softening up Queenslanders for the fact that, yet again, it will not be delivering on what it has given people the impression it will be delivering. Out in the western suburbs of Brisbane we do not have a bus lane. We have one park and ride in the largest state seat in the area of Brisbane. We have places that are so dangerous that people are not game to walk across the road to catch the bus. Let me read from a letter from one person about the bus stop on Grandview Road. I have warned this government for years that this will be the scene of a fatal pedestrian accident. This is one of numerous reports that come into my office about this incredibly dangerous piece of public transport infrastructure. The letter states—

Recently, whilst picking up my children from the bus stop, I was witness to a young boy being hit by a car whilst trying to cross the road.

The student, from BBC, was aged approximately 13 years. Fortunately, the driver of this car was driving extremely carefully and managed to stop and just touch him and therefore prevent serious injury. I have no doubt this boy could easily have been killed. The car pulled over and a passenger went to check on the boy. I stayed with the lady driver who was highly distressed. They had 3 children in the car.

The driver of that car also contacted my office and said that they witnessed similar near misses every day at this bus stop. I have been out there and once I walked across the road myself at that bus stop. I would not walk across there again. Even the department has accepted that it is dangerous, but there is no plan to put in a set of lights or a safe crossing. Let us have some action and deliver on something and not have more expensive waste of time—

(Time expired)

 **Mr LAWLOR** (Southport—ALP) (6.01 pm): I support the amendment and condemn the LNP for taking such a negative view of this comprehensive and far-reaching transport document. It has been developed with input from local councils, key stakeholders and the broader community. It draws on the best available Australian and international research. It is planned to be updated every five years in conjunction with reviews of the South East Queensland Regional Plan. We should not really be surprised by the LNP's objection to long-term planning when it comes to transport planning in particular. The LNP and, of course, its coalition predecessor have always been against long-term planning. That is why the Gold Coast suffers from the traffic congestion problems we now have—problems which are being addressed by this government and previous Labor governments.

This is a regional transport plan for South-East Queensland for the next 20 years. I wish we had had a document like this in the late sixties when, in a stunning act of stupidity and lack of planning, the coalition government decided to close down the railway line to Southport and Coolangatta. It compounded its stupidity by smashing the bridges so quickly to avoid the possibility of a reversal of the decision that it actually left a locomotive down at Coolangatta. It had to be dismantled and brought back to Brisbane by road. It further compounded that act of stupidity by then selling off the land corridor. The member for Coomera goes on about ignoring the Gold Coast.

Mr Crandon interjected.

Mr LAWLOR: That is absolute rubbish. You sold it off. You closed it down. You sold it off.

Mr Crandon interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Coomera!

Mr LAWLOR: Member for Coomera, I bet when you were born the doctor smacked your mother.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Southport will get back to the debate.

Mr LAWLOR: The opposition hate it when I mention this example of planning short-sightedness. That should not be a surprise. After all, its members have no policies. They do not have any transport plans of any consequence whatsoever. They plagiarised the South-East Queensland plan from the regional mayors. Of course, as the minister pointed out this morning, the member for Indooroopilly was asked four times by Spencer Howson what he was going to do. He could come up with nothing—nothing whatsoever.

I will confine my remarks to the Gold Coast City Council area. In 2006 the population was 466,000. In 2031 the population will increase by almost 300,000. The public transport mode represents 4.4 per cent of trips, and half the population travels less than 10 kilometres to work. So there is a real opportunity to increase the number of people cycling to work. Eight per cent of Gold Coast workers are employed in Brisbane and 29 per cent of the population do not have a driver's licence. The average distance travelled to work, excluding in Brisbane, is 15.2 kilometres.

It is estimated that 65 per cent of new housing on the Gold Coast will be developed through urban infill. In the 2031 transport targets, the aim is to reduce the share of trips made by private car from 87.5 per cent to 69 per cent. That is made up of an increase in the share of trips made by public transport, from 4.4 per cent to 15 per cent, taking total daily trips from 72,000 in 2006 to 400,000 in 2031; an increase in the share of trips made by walking, from 6.8 per cent in 2006 to eight per cent in 2031; and an increase in the share of trips made by cycling, from 1.3 per cent in 2006 to eight per cent in 2031. This would still see the number of daily private car trips made by Gold Coast residents over that 20 years increase from 1.43 million to 1.91 million. So public transport, walking and cycling will play an integral part in moving people efficiently around the Gold Coast.

It is recognised that there is a need to increase the capacity on the Gold Coast-Brisbane passenger services, especially in peak periods. New rail stations are needed on the Gold Coast line to accommodate urban growth while maintaining a rapid journey from Brisbane to the Gold Coast. Of course, the increase in transport to the Gold Coast by rail is constrained by the lack of a second Brisbane River crossing, which is not supported by Campbell Newman. We have a plan for the second crossing and we will deliver that plan.

Ms SIMPSON (Maroochydore—LNP) (6.06 pm): This document that the government has tabled is not a real plan; it is a con job. In fact, it should be renamed 'Conning SEQ 2031', not 'Connecting SEQ 2031' because there is no connection to reality and no connection to any construction plan to deliver on any meaningful targets. I have to ask myself: how many government spin doctors does it take to build a road in Queensland? Given that that is what this government does so well—spinning the story, not constructing in a timely and cost-effective way—how many government spin doctors does it take to build a road in Queensland? Absolutely none, because they are useless in respect of building roads. However, they are very good at trying to give the minister a media opportunity rather than actually having a substantive plan.

We have seen SEQIPP and the South East Queensland Regional Plan, which was supposed to be the active component of delivery for these integrated plans, and it has now morphed into QIP. But what has the government done? It has taken out the time frames and the cost structures because it kept blowing them; it could not get a handle on how to actually deliver the real infrastructure. Without that action plan, without a construction pipeline, this integrated transport plan is a complete joke. I believe that Queenslanders have seen enough of the way this government operates to see through it. They have had a gutful of it. We have heard already about the real impacts of seeing people transition to public transport. On the government's own figures, we have seen a fall-off in the number of people in real terms using public transport in areas where we need to see people shifting to real and effective public transport.

I want to address my remarks towards my own area of the Sunshine Coast. If honourable members believe this document—if they believe, once again, the promises of a range of pieces of infrastructure that are now listed without any time frames and without any hard data on the cost—the government would have them believe it had done the planning. It cannot even build a bus station that was promised some years ago, a bus station that is the very hub of the Sunshine Coast. This is not brain surgery; it is pretty basic stuff—building a bus station at the hub of the Sunshine Coast. Government members pulled out the glossy brochures for that last year, too, and they told people that they had done the planning and they were going to get underway and start construction. They bought a number of properties and they tipped out the tenants. There are empty properties where this bus station was supposed to go. But what has happened since then? They have announced, 'We have to go out and do the plan again. We are going to consult on the design'—the design that they announced last year they would have done more than 12 months earlier. Meanwhile, tenants have gone and so has the rent in respect of the properties that were acquired. This is a government that is rudderless with regard to the most basic issue of construction delivery.

Who is going to believe that this is an integrated transport plan? Nobody! This government cannot even construct a bus station at the hub of the Sunshine Coast. This document says—

Centres access hierarchy

Maroochydore is the logical regional hub for the Sunshine Coast as it is the principal activity centre and is forecast to accommodate 18,000 employees by 2026.

Meanwhile, at the existing bus station someone is paid to stand behind the buses to make sure that nobody is run over because the buses have to back out in order to transition out of the bus station. It is pretty well at capacity. It is such a basic bit of infrastructure. Who is going to believe everything those opposite have listed here will occur? Those opposite do not have a plan unless they can show a construction time frame and a cost.

I think that the shock is that most of SEQIPP, which has now been sucked into the QIP, has never had 'P' ratings done. It has never had the probabilities around the processes to put in place the business plans for certainty. This is basic stuff that people in business would expect if there was to be a real pipeline of work. Connecting SEQ 2031 is a con job. It is little different from the draft that we released when it was leaked 12 months ago. Here we are today with a new glossy print of what those opposite had leaking around the traps 12 months ago, which is not much different other than being printed and glossed. One has to ask: what does this government do? All it does is a PR spin job rather than actual and meaningful pipelines of work for construction so that Queensland and South-East Queensland does not grind to a halt.


Hon. DM WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (6.11 pm): I suppose if one speculates one might expect that tomorrow's headlines will be 'Authors of the dirt file criticise somebody else for putting out a glossy brochure'. How odd that they should do that? Then they go on to say that the document is an unfunded document. Let me tell honourable members about the \$1.147 billion of already allocated money that is

the making of the Petrie to Kippa-Ring rail link—the Moreton Bay Rail Link. Of that \$1.147 billion, \$742 million comes from the Australian government, \$300 million plus the land comes from the Queensland government and \$105 million comes from the Moreton Bay Regional Council. This money is already voted. It is allocated this year, it is allocated next year, it is allocated the year after. It is not allocated in the year 2017 because by then the rail line would already have been running for one year. The opposition says it is a con job. The money is already there. This year the Australian government brought forward \$133 million from the out years, as they are referred to, to speed up the activities to make sure that it came in on time, as indeed it will. This year's money has funded the surveying, the geotechnical work, the ground testing along the track and at the location of the six stations, and the consultation with the community about property impacts, traffic and parking issues and environmental considerations. I understand it will also fund the commencement of construction in this financial year.

This railway line is a dream coming true for my constituents. In 1896 the idea of the Redcliffe rail link, as it was in those days called, was first canvassed. I have been campaigning for it since 1983. On 3 December 2010 Prime Minister Gillard, Premier Bligh and Mayor Sutherland signed an intergovernmental agreement to embed the arrangement to which I have just referred, the arrangements for a funded project, funded this year and in the out years, contrary to what the honourable members on the other side of the House have been saying.

An intergovernmental agreement is not a mere promise by a political party. It is a deal between governments. The consequences of breaching an intergovernmental agreement are dire. Even politicians like John Howard, our former Prime Minister who spoke of non-core promises, would shrink at the thought of dudding another government with the consequence that that other government would be on the front page every day pointing to the breach of agreement of his government.

So the Moreton Bay Rail Link is a reality and it is a glorious reality. In 115 years we have come this far. In another 115 years time it is still going to be part of the living history of the place that I represent. These days will be part of the living history of the place that I represent. Schoolchildren getting off the train at Rothwell station will have been taught in school, and will remember—or some of them will remember—the names of Gillard, Bligh, Sutherland, Nolan and Palaszczuk. They will be able to spell at least some of them. This is the reality that those opposite are controverting. I do not know what their problem is. They keep talking about glossy brochures. They seem to have a problem with gloss. I am very happy with gloss when it delivers such glorious reality. Their problem with gloss is probably due to their preference for dirt, which is, of course, their speciality.

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (6.16 pm): I rise to support the shadow minister's motion that this House condemns the Bligh Labor government for releasing another glossy brochure called Connecting SEQ 2031. Contrary to government claims, this colour brochure does not give clear direction for future transport projects, nor provides anything like a blueprint for the future. It is merely an election eve special, a cobbled together mishmash of largely unfunded promises in the guise of a plan.

I contend that the document is not worth the paper that it is written on, particularly when it comes to provision of road infrastructure. I do so for four reasons: firstly, the government has continuously failed to provide major road infrastructure all over Queensland. It has had 20 out of 22 or so years to upgrade, keep pace and maintain our roads in South-East Queensland but it has failed to plan for the truck traffic through the Brisbane urban corridor across the south or for the building of the Kenmore bypass in the west or for important intersection upgrades at Samford Road and Wardell Street where the government has done nothing for years and then in the rush to bail out the Labor member for Ashgrove has rushed in an unpopular and impractical plan. The failure is greater the further one goes outside the south-east corner.

Secondly, the government has no capability to pay for this transport and road speculator. The documents contain \$227 billion of funding commitments that this government has no idea how to achieve. The government has failed to gain federal funding for roads all across Queensland. It has also failed to invest state funds in 2010-11 to the tune of \$600 million in road upgrades and jobs.

Thirdly, the document does not consider the impacts of Labor's job-destroying and economy-wrecking carbon tax. Every South-East Queensland road project listed in this brochure is in doubt because of the cost of Labor's carbon tax.

Fourthly, the government's track record is one of broken promises. This flashy brochure is just another series of false promises on the eve of another election. I highlight this pattern of government broken promises on road infrastructure in Brisbane with two examples of government failure in south-east Brisbane. The government has promised and failed to deliver projects along the critical Redlands corridor. The government promised the people of Mansfield and the Redlands the road widening or dual laning of Mount Cotton Road from Mount Gravatt to Capalaba. This corridor has been identified as a high priority for the growing south-east Brisbane bayside suburbs.

I take this opportunity to note that the LNP candidate for Mansfield, Ian Walker, is in the gallery. I commend him for his work for the people of Mansfield and for holding this government accountable on the roads in what hopefully will be his electorate. In 2008-09 a piece of ALP election advertising promised the widening of Mount Cotton Road. It states—

Mt Cotton Road, Burbank, is to be widened between Mt Gravatt-Capalaba Road and the Tingalpa Creek Bridge.

Construction commences 2009

Due for completion 2011.

The document is signed—

PHIL REEVES MP

Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier

State Member for Mansfield

Authorised N Petersen, 26 Mascot Street, Upper Mount Gravatt for the ALP.

I table that document as part of another headed 'Brisbane Urban Corridor Traffic Facts'.

Tabled paper: Brochure titled 'Brisbane Urban Corridor Traffic Facts' [5694].

Unfortunately, as of October 2011 the promised road widening duplication has not occurred. In December 2010 the government downgraded the project to an upgrade of the intersections only by 2011-12, not the widening it promised by 2011. In fact, the road widening does not appear in the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan right through to 2015. Clearly, this is a broken election promise by the Labor government. It has form.


Then there is the promised signalling of the intersection of Shore and Wellington streets in Cleveland, which currently is a roundabout. I table a photo clearly showing that it is a roundabout.

Tabled paper: Photograph near roundabout [5695].

In answer to question on notice No. 1410, the minister stated—

The signalisation of Shore Street and Gordon Street is no longer required as the signalisation of Shore Street and Wellington Street has improved traffic flow ...

It is a roundabout; it does not have traffic lights on it. The minister does not even know the difference. How can the people of Queensland have confidence in this document, Connecting SEQ 2031, when the minister does not even know the difference between traffic lights and a roundabout? I support the motion moved by the shadow minister.

 **Hon. CA WALLACE** (Thuringowa—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Fisheries and Marine Infrastructure) (6.22 pm): I support the amended motion moved by the Minister for Transport. How can any tory seriously come into this place and question this side of the House on transport and road infrastructure in South-East Queensland? How can they seriously have that contention in this place? Let us not forget this is the same tory party that would not take the fight to John Howard to seek funding for Queensland's roads. This is the same tory party that sat there mute for 13 years while John Howard ripped off Queensland motorists. Over that time, John Howard's investment in the Bruce Highway was a paltry \$100 million per year.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr WALLACE: The member thinks the Bruce Highway is on the Gold Coast. I take the interjection from the member for Cleveland, who told the estimates committee hearing that he thought that the Bruce Highway was on the Gold Coast. It is no wonder they protest, because they have been caught out with their crocodile tears here today. Theirs is the party that sat there mute while, for 13 long years, Queensland motorists were ripped off by the Howard government. Let us not forget that theirs is the party that told the people of regional Queensland that it will not have a Bruce Highway upgrade strategy available for the people of Queensland to peruse until six months after the election, with the proviso 'should they be elected'. They have no legs to stand on when it comes to this debate.

It is Labor that has rebuilt the road and traffic system of South-East Queensland. It is Labor that is proud to produce better roads for South-East Queensland. Let us look at that massive investment, which is critical to support growth in South-East Queensland. Let us look at the better roads that we have built. We have upgraded the Gateway Motorway, including the brand-new Sir Leo Hielscher Bridge, which was proudly opened by a Labor government last year. We have extended the Gateway Motorway to the Logan Motorway.

Mr KILBURN: Hear, hear!

Mr WALLACE: I take the interjection from the honourable member for Chatsworth, who knows the importance of the entire upgrade of that network to the people in his electorate. As I said, after years of hard-fought battles with tory governments, it took Labor to fund the massive roadworks between Brisbane and Ipswich. Members should drive the road between Brisbane and Ipswich and see those works that are underway. Mr Speaker, coming from an electorate to the west of Brisbane, you would

understand that. The member for Ipswich, the member for Bundamba and the member for Inala understand the importance of those massive works that are underway at the moment. The Port of Brisbane is one of the most important ports in Queensland and it will benefit from the duplication and four-lane extension of that road.

Our hardworking crews have delivered Bruce Highway upgrades between the Gateway Motorway and Caboolture. They have toiled away in the heat and the rain to rebuild the Pacific Highway between Brisbane and the Gold Coast. We have upgraded the Sunshine Coast Motorway and we have upgraded the Logan Motorway. We have extended the Centenary Highway to Yamanto. Despite numerous challenges, we have built the Tugun bypass. What else have we done? We have built the brand-new Ted Smout Memorial Bridge to Clontarf. Labor built that bridge. We are getting on with the job with final road upgrades. The Ipswich Motorway link from Dinmore to Goodna represents \$1.95 billion worth of work funded by Labor, but not a cent from the tories. The road from Cooroy to Curra is the most dangerous section of the Bruce Highway. Over \$600 million in funding has been provided by Labor. John Howard and the tories did nothing.

As I said, they do not have a leg to stand on. I think parliament should buy an 89-seat bus. Let us put all the members of this place on that bus. Let us drive across South-East Queensland and see those projects. Let us drive from Coolangatta to Cooktown, let us drive out to Clermont, let us drive to Charleville and we will see the roads that Labor has built and that Labor continues to build in Queensland.

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

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

NOES, 31—Bates, Bleijie, Crandon, Cripps, Cunningham, Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Douglas, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, Foley, Hobbs, Johnson, Langbroek, McLindon, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Powell, Pratt, Robinson, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Rickuss, Sorensen

Resolved in the affirmative.

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

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

NOES, 31—Bates, Bleijie, Crandon, Cripps, Cunningham, Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Douglas, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, Foley, Hobbs, Johnson, Langbroek, McLindon, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Powell, Pratt, Robinson, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Rickuss, Sorensen

Resolved in the affirmative.


Motion, as agreed—

That this House endorses the detailed transport plan titled Connecting SEQ 2031 which has been delivered by the Bligh Government and notes that this plan provides the vision for transport over the next 20 years for South East Queensland.

Sitting suspended from 6.36 pm to 7.40 pm.

CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS BILL

Introduction and Referral to the Health and Disabilities Committee

 **Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade) (7.40 pm): I present a bill for an act to provide for civil partnerships and to make minor or consequential amendments of the acts mentioned in part 6. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Health and Disabilities Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Civil Partnerships Bill 2011 [5696].

Tabled paper: Civil Partnerships Bill 2011, explanatory notes [5697].

It is Labor that has been at the forefront of fighting for equality, for equity and for those for who need a voice. The bill I introduce tonight will declare the end of the legal fiction of human relationships, and give fuller meaning to the relationships that many of our fellow Queenslanders hold as their most important and significant. We live in a modern, diverse society. Our community shares many different views, many different beliefs and many different attitudes.

The Civil Partnerships Bill I introduce to the House tonight is a landmark step for this parliament and, more importantly, for the breadth of the community we represent. It achieves two important milestones that in 2011 many couples take for granted. Firstly, it provides a mechanism for couples, of the same or opposite sex, to declare their relationship before family and friends in a civil partnership ceremony and, secondly, it provides a relationship registration scheme for both same and opposite sex relationships.

Queensland is not the first state to officially take these steps. A civil union or partnership scheme was introduced in the Australian Capital Territory in 2008 and relationship registers were introduced in Tasmania in 2003, Victoria in 2008 and New South Wales in 2010. The bill will provide for Queensland to legally cater for what no-one can deny is the reality—that there are same-sex couples amongst us, that many of them share committed, long-term relationships, and that they deserve the same rights as the rest of us. To be eligible to enter into a civil partnership the parties must be residents of Queensland; over 18 years old; not married or already in a civil partnership; and not in a prohibited relationship—that is, related to each other, as set out in the bill.

The bill provides that couples intending to register their civil partnership may have a ceremony. The ceremony consists of the couple making a declaration of civil partnership before a civil partnership notary. The bill also requires couples to give notice of their intention to enter into a civil partnership not less than 10 days or more than 12 months before the ceremony. It should be noted that a declaration or a ceremony is an option for couples. It must be made very clear that a declaration or a ceremony is an option for couples. A partnership can apply to be registered without a ceremony, provided they meet the other eligibility requirements of the bill.

To apply for a civil partnership, the two people in the relationship must lodge an application to register a relationship with the Registrar-General which attaches proof of age and identity. It must also include a statutory declaration stating that the person wishes to enter into a civil partnership with the other person; the person is not married or already in a civil partnership; and the person is not in a prohibited familial relationship and where the parties live.

There is a period of 10 days after registration where the parties can withdraw their application. After that 10-day cooling-off period, the Registrar-General must register the relationship by making an endorsement to that effect. This is just one of many aspects of the bill which are different in the scheme of the proposed framework to that which operates under the federal law providing for marriage. I also note that the Registrar-General may decide to refuse to register the relationship if satisfied one of the parties does not meet the eligibility criteria.


Declarations will take place before a notary. As such, the bill provides eligibility criteria and a process for registration of people wishing to be civil partnership notaries. A person may apply in writing to the Registrar-General for registration if he or she is over 18 years of age; has the knowledge and skills or experience necessary to exercise the functions of a civil partnership notary; and is a suitable person to be registered. To decide whether the person is suitable the Registrar-General must have regard to whether the person has been convicted or found guilty, in or outside Australia, of any offence punishable by imprisonment for one year or longer; whether the person has been convicted, or found guilty of an offence against the act; whether the person is or has been an undischarged bankrupt; or anything else the Registrar-General considers relevant. This broad power provides for the Registrar-General to exercise discretion over the appointment of notaries.

The bill provides that civil partnerships are terminated automatically on the death or marriage of either party. The termination of a civil partnership may also occur when one or both parties to the civil partnership wish to terminate the civil partnership by an application to the District Court. The District Court may make an order terminating the civil partnership if the court considers the civil partnership has broken down and there is no likelihood of the parties reconciling. The ground is established if the parties have lived separately and apart for a continuous period of 12 months. The application can be made by either or both of the parties and must be personally served and attach an affidavit attesting to the fact that the party believes the relationship has broken down and that there is no chance of reconciliation and the date the separation occurred. The termination will take effect on the day of the court order.

The Civil Partnerships Bill includes consequential amendments to several other acts. The Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 2003 will be amended to provide for the registration and termination of a civil partnership in the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages and will create the register of civil partnership notaries. The Acts Interpretation Act 1991 will be amended to provide for a new definition of 'spouse' that will now include a de facto partner and a civil partner. This amendment will provide that in the many Queensland laws where the word 'spouse' is used, a civil partner is also included or recognised as a spouse. The Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 will be amended to include civil partnership within the definition of 'relationship status' which is a ground upon which discrimination can occur.

This is a bill that provides for a reform for which the time has come. It is a step towards equality, towards inclusion, towards truth and towards the realisation of the legitimate aspirations of thousands and thousands of Queenslanders, their partners, their families and their friends. That must not be a project that should ever be delayed. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

 **Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade) (7.46 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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

AYES, 46—Attwood, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Darling, Dick, Farmer, Finn, Fraser, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Johnstone, Jones, Kiernan, Kilburn, Lawlor, Lucas, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wells, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Male, Grace

NOES, 30—Bates, Bleijie, Crandon, Cripps, Cunningham, Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Douglas, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, Foley, Hobbs, Johnson, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Powell, Pratt, Robinson, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Rickuss, Sorensen


Resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a first time.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Health and Disabilities Committee.

SURAT BASIN RAIL (LONG-TERM LEASE) BILL

Introduction and Referral to the Industry, Education, Training and Industrial Relations Committee

 **Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade) (7.56 pm): I present a bill for an act to facilitate the granting of a long-term lease over the Surat Basin rail corridor land by providing for the exclusion of certain leases from the application of particular provisions of the Land Title Act 1994 and the Property Law Act 1974. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Industry, Education, Training and Industrial Relations Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Surat Basin Rail (Long-term Lease) Bill 2011 [[5698](#)].

Tabled paper: Surat Basin Rail (Long-term Lease) Bill 2011, explanatory notes [[5699](#)].

I present a bill for an act to advance the construction of the southern missing link rail project, and to provide for the state's interests under the Surat Basin rail lease and operating agreement. The Surat Basin Rail (Long-term Lease) Bill 2011 will give certainty to the legal framework for the Surat Basin rail project by exempting the Surat Basin rail lease from certain laws which apply to all leases in Queensland, notably the Land Title Act 1994 and the Property Law Act 1974.

The Surat Basin rail project proposes to construct the 210-kilometre southern missing link between Wandoan and Banana to enable the export of thermal coal from the Surat Basin through the Port of Gladstone. In 2006, the government granted an exclusive mandate for the Surat Basin rail to the Surat Basin rail joint venture. Under the terms of the exclusive mandate, the Surat Basin rail project must be developed at no cost or risk to the state. The exclusive mandate obliges the state to secure the rail corridor, at the joint venture's cost, and after the project achieves financial close and provides the joint venture with tenure to construct and operate the railway over the long term.

If the project reaches financial close, the state will receive significant benefits from the development of the \$1 billion plus railway including opening up the estimated four billion tonnes of thermal coal reserves in the Surat Basin. I seek leave to have the remainder of my explanatory speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Order! Has your speech been checked by the Speaker?

Mr FRASER: It has, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Leave granted.

The project will also generate an estimated \$300 million per annum in coal royalties to the State and provide employment for up to 1,350 workers in the construction of the project. The economic growth for the local and regional economy will be significant.

The State is presently negotiating in good faith with the Joint Venture on a range of agreements for the project, including a Development Agreement, Operating Agreement and Lease. These Agreements will establish the rights and obligations of both the State and Joint Venture over the initial construction period and long term operations.

The administration of the Lease will be subject to a range of State statutes. The Property Law Act 1974 and Land Title Act 1994 provide generic safeguards and directives for all Queensland leases, irrespective of the terms, value or duration of the lease. Certain aspects of this legislation are not appropriate for a long-term lease involving a high capital value infrastructure asset such as the Surat Basin Rail. If these aspects of the legislation were allowed to apply to the Surat Basin Rail, it would afford the Joint Venture, as lessee, rights inconsistent with the contracts to be agreed between the parties and thus create uncertainty as to rights and obligations.

The Bill will exempt the Lease from section 121 and Part 8, Division 3 of the Property Law Act 1974 which prescribe general conditions of assignment, default and termination. The State intends to effectively manage these conditions under the Lease and Operating Agreement which will 'codify' the rights of the parties. The Operating Agreement will provide the State as lessor with reasonable termination rights, recognising the long-term nature of the concession and the consequences to the lessee and its financiers of termination. The contract will also provide the lessee with appropriate protections from premature forfeiture.


The Bill also provides for an exemption from section 67(3)(a) of the Land Title Act 1994 which prohibits alterations to lease boundaries. If this section were applicable to the Lease, it would require the parties to negotiate and execute a whole new lease any time a change in the lease boundaries was necessary or desirable for operational or other reasons over the long term life of the project. The exemption of section 67(3)(a) from applying to the SBR Lease will not impact on the rights of adjacent landholders or the acquisition powers available to the Coordinator-General. The proposed exemption would simply allow the State to amend the Lease without having to issue a new Lease. Given the complexity of the Lease and the investment of time and resources in its preparation, it is more efficient for the State to be able to vary the boundaries, as required.

I also note the State has elected, on a number of occasions, to enact powers to exempt long-term infrastructure leases from key sections of this generic legislation and give primacy to binding contractual arrangements with lessees which afford a higher degree of protection to the State. Examples of this are the Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal (Long Term Lease) Act 2001 and the Airport Assets (Restructuring and Disposal) Act 2008.

To summarise, to ensure the agreements effectively protect the State's interests and can be managed efficiently over the long term, the bill proposes that the Surat Basin Rail Lease be exempt from section 121 and Part 8, Division 3 of the Property Law Act 1974 and from section 67(3)(a) of the Land Title Act 1994.

On this basis, I commend the Bill to the House.

First Reading

 **Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade) (7.58 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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


Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Industry, Education, Training and Industrial Relations Committee.

MINISTERIAL PAPERS

Health Regulations


 **Hon. GJ WILSON** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Health) (7.59 pm): I lay upon the table of the House two reports: first, a report regarding the exemption of the Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulation 1996 and the Health Regulation 1996 from expiry under section 56A(4) of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992; and, second, the Health Practitioners Regulation National Law Amendment (Midwife Insurance Exemption) Regulation 2006.

Tabled paper: Letter, undated, from Hon. Geoff Wilson MP to the Clerk of the Parliament, requesting the tabling of a report under the s56A(4) of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992 in relation to the Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulation 1996 and the Health Regulation 1996 [[5700](#)].

Tabled paper: Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Amendment (Midwife Insurance Exemption) Regulation 2011, No. 108/2011 [[5701](#)].

CRIMINAL ORGANISATION AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction and Referral to the Legal Affairs, Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services Committee

 **Hon. PT LUCAS** (Lytton—ALP) (Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State) (7.59 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Criminal Organisation Act 2009, the Crime and Misconduct Act 2001 and the Criminal Code for particular purposes and to make a regulation under the Criminal Organisation Act 2009. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Legal Affairs, Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Criminal Organisation Amendment Bill 2011 [[5702](#)].

Tabled paper: Criminal Organisation Amendment Bill 2011, explanatory notes [[5703](#)].

Organised crime in Australia is a multibillion-dollar industry. The Australian Crime Commission conservatively estimates that serious and organised crime costs Australia between \$10 and \$15 billion every year or an estimated one to two per cent of GDP. The assets seized under Queensland confiscations legislation is further evidence of this. From January 2003 to 30 June 2011, the state seized \$125 million in assets, \$31.5 million of which was forfeited to the state.

The ACC describes opportunities for organised crime today as unprecedented due to increased globalisation, escalating cross-border movement of people, goods and money, emerging international markets and rapidly developing and converging technologies which provide a fertile operating environment for organised crime. It portrays organised crime as sophisticated, resilient, highly diversified and pervasive. Activities of high-threat, serious and organised criminal enterprises result in significant harm to the Australian community.

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Crime Commission identified that serious and organised crime not only results in substantial economic cost to the Australian community but also operates at great social cost. Along with this are the emotional, physical and psychological costs to victims of organised crime, their families and communities.

It is widely recognised that there is a real level of fear in the community about bikies and their ability to inflict violent retribution with impunity. However, the state has had success in combating organised crime. Recently, a former bikie gang member was ordered to pay the state of Queensland \$4.2 million in crime earnings and an additional \$4.3 million in interest. But criminal organisations do all that is in their power to protect their interests and intimidate those who would provide evidence which sheds light on their criminal activities.

The Criminal Organisation Act 2009 commenced on 15 April 2010 and is designed to disrupt and restrict the activities of criminal organisations and their members and associates. Members of outlaw motorcycle gangs and other criminal organisations have been involved in activities such as attempted murder, extortion, drug manufacturing and distribution and pose a threat to Queensland. In response to outlaw motorcycle gang violence in southern states, other states and territories around Australia have passed legislation aimed at disrupting the activities of criminal organisations.

The powers provided for in this act are necessary to send a clear message that Queensland will not be seen to be or to have become a safe haven for criminal organisations that may be tempted to move their operations from other states and territories. All states and territories have a form of legislation currently in force in respect of outlaw motorcycle gangs. When this legislation was first introduced, the Queensland government took the time to ensure the act represented the most robust legislation in the country, striking the proper balance between the rights of individuals and the safety of the community. The act explicitly provides that it is not the parliament's intention that powers under the act be exercised in a way that diminish the freedom of people to participate in advocacy, protests or industrial action.

I trust that many people will remember the shocking Sydney Airport attack when a bikie member was killed in a huge brawl with a rival club at the airport. It is these scenes that we need to ensure the Queensland community is protected from. The bill provides the Commissioner of Police with the tools necessary to obtain orders from the Supreme Court to declare organisations involved in criminal activity to be 'criminal organisations'. This declaration forms the basis on which the commissioner can apply to obtain further civil orders—

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Order! I remind the member for Kawana that he is not in his seat and that if he wishes to interject, he had better go back there.

Mr LUCAS: including orders against the organisation itself, such as the fortification orders—requiring the modification of the organisations' premises—against members of the criminal organisation, such as imposing prohibitions on members obtaining weapons licences or attending certain premises, and associates of the criminal organisation, such as prohibiting them from associating with other members of the organisation. Breaches of these civil orders result in criminal sanctions.

A significant component of the Criminal Organisation Act 2009 lies in the ability of the commissioner to apply under part 6 of the act to have certain informant information declared by the Supreme Court to be criminal intelligence. This intelligence then forms part of the evidence but may not be the only information relied on by the commissioner to seek an order declaring an organisation to be a criminal organisation. The effect of being declared to be criminal intelligence is that, among other things, the identity of the person giving the information as well as the information itself is kept confidential and disclosed only to the court. Under section 59 of the act, criminal intelligence is information which, if disclosed, could reasonably be expected to prejudice a criminal investigation; lead to the identity of confidential informants or covert police officers; or endanger a person's life or physical safety. Such an approach is justified on the basis that it is necessary to protect the identity of informants and operatives and ensure that such persons can continue to be a source of criminal intelligence information.

Part 6 of the act provides for significant judicial discretion and special safeguards where such applications are made. One such safeguard is that an informant affidavit must be provided by a police officer under section 76 of the act about the criminal intelligence supplied by an informant. This affidavit sets out the evidence provided to the police officer by the informant and the grounds on which the information is considered reliable.

Section 72 of the act provides the court with the discretion to critically assess the weight to be given to an informant's information and provides discretion to the court to balance the interests of protecting informants with the need to ensure fairness to the respondent.

Another significant safeguard is the Criminal Organisation Public Interest Monitor, or COPIM, whose role is in the nature of *amicus curiae*. To date, the commissioner may only rely on evidence provided by informants to Queensland police officers. The bill amends the act to ensure that the Commissioner of Police may rely on intelligence information provided to third-party agencies, including interstate law enforcement agencies. The harsh reality of organised crime is that it does not respect state or international borders. The investigation of organised crime can only work with the cooperation of law enforcement agencies. Often information is gathered from informants across a range of law enforcement agencies and this information is shared between the agencies. It is vital that the commissioner be able to use intelligence gathered by other agencies in support of applications under the act so that the courts have the maximum amount of information before them before they make any orders under the act.

I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my speech in *Hansard*. I have sought the permission of the Speaker.

Leave granted.

The amendments will also ensure the protection of the identity of informants of any agency whose information is used to support an application under the Act.

Section 64 in its current form requires that details of an informant's full criminal history be provided in the informant affidavit. The intention of the requirement contained in section 64 is to ensure that the court can properly weigh the credibility of an informant's evidence.

'Criminal history' is defined in the dictionary at schedule 2 of the Act. However, certain specific offending, if linked to dates or locations, can by virtue of the notoriety of the offences identify a person.

Therefore, new section 64 allows for an account of an informant's criminal history to be provided for, without providing the specific description of the offences or linking the convictions or charges to specific dates but linked to periods of time not exceeding seven years. This allows the court to have a reasonable idea of the proximity of the offending to the date of the application while preventing the history from identifying the informant.

To give further certainty to external agencies that the identities of their informants will be protected under the Act, the Bill explicitly provides that the information provided about an informant need not include the informant's name, address, current location, date of birth, or the position held by an informant in an organisation.

The Bill clarifies that officers of external agencies providing such informant intelligence to the court can not be asked to provide those details under examination-in-chief, or cross-examination.

In view of this, a balancing amendment is made to provide that information provided to an agency by an informant may not be declared to be criminal intelligence if the intelligence is not supported in a material particular by other information.

These amendments to the Criminal Organisation Act were approached with great caution given the High Court ruling in *State of South Australia v Totani & Anor* [2010] HCA 39 which held certain provisions of the South Australian equivalent legislation to be constitutionally invalid and also the High Court decision in *Wainohu v New South Wales* [2010] HCA 24 which held the entire of the New South Wales equivalent Act to be constitutionally invalid.

There are fundamental differences between Queensland's Act and the South Australian and New South Wales Acts, and great care has been taken by this Government, as was taken when the Government introduced and amended the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offences) Act 2003, to ensure that the amendments to the Act do not offend against the principle set out in *Kable* and the constitutional validity issues that flow from that case.

It is clear that these amendments are very practical in nature and will ensure that intelligence collected by third party agencies, that is, other than the Queensland Police Service, including relevant interstate agencies, can be used in Queensland to tackle criminal organisations operating in Queensland.

Given the importance of such law enforcement action to the people of Queensland, it is imperative that these amendments be passed by the House as a matter of priority this year.

I invite the Opposition to put the community before outlaw bikie gangs and stop protecting these criminals. I invite the Opposition to recognise the value in these amendments and support the Bill.

I commend the Bill to the House.

First Reading

 **Hon. PT LUCAS** (Lytton—ALP) (Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State) (8.06 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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


Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Legal Affairs, Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services Committee.

BIOSECURITY BILL

Message from Governor

 **Hon. TS MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies) (8.06 pm): I present a message from Her Excellency the Governor.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Wendt) read the following message—

MESSAGE

BIOSECURITY BILL 2011

Constitution of Queensland 2001, section 68

I, PENELOPE ANNE WENSLEY, Governor, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a Bill intituled—

A Bill for an Act to provide for a flexible and responsive biosecurity framework to prevent or minimise adverse effects of exotic or endemic pests and diseases and contaminants on human health, social amenity, the economy and the environment, to repeal the Agricultural Standards Act 1994, the Apiaries Act 1982, the Diseases in Timber Act 1975, the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981, the Land Protection (Pest Management) Act 2002, the Plant Protection Act 1989 and the Stock Act 1915, to amend the Chemical Usage (Agricultural and Veterinary) Control Act 1988 and the Fisheries Act 1994, and to make minor and consequential amendments of the Acts mentioned in schedule 3.


GOVERNOR

(sgd)

Date: 25 OCT 2011

Tabled paper: Message, dated 25 October 2011, from Her Excellency the Governor recommending the Biosecurity Bill 2011 [[5704](#)].

Introduction and Referral to the Environment, Agriculture, Resources and Energy Committee

 **Hon. TS MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies) (8.07 pm): I present a bill for an act to provide for a flexible and responsive biosecurity framework to prevent or minimise adverse effects of exotic or endemic pests and diseases and contaminants on human health, social amenity, the economy and the environment, to repeal the Agricultural Standards Act 1994, the Apiaries Act 1982, the Diseases in Timber Act 1975, the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981, the Land Protection (Pest Management) Act 2002, the Plant Protection Act 1989 and the Stock Act 1915, to amend the Chemical Usage (Agricultural and Veterinary) Control Act 1988 and the Fisheries Act 1994, and to make minor and consequential amendments of the acts mentioned in schedule 3. I table the bill and explanatory notes. I nominate the Environment, Agriculture, Resources and Energy Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Biosecurity Bill 2011 [[5705](#)].

Tabled paper: Biosecurity Bill 2011, explanatory notes [[5706](#)].

This bill will provide for a flexible and responsive biosecurity framework—a framework to prevent or minimise the adverse effects of exotic or endemic pests and diseases and contaminants on the economy, human health, social amenity and the environment.

The bill will repeal seven acts in total—the Agricultural Standards Act 1994, the Apiaries Act 1982, the Diseases in Timber Act 1975, the Exotic Diseases in Animals Act 1981, the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002, the Plant Protection Act 1989 and the Stock Act 1915. This bill will also amend the Chemical Usage (Agricultural and Veterinary) Control Act 1988 and the Fisheries Act 1994 as well as make minor and consequential amendments to 14 other pieces of legislation.

Pests, diseases and contaminants threaten not only our agricultural industries, which contribute about \$14.7 billion per year to our economy, but also human health and our environment. Honourable members will no doubt be aware that in recent years we have faced increased biosecurity related incidents in Queensland. This is as a consequence of a number of factors which include our favourable climate, unpredictable weather conditions and the increasing frequency of movement of people and commodities that can inadvertently transport pests and diseases.

In late 2008 I released the Queensland Biosecurity Strategy, a five-year plan to provide a solid foundation on which to build a world-class biosecurity system for Queensland. The strategy is the product of the experience we have gained in biosecurity in Queensland and the collaboration and support of a wide range of stakeholders. Regulatory and legislative improvement is an area of focus in strengthening biosecurity that has been identified as part of the Queensland Biosecurity Strategy.

The consultation on the bill has been both comprehensive and inclusive. Biosecurity Queensland has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from a broad cross-section of stakeholders. I also note the support given to this landmark legislation by those opposite. I commend Biosecurity Queensland's commitment to working with stakeholders throughout the consultation process. I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Mr Speaker, this Bill provides one single coherent approach that carries over the best of current regulatory provisions while providing flexible new regulatory tools that will address known biosecurity risks and allow a rapid response to new and unforeseen threats.

Elements from the current regulatory framework that are obsolete, repetitive, obscure, contradictory or unnecessarily obstructive to the delivery of sound biosecurity outcomes will be removed.

Current legislation has evolved independently over time in response to changing biosecurity circumstances and is principally based on the primary industries aspects of animal and plant health.

We would all agree the world of today is significantly different to the world which shaped the Stock Act of 1915.

This Bill will provide clarity and uniformity with one approach to biosecurity that applies to all. It provides for a broad focus on prevention and management of biosecurity risks in a modern environment and acknowledges that a precautionary approach is critical to achieve the best outcomes.

For the first time, we will have legislation that recognises risk based decision making underpins biosecurity responses and a lack of scientific certainty should not be used as a reason to postpone taking action.

As an example, under current arrangements Biosecurity Queensland cannot officially quarantine a property for Hendra Virus until they have a positive test result even if they highly suspect a horse on the property is sick with the virus.

In such high-risk circumstances it is not sufficient to rely on the good will of people alone.

Under the new Act Queensland will now be well placed to deal more efficiently and effectively with the many new and unknown pests and diseases that have the potential to have a costly impact on our primary production industries or environment.

Queensland will become the first jurisdiction in the country to have a single coherent Bill that applies a general biosecurity obligation on every member of the community.

Everybody will have a general obligation to actively identify and mitigate the risks associated when dealing with things that can create a risk to the environment, the economy, social amenity and human health.

This Bill recognises biosecurity as a shared responsibility suitable for a modern biosecurity environment.

Government cannot achieve efficient and effective biosecurity outcomes on its own. A proactive biosecurity system where there are shared responsibilities relies on active participation not only from people involved in rural communities and primary production but also from the broader community—particularly people who choose to be, or are inadvertently, part of a biosecurity risk pathway.

These risk pathways are diverse and are identifiable across a broad cross-section of the community, from nurseries and landscapers to nature loving bushwalkers.

The Bill firmly acknowledges the risks and consequences associated with biosecurity related matters and places responsibility for not creating or exacerbating a risk on the risk owner.

Queensland is part of a national biosecurity system and the Bill will enable the government to enter into biosecurity related partnerships.

This can include the Commonwealth, other states and territories, individual or multiple local governments, industry bodies or organisations representing particular interests such as primary production.

Mr Speaker, this Bill provides a legislative basis for the continuation of the key role played by local government in Queensland's biosecurity.

Councils will continue to manage invasive plants and animals in their area. The local government pest management planning process will continue with requirements for each local government to lead the development of a biosecurity plan for their local area in consultation with stakeholders and local community groups.

In response to requests from local government, the Bill includes provisions for joint local government planning and implementation of biosecurity programs to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of those programs.

The Bill will allow each local government to be more responsive to their own particular invasive plant or animal priorities as well as responding to state wide priorities.

It also makes provision for the appointment of local government compliance officers with the power to issue a biosecurity order to direct a person to take specific action in relation to a particular threat.

A feature of the Bill is its flexibility in authorising action according to risk.

The Bill will allow Government to determine the extent of the response based on the potential threat or risk and ensure that regulation does not place undue burden on the community, business or Government.

It also provides options to safeguard a person's rights and liberties according to the nature and seriousness of the risk that is actually presented.

The Bill allows Government to recognise good practice as a way to mitigate risk. This approach is designed to maximise acceptance and adherence by users.

The Bill provides the flexibility for a decision to be made by an industry sector or geographic area to help improve the co-ordination of effort across government and non-government stakeholders to achieve good Biosecurity outcomes.

This Bill continues to support national undertakings for stock identification and relevant registration. It continues to support animal identification systems, of which registration is a component.

Mr Speaker, this Bill provides significant powers and options that may be employed to deal with emergency situations. Improvements have been made to the ways in which a biosecurity emergency is declared and communicated to relevant stakeholders.

The old and more cumbersome approach will be replaced and it will be possible to use modern technology to alert people who may be affected quickly.

The Bill also includes improved procedures for the appointment of Queensland Police and officers appointed under the Transport and Road Management Act to assist in the event of a biosecurity emergency.

Mr Speaker, if somebody causes or is likely to cause significant damage to the health and safety of people, the economy or environment it will be known as an aggravated offence. Under the new Bill an aggravated offence will incur a higher penalty.

Having a single Biosecurity Act will reduce regulatory red tape. The administration of one Act as opposed to seven pieces of legislation will benefit Government, stakeholders, businesses, landholders and the broader community.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the various agricultural and production industry peak bodies, natural resource management groups, local governments, and other government agencies for their support for the development of a new approach to biosecurity legislation in Queensland.


In particular I thank the members of the Biosecurity Queensland Ministerial Advisory Committee and the Biosecurity Reference Group for their commitment to this task since 2009.

Mr Speaker, despite the fact we have developed a coordinated, flexible legislative tool that is the envy of every other State in Australia, we cannot afford to be complacent.

This Bill provides the required framework to improve our responses to known biosecurity risks as well as the flexibility and adaptability to meet future threats head on.

I commend the Bill to the House.

First Reading

 **Hon. TS MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies) (8.11 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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


Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Environment, Agriculture, Resources and Energy Committee.

STRATEGIC CROPPING LAND BILL

Message from Governor

 **Hon. RG NOLAN** (Ipswich—ALP) (Minister for Finance, Natural Resources and the Arts) (8.12 pm): I present a message from Her Excellency the Governor.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Ms Farmer) read the following message—

MESSAGE

STRATEGIC CROPPING LAND BILL 2011

Constitution of Queensland 2001, section 68

I, PENELOPE ANNE WENSLEY, Governor, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a Bill intituled—

A Bill for an Act about land that is highly suitable for cropping, and to amend the Environmental Protection Act 1994 and the Sustainable Planning Regulation 2009 for particular purposes


GOVERNOR

(sgd)

Date: 25 OCT 2011

Tabled paper: Message, dated 25 October 2011, from Her Excellency the Governor recommending the Strategic Cropping Land Bill 2011 [\[5707\]](#).

Introduction and Referral to the Environment, Agriculture, Resources and Energy Committee

 **Hon. RG NOLAN** (Ipswich—ALP) (Minister for Finance, Natural Resources and the Arts) (8.13 pm): I present a bill for an act about land that is highly suitable for cropping, and to amend the Environmental Protection Act 1994 and the Sustainable Planning Regulation 2009 for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Environment, Agriculture, Resources and Energy Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Strategic Cropping Land Bill 2011 [\[5708\]](#).

Tabled paper: Strategic Cropping Land Bill 2011, explanatory notes [\[5709\]](#).

Queensland is a vast state with precious little high-quality agricultural soil. In recent times, as the economics of mining have changed, the best quality cropping lands have begun to experience significant pressure from mining development. The bill that I introduce today shows that this government is acting. We believe that Queensland's best farmland is a precious resource that must be protected for future generations. That is why we are the first government in the country to protect farmland by law. I seek leave to have the remainder of this speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Mr Seeney: That's because you don't understand it. You can't even say the words.

Ms NOLAN: Madam Deputy Speaker, I withdraw that request.

Like all great environmental reforms, science is at the heart of the Strategic Cropping Land Bill. Government has developed a rigorous soil science test to determine where the state's strategic cropping land is. The test has been subject to an independent scientific review and its rollout will be overseen by the Science and Technical Implementation Committee—a group made up entirely of professional soil scientists to ensure technical rigour is maintained and a group which I initiated.

The test establishes eight criteria that in combination provide a rigorous and accurate assessment of the state's strategic cropping land. The eight criteria include assessment of the soil's depth, its drainage, slope, rockiness, gilgai microrelief and pH, as well as salinity and water storage capacity. Around four per cent of Queensland's land area is mapped as potential strategic cropping land, which is around 7.5 million hectares of the state. It is an area that extends from Mossman, north of Cairns, all the way south to the New South Wales border—an area that extends from the coast 500 kilometres inland to cover Clermont, Emerald, Roma and St George.

The legislation splits this area into two categories. It creates protection areas around the Darling Downs, the Lockyer Valley and the golden triangle, as well as a management area that includes much of Queensland's coastal farmlands. In protection areas, future open-cut mines or other developments which permanently alienate the land will effectively be banned. In management areas, mining can still go ahead but only if the proponent can prove that they have avoided, minimised and mitigated their impact of farming land.

Whilst avoiding and minimising impact are clear in the bill's intent, it also establishes a mitigation framework whereby local communities, should their strategic cropping land be permanently impacted by a development, will have the productive capacity of that agricultural land reinstated in their local area. Project proponents will be required to enter into a formal arrangement with government on how their mitigation obligations will be met. This arrangement will ensure that local communities do not see a net loss of agricultural productive value in the long term.

Importantly, the new law is not just about preventing permanent loss of strategic cropping land due to mining; it is about conditioning a range of significant development types which would impact on strategic cropping land. Urban encroachment is also a real threat to the state's best quality cropping lands, so the legislation will provide for new state planning policy for best quality farmland protection.

Development that is made assessable by local councils for material change of use or reconfiguring a lot will also now be assessable by the Department of Environment and Resource Management if the development will lead to a prescribed and significant size impact on strategic cropping land. Under the provisions of this bill, a change of use for urban or industrial development in rural areas, already assessable by councils under their planning schemes, that has a footprint larger than 750 square metres, or just under a quarter acre for those who still speak in the old money, will be referred by councils to the Department of Environment and Resource Management for assessment of its impact on strategic cropping land.

The Strategic Cropping Land Bill is a significant policy shift. Before this government took this nation-leading step, mining had a pre-eminent right to almost all land except urban areas and national parks. That is the very significant—indeed groundbreaking—change that this Labor government is making with this legislation.


Consistent with a policy of this magnitude and breadth, substantial policy work has been undertaken to smooth the transition for both the agricultural sector and the urban development and resource sectors. In brief, these initiatives are: transitional arrangements for resource projects which were well advanced, having had the terms of reference for the EIS approved when government announced the legislative framework on 31 May this year; and transitional arrangements for the Bandanna Energy project at Springsure Creek, which met the test above, and for established mines looking to expand. Together, these arrangements manage sovereign risk.

The bill also ensures that costs associated with applications for development, including having strategic cropping land confirmed by government, are to be borne by the development proponent, not the party seeking to protect their land. There has been creation of an exceptional circumstances test to be applied in protection areas, which will ensure that the new laws will not prevent a project which cannot be accommodated on any alternative site and which presents an overwhelming public benefit.

Finally, the bill provides that a comprehensive review of the legislation be undertaken two years after its commencement. Queensland is a growth state, the economic engine room of the nation. Our economy right now is in a period of transition, not just to a mining boom but to a period of sustained growth as we become, for the first time, a major energy exporter. The government supports resource developments as a harbinger of economic and social opportunities for people. We recognise that a strong resources sector creates an opportunity for the proceeds to be funnelled into the education and skilling of the people of Queensland but we do not, and have never, supported resource development at any cost. The challenge for Queensland is to ensure economy-wide growth and development, and this includes ensuring that agriculture maintains its most precious and scarce resource—its strategic cropping land.

This bill is about supporting agriculture. It is a key plank of our policy to treble the value of Queensland's agricultural production by 2020. Our commitment is to a sustainable mix of economic growth and development. This bill is the result of extensive consultation involving organisations like the Queensland Resources Council, the Queensland Farmers Federation, Future Food Queensland, AgForce, the Local Government Association of Queensland, the Planning Institute of Australia and the Urban Development Institute of Australia. I thank these Queenslanders and the officers from my department who have worked diligently together on this policy, in spite of their sometimes divergent interests. This bill represents a very significant public policy shift initiated and led at every step of the way by this groundbreaking Labor government. It is a significant public policy shift towards sustainability. I believe it gets the balance right. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

 **Hon. RG NOLAN** (Ipswich—ALP) (Minister for Finance, Natural Resources and the Arts) (8.23 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.


Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Environment, Agriculture Resources and Energy Committee.

DISASTER READINESS AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 3353, on motion of Ms Bligh—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr RICKUSS** (Lockyer—LNP) (8.23 pm): I rise to say a few words about the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill 2011. Like a lot of members who have spoken before me, I would also like to congratulate the SES, the rural fires, the council workers and the state government workers who put in a major effort during the floods this year. They worked extremely hard then and they have continued to work hard trying to rehabilitate some of the areas in my electorate. The Army was also put to great use in my area. It was great to see the Army come in. It gave everyone a great sense of relief to see the Army turn up. I think they turned up on the Thursday morning after the flood disaster happened on the Monday and there was continual rain on the Tuesday and the Wednesday. It was great to see the pure manpower that the Army can bring to a place plus their machinery. That sort of thing makes a substantial difference after a disaster has occurred. As the member for Hinchinbrook has previously mentioned, maybe they should also be included in the local government and district disaster groups when they are actually in place in affected areas. It is not a bad policy.

The volunteers did a great job in the Lockyer Valley. The conditions were very trying. I highlighted in my submission to the flood inquiry that improvements need to be made to the Disaster Management Act, and this bill goes some way to improving that piece of legislation. I do feel that a lot more needs to be done to improve what is already a comprehensive act. For the information of the House, I table my submission to the flood inquiry simply because it highlights the full range of issues that I identified with the Disaster Management Act. I have sent it in to the flood commission, but I have not tabled it in parliament before.

Tabled paper: Submission to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry by Mr Ian Rickuss MP, member for Lockyer [\[5710\]](#).

The local communities are starting to get back on their feet. Grantham is starting to go ahead. Areas like Forest Hill and Laidley are starting to get back to normal. There was quite a lot of flooding in Forest Hill and Laidley. There was a lot of stress on people. Hopefully this Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill will start to take away some of that stress. My electorate contains areas such as

Murphys Creek, Postmans Ridge, Helidon, Grantham, Ma Ma Creek, Mount Sylvia, Junction View, Ropeley, Forest Hill, Laidley, Lockyer Waters, Glenore Grove, Brightview, Lake Clarendon and Gatton itself. They were all affected by the disaster that occurred at the start of the year. This is why we have to have this appropriate level of readiness in place.

The bill amends the Water Act and the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) Act 2007 to provide a regulatory framework that enables the minister to effect temporary alteration to the full supply of the dam levels. This was highlighted to me by a number of mid-Brisbane River irrigators who are actually in the electorate of the member for Ipswich West. They have a fairly good understanding of how the Brisbane River flows and what needs to be done. It was highlighted to them that, if it had been managed a bit more appropriately, not so much devastation would have occurred in the Fernvale and lower Brisbane reaches of the river.

Mr Wendt: That is their view.

Mr RICKUSS: I take that interjection from the member for Ipswich West that that was their view. I must admit that I do accept that the knowledge base of those who have lived on the river for generations is fairly substantial, so we should not brush their views aside.


There is an amendment to the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 in relation to dam safety. We need to start looking at dam safety. The member for Ipswich West mentioned the cracks in the wall of the Somerset and the Wivenhoe which, fortunately, were urban myths. I had truck drivers telling me that they were not allowed to drive trucks over the dam because it was unsafe and all that sort of thing. We can put some of those myths to bed.

The bill amends the Disaster Management Act to strengthen and streamline disaster management planning and preparation. As I said, I tabled a 14-page document which does go into the Disaster Management Act. Some work does need to be done on that act. A review of the disaster management legislation and policy was conducted in 2009 by Jim O'Sullivan OC. He was also on the flood commission. I do not think that some of those recommendations have been implemented to the fullest extent. More needs to be implemented and that is highlighted in my submission to the flood commission.

With modernisation and change the Disaster Management Act needs to be reviewed and updated regularly. The local and district disaster management groups need to ensure that quality assurance processes are in place so that what is in the act is what is actually done. After reading the 2003 act, I can see that there are a lot of holes in what had actually been put in place in some of the plans and subplans. The districts I mentioned before probably need a subplan. In the Lockyer Valley we live on flood plains. The whole area is myriad flood plains. Forest Hill is cut off from Laidley, which is cut off from Gatton, which is cut off from Helidon, which is cut off from Grantham. Nearly every one of those villages needs a subplan. We not only need the Lockyer District Management Plan; we need subplans for the villages. Unfortunately, one of the evacuation centres was in Gatton but no-one could get to it. That causes problems. The residents of Murphys Creek did a good job of looking after themselves.

This bill amends the Transport Infrastructure Act and the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act. During the floods I drove past some 'flooded' signs, too. Some of them were up there for quite a long time. I see that the Minister for Transport is here. I wonder if we could have a standard red sign and a standard orange sign. The orange sign is an advisory sign and any sign that is red and white is a stop sign. It is as simple as that. If it is a red and white sign saying 'road flooded' you stop. If it is an orange and black sign saying 'road needs repair' you can still drive on it. So that there is no confusion, it does not matter what the sign says: if it is red you stop. If it is yellow and black it is an advisory sign. The red signs would have to be collected fairly quickly after a flood event whereas the yellow and black signs could be left out after it is dry. What happens in a flood event is that people put out the signs, the flood recedes and they do not come and get them immediately, so people start driving through. If you had a red sign it would make it clearer for the public. If it is a red and white sign the same as a red and white stop sign, you stop. I think that is pretty simplistic.

In relation to the amendments to the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 and repairs to community infrastructure, I think that is a bit of common sense. I think that has to be done. This act needs to be continually revisited. I again stress to the Premier that the Disaster Management Act needs to be followed through to ensure that there is a tick-off process in relation to quality assurance issues. If reports are supposed to be done and committees are supposed to be set up, they actually need to be set up. Some of the smaller councils did not quite meet the mark when it came to the Disaster Management Act. Their lack of resources did not help. I highlight that as an issue that needs to be looked into.


 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Multicultural Affairs) (8.33 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill 2011. I do not need to remind honourable members about the suffering that many Queensland families endured earlier this year. Many tragedies and near misses occurred. Sadly, some of those were the result of drivers entering floodwaters. Tragically, nine people died in Queensland during the last floods when their vehicles were caught in floodwaters.

One of the aims of this bill is to reduce the incidence of drivers attempting to cross floodwaters when it is unsafe to do so. The danger is not just to drivers and passengers; the government also wants to eliminate the risk to potential rescuers as well. Rescuers, as we know, may risk their own lives attempting to save those who drive through dangerous floodwaters and then happen to get into trouble. During emergency situations such as Queensland experienced earlier this year, police resources were stretched to the limit. They have to attend many incidents and their efforts are first class. Due to the extreme wet weather conditions earlier this year, the police requested the assistance of transport inspectors. The inspectors responded to that request and were able to provide very valuable assistance. In parts of southern and south-eastern Queensland transport inspectors monitored road closures for up to 24 hours a day. The road closures were clearly signed. The closures were to protect the safety of road users and also to protect the road infrastructure.

The amendments contained in this bill ensure that transport inspectors will have clear powers to enforce such road closures. By doing this the amendments will help to release police to continue their vital emergency responses in other important areas. These amendments make sense. Transport inspectors are trained to be experts in road safety. They perform a first-rate job in keeping our roads safe. Their roles are many and varied. They are often performing numerous behind-the-scenes roles, particularly regarding heavy vehicles. During the extreme wet weather conditions earlier this year they also performed many on-road emergency management activities. They educated drivers about the dangers of floodwaters, they advised the public of temporary road closures and provided frequent updates for the 139040 hotline and website. These services provided up-to-the-minute traffic information for all motorists. Once the floodwaters receded, inspectors worked around the state to open roads as quickly as possible. Thanks to the hard work of local inspectors and others, the Bruce Highway around Gympie reopened to the south and through the heart of town just six days after floodwaters closed the National Highway link in January this year.

Transport inspectors also performed a valuable role working cooperatively with other agencies. They worked closely with disaster management groups, local government and the heavy vehicle industry. Wherever possible they found alternative routes for heavy vehicles when roads were cut. This in turn enabled heavy vehicles to continue to provide much needed supplies to Queensland communities. Transport inspectors are highly experienced and well trained. They are clearly recognisable by their uniforms and identification. Over the last two months they have been gearing up in readiness for the next wet season. They have been attending pre wet season training and information sessions and bedding down protocols to respond to emergency situations.

The amendments in this bill relate to just one small aspect of the work undertaken by our transport inspectors, but it is a very important aspect. The amendments will enhance the inspectors' ability to protect our valuable road assets but also, more importantly, to protect the safety of our fellow Queenslanders. Giving transport inspectors clear powers to enforce road closures will also allow police to concentrate their emergency response efforts on other important areas. It will ensure that in times of disaster all government departments are working together for the good of Queensland. This bill puts the safety of Queenslanders at the forefront of disaster management and I therefore have no hesitation in commending this bill to the House.

 **Hon. NS ROBERTS** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (8.37 pm): I rise to make a few brief comments in support of the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill. As members have outlined, Queenslanders are well versed in preparing for and responding to disasters. Again, I want to place on the record my sincere appreciation, and those of the community, for the great work that has been undertaken by Emergency Management Queensland, our Police Service, our volunteers in the SES, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and, indeed, the local and district disaster management groups across the state, particularly the work that they are doing in preparation for this year's flood and cyclone season which, as we have seen with recent events, is indeed upon us at the moment.

The commission of inquiry found, importantly, that the fundamental structure of our disaster management system was sound. However, there are a number of issues which it did recommend to strengthen and improve that system and this bill goes a long way towards doing that. I wanted to outline for the House some of the initiatives that are currently underway in terms of preparation because they are important in terms of public confidence in our police and emergency services agencies. As with every season, emergency services are hoping for the best but preparing for the worst. So far this year 11 workshops have been held across the state to inform local communities, and particularly those directly involved in disaster management, about not only the weather forecast but also the way in which those communities can better prepare for disaster management. The last three, two in Cairns and one in Hervey Bay, are being held this week.

In addition to that, on 30 November in the Brisbane region a major regional training exercise will commence to test disaster response capabilities. In August an exercise was undertaken to fully load test the State Disaster Coordination Centre, which was opened by the Premier earlier this year, to make sure that it is fully prepared for the season. Emergency Management Queensland has been working hard

with local government and other agencies to produce and distribute a district review and assessment workbook for local disaster management plans, which will be an important tool in assisting local governments when reviewing their plans.

The SES recruitment campaign is well underway and getting significant results. Currently there are around 7,200 active volunteers in the SES, which is up from around 6,800 at the beginning of the year, and a further 200 or more volunteers are expected to complete training in the near future and become available for activation in the coming weeks. By the end of 2011, 19 new flood boats will be delivered to SES groups across the state, by February a further two will be delivered and in 2012-13 an additional 32 boats will be delivered.


The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service is working to increase to 253 the number of trained swift-water rescue technicians before the end of November. Since July two additional training courses and six refresher courses have been undertaken. An additional three courses are scheduled to take place in November on the Tully River. Additionally, 2,000 swift-water rescue awareness training DVDs are being distributed to rural firefighters across the state. What I am outlining is that there has been and will continue to be significant preparation from both state government agencies and local and district disaster groups.

The bill implements a number of significant amendments to the Disaster Management Act and builds upon the significant amendments that came from the review that occurred in 2010. In particular, the commission of inquiry recommended that both the Australian Defence Force and the Australian Red Cross, which are both significant partners in response and recovery arrangements, be included in the membership of the state disaster management groups. The government has determined that, in addition, the Bureau of Metrology and Surf Life Saving Queensland, which play a significant and critical role in many communities—

Mr Rickuss: You definitely need the met bureau involved. It is important.

Mr ROBERTS: Absolutely. The Bureau of Metrology plays a very significant role. The review of local disaster management plans is an important responsibility of local governments and the act will be amended to ensure that local disaster management plans are regularly reviewed by the district groups. The publication of those plans on websites is already done by many councils. In recent times I have noticed a lot of very proactive work by councils to ensure that their communities are fully informed about their disaster management plans and also about other areas where information can be acquired to help them prepare for disaster situations.

One of the issues identified during the December/January floods was that the process to extend a disaster situation once it had been declared was somewhat cumbersome. The bill provides a more streamlined process to ensure that both the Premier and myself can extend a disaster situation in certain circumstances to ensure that the appropriate powers and protections are provided to emergency service agencies. With those few words, I commend the bill to the House.

 **Hon. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Reconstruction) (8.43 pm), in reply: At the outset I thank all members for their contributions to this debate on what I believe is a very important bill. The bill reflects the government's considerable efforts in ensuring that the recommendations of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry interim report be fully implemented. The bill takes us one step closer to ensuring that, as a government and as a community, we are ready to respond to whatever the coming wet season or, indeed, any future disaster brings to Queensland. We have all learned some very valuable lessons from last season's summer of sorrow and we have made significant progress with rebuilding our state. We are continuing our very strong focus on the reconstruction and recovery effort. This bill is yet another building block in that project.

As honourable members are aware, the bill was prepared to implement our legislative response to the Floods Commission of Inquiry interim report and it puts in place other improvements to the disaster management framework prior to this year's wet season. Queensland's disaster management framework is the foundation upon which we prepare, we plan and we implement our disaster response. While the commission found that this foundation was fundamentally sound in Queensland, through its interim report it has given us much to consider by way of improvement. The Queensland government is fully committed to implementing the blueprint that has been laid out and that is what this bill does.

I thank the opposition and the Independents for their support of the bill. I believe it is essential that we act together and in a bipartisan way when it comes to disaster preparedness and implementing recommendations of the Floods Commission of Inquiry. I thank the Finance and Administration Committee for undertaking a very comprehensive inquiry into the bill within a very short time frame. I thank the chair for his diligence in this regard. I note that the committee conducted a public hearing on the bill and consulted with relevant stakeholders, including the Queensland Farmers Federation, the Local Government Association of Queensland, the RACQ, Seqwater and SunWater.

I reiterate to the House the advice provided to the committee about the implementation of those parts of the bill that apply to referable dam owners and their obligation to notify their local communities about outflows from their dams. In this respect, I note the comments from the Leader of the Opposition,

who also noted the specific concerns raised by the Queensland Farmers Federation. Of course we share the concerns about the importance of getting the balance right between community safety and the circumstances of individual dam owners. The committee received detailed information from the Department of Environment and Resource Management about how the new requirements will achieve that balance.

I now turn to some of the specific issues raised by honourable members on both sides of the chamber during today's debate. The Leader of the Opposition dwelt at some length on the events of last summer and the opposition's view that Queensland was not prepared for the disaster season. While I welcome the support of the opposition for this bill, I think the comments of the member for Callide were a great injustice and did a great disservice to all of those men and women on the front line of disaster preparedness in Queensland. What I saw, what I think Queenslanders saw and, indeed, what I think the world saw was a state that was very ready. After the very concerning forecasts by the Bureau of Metrology last year, every government agency with any responsibility in disaster preparedness, planning or response took all of the appropriate action to ensure that last summer, in fact, they were more ready for a disaster than they have been for any summer and any disaster in the past. Therefore, I think it was a very great shame that this debate was marred a little by members on the other side seeking to make political points and, in doing so, in my view, insulting those people who staff the front line in very difficult circumstances. However, that does not mean to say that, as a government and as a community, we are not able to learn each and every time we experience something terrible. That is what we have done here, it is why we have acted so quickly to establish the commission of inquiry and it is why we are acting so quickly to put in place its recommendations.

One of the specific issues raised by the Leader of the Opposition was the need for the government to act responsibly in managing our large dams and taking appropriate action based on scientific information, including the seasonal outlook provided by the Bureau of Metrology. I am very pleased to advise the House that that is exactly what the government is doing. In fact, this bill entrenches a legislative process that requires any government of the day, in any future circumstance, to put in place a process that will see that decision made rigorously on the basis of advice from those people with the technical expertise to give it. It is not without some irony that I note the Leader of the Opposition's concern to make sure that those decisions are made on advice based on scientific information, because on tonight's news his leader from outside the parliament, Campbell Newman, said that the LNP will decide what to do with the dams on Thursday. They would bypass all of the scientific and technical advice, and we would have politicians deciding what to do with the dams. That will not be the case here, as I have said publicly today and I am happy to reiterate in this debate. If we receive the advice that the dam levels should be lowered, the government will not hesitate to act, but the government will not be acting capriciously, we will not be acting without advice, and nor do we need to do so.

As members would be aware, cabinet has received regular briefings from the bureau and the bureau has been making very strong public statements to the effect that we can expect to see quite a significant wet season this year. That may be a wet season that delivers some very, very high levels of rainfall in parts of our state. I make the point that if that rainfall falls in the south-east we will be acting on the advice of our best technicians.

I think it is important to remember that references to the full-supply level of Wivenhoe Dam do not mean that the dam is completely full. At 100 per cent full-supply level the dam would actually be at approximately 45 per cent of its total storage capacity. The Bureau of Meteorology forecast that was finalised and published this week has indicated a potentially higher risk than its previous forecast. As a result, the Minister for Natural Resources has acted immediately to formally seek the advice, as required now under the provisions of this legislation, of the Queensland Water Commission, Seqwater, the South East Queensland Water Grid Manager and the Department of Environment and Resource Management on whether the full-supply levels of the dams should be temporarily reduced.

The Leader of the Opposition and other members also emphasised the importance of using local expertise and local knowledge in disaster planning. I am pleased to advise those opposite as well as other members of the House that it is that local knowledge that informs our entire disaster preparedness, planning and management and response framework. In Queensland I think it is the only way to manage in such a big state. Making sure that local government, along with representatives at a local level of all of the relevant agencies, bring in the local knowledge that they have could work in making this an effective planning and response tool.

The member for Mermaid Beach specifically asked that I advise the House about additional funding provided to the Department of Environment and Resource Management. I am pleased to advise the member that the funding will be provided from consolidated revenue and will be used over the next five years for work associated with reviewing and approving dam operational manuals, assessments related to temporary alteration of full-supply levels, the department's expanded role in regulating referable dam operators and other recommendations of the report.

I thank the member for Gladstone for her contribution to the debate. I note her concerns about the amount of the penalty in the transport act amendments dealing with restricted road use notices. I think it is important that I clarify for the member that this penalty is an existing penalty and not a new penalty. It is also important to understand that a transport inspector can only impose a fine of \$600 for contravention of a restricted road use notice. The penalty of up to \$20,000 is a maximum penalty that can only be imposed by the courts and reflects the potential severity of these types of offences, noting the very significant public safety issues involved. So those very high levels of fines cannot be imposed by transport safety inspectors or, indeed, by the police. They have to be matters that are taken before a court. The party who is at risk of paying the penalty will have the opportunity to defend themselves in those circumstances.

I also note that the new exemption process provided in these amendments will avoid some of the situations that the member is concerned about by providing a legitimate means by which a person can travel past a road restriction notice where they have a compelling reason and there is no unacceptable risk to safety. I hope that those comments have allayed the legitimate concerns raised by the member for Gladstone.

I think it is important that we recognise as a parliament that it is inevitable that Queensland, as a tropical state, will face extreme natural disasters again sometime in our future. While I think we all share the hope that that will be a very long time in the future, we need to be prepared for the possibility that it could be as early as this season. That means that while we are hoping for the best we are nevertheless obliged to prepare for the worst. That is a responsibility that my government takes very seriously and a responsibility that the legislation before the parliament will assist in delivering.

I would like to take this chance to acknowledge the officers of all of the departments who contributed to this bill. This bill is effectively an omnibus bill. It was not easy to pull it together across a number of government departments. It did require considerable work to be completed in a very short time frame between the interim report of the commission and bringing it into this parliament. Not only did this involve preparing this bill but implementing all the other recommendations of the report. So I thank the officers of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet who are overseeing this process and those in other agencies.

I also take the opportunity to thank the commission of inquiry for the diligent way in which it has approached its work. I thank it for meeting the very tight time frames that the government set it in relation to its interim report, because it has meant that we are in a position to implement its findings and make sure that we are all more prepared—as a government and as a community—for whatever Mother Nature might throw at us in this summer season.

In conclusion, my government remains ever vigilant and ever committed to the best possible position to respond to any disasters that might befall our great state.

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


Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 35, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

 **Hon. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Reconstruction) (8.56 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. AM BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Reconstruction) (8.56 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.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES COMMISSION AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 23 August (see p. 2575)

Second Reading

 **Dr FLEGG** (Moggill—LNP) (8.56 pm): The Family Responsibilities Commission and Other Acts Amendment Bill has a number of parts. I will address my remarks essentially to the issues that relate to the Family Responsibilities Commission. There are provisions in the bill in relation to the adoption of children which my colleague the member for Aspley will address on behalf of the LNP.

As members would be aware, the Family Responsibilities Commission was set up under the Cape York welfare reforms. It involves a three-year trial which is due to expire on 1 January 2012. It provides for four Cape York trial communities—Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge—where four categories of notifications are required. They are notifications to the commission in relation to crime and public disorder acts—essentially Magistrates Court notifications; child safety notifications; tenancy breaches; and, what tends to be the largest group, school attendance issues.

If we look at the last annual report for the Family Responsibilities Commission, it does give some insight into the challenges the commission faces. I have met Commissioner Glasgow and I find him to be very impressive and very well informed and someone with a genuine care for the people he has responsibility for in this position.

If we look at the ongoing quarterly reports and the annual report—and I know the minister would probably be in agreement with me—we are under no illusion about the size of the challenge in some of these isolated Indigenous communities. In fact, if we look at the most recent report, which is 2010, we can see that, for the roughly 2,200 people who are resident in the four communities, there were 4,364 agency notifications, which is pretty close to two notifications for each resident. However, of those, around 3,000 were in jurisdiction. So they were residents of those communities and the problems that were notified occurred in relation to those communities.

For anyone who is interested, I think that the reports are a very honest attempt to describe the challenges of dealing in these remote communities. The commission, to my mind—and perhaps to the minister's frustration at times—gives a pretty accurate account. It does not pull any punches about the difficulty of maintaining staff, of providing services and the like in very, very difficult areas. The commission has been a reasonably expensive trial—around \$16 million, I think, over the two years. There is a breakdown in the annual report on page 39 in relation to that expenditure.

At the end of the day, residents who are counselled in relation to their notification—that is, their children do not attend school; they are caught for public disorder, domestic violence or other Magistrates Court type offences; they have tenancy breaches in their social housing; or, concerningly, they have child safety related issues—receive a counselling session with local commissioners. If the commission finds it necessary, the income—so far as that income is derived from social security payments and the like is concerned—can be managed on behalf of those residents.

I think the whole issue around FRC raises very challenging issues for us. I think that people should be aware that this program applies only in four communities. I think that people sometimes get the idea falsely that this is a more extensive program than it actually is. I think it is a very valid function of the opposition to question both value for money and the effectiveness of actually making the lives of people in the subject communities better. That is our role. I will never resile from that. I think it is right and proper for us to ask questions. I am sure that the minister would not expect anything different from the opposition. In fact, if he were in opposition nor would we expect anything different from him.

The LNP supported the introduction of the Family Responsibilities Commission. I think three years was always a very optimistically short time frame to decide whether we are able to make a judgement about how effective and how long term the results of approaching these sorts of social problems in this manner will be. The LNP—and I am sure the minister will be pleased—will be supporting today's bill. I think that the welfare of Indigenous Queenslanders is a very important issue. It is something that as shadow minister I take very much to heart. I have had the opportunity to work and visit Indigenous communities. I am under no illusions about how critically difficult some of these issues are to deal with. If we have a solution to ensuring that kids go to school, that streets in communities are safe, that child protection is rigidly enforced and that social housing rules are abided by, then I think it is a very important function for us to attempt to determine to pursue those areas.

But over time as the results come in—as we see data that measures the social issues that we are trying to improve, particularly school attendance, violence and child protection—we will be very vigorous and thorough in assessing the results of the program to see that it delivers in a long-term fashion for those communities. I do not think to date that there is enough data there to say with absolute confidence that the FRC is delivering lasting benefits. There are certainly achievements, and that is why the LNP is happy to support the one-year extension that the government has given. I think it is very important that


anyone interested in this subject should be aware that this is only a one-year extension. At the end of that one year, whoever is in government—because there will be an election in this state within the next year—whether it is the present government or the LNP, will need to make some decisions in relation to this program and the results it is achieving, whether it is to be extended to additional communities, whether it is to have a further extension beyond the one we are considering here tonight. I have no doubt that, for whoever is sitting in the minister's seat in 12 months time when we review this, this will in fact be quite a challenging decision.

I also note—and I am sure that members are aware—that there are a whole plethora of initiatives in relation to various Indigenous issues. I did have the opportunity just in the last week or so to visit North Queensland to have a look at one of the Closing the Gap mentoring programs in the schools—the mentoring of school principals to help them deal with Indigenous students on matters like attendance. I also got to meet officers who were involved in attendance programs for Indigenous students. I think the program was basically centred around firstly early notification. If a child was absent on a particular morning, that child's family received a phone call very promptly. If the response to that was not satisfactory, a letter was generated. Then an Indigenous teacher aide or case worker would attend the family. That is another approach that is quite separate to the FRC approach to school attendance. So I think it is important to note that there are a lot of programs that have been put in place.

I understand the federal government has something like 53 Indigenous specific programs that are separate to programs that apply to the broader community. So it is a complex world out there in Indigenous policy. I think all of us want to see Indigenous Queenslanders have a better life—and a better life is education of your children, the opportunity to have a job, the opportunity to own your own home, the opportunity to live in a community where the streets are safe, where your property is safe, and in particular the very basic human right for children to be able to grow up in a community free from the fear of child abuse—whether that be sexual abuse or child abuse of any type—and to be able to grow up in a community in which they feel safe and of which they are proud. Whilst analysing things very thoroughly and very strongly on behalf of taxpayers, who fund now some billions of dollars in projects for discrete Indigenous communities, I know for a fact that we will not ever lose sight of our compassion and our concern that Indigenous Queenslanders should share the same opportunities that the rest of us take for granted.

There is one thing that I know for sure—that is, at the present time Indigenous Queenslanders do not enjoy the same opportunities as the rest of Queenslanders. They do not share the same life expectancy, they do not get the same educational outcomes. Twenty-five per cent of young Indigenous school leavers in Queensland currently are not either earning or learning; they are not in education or in work. In every measure that you might apply to the welfare of a community—such as health and housing—Indigenous Queenslanders fall short. I think we have a very vigorous responsibility to ensure that we change that. We cannot just throw money at problems without measuring whether or not that is fixing the problem. We need to make the wellbeing of these Queensland residents as our principal and, in fact, our only guiding decision maker. The decision on any of these matters should be made by answering this question: is this delivering results and giving Indigenous Queenslanders the same opportunities in education, employment, housing and health that other Queenslanders take for granted?

We look forward to seeing what the end result will be after a further year of the FRC. The LNP will certainly be giving this initiative, as with the many others in the Indigenous portfolio area, every opportunity. We will be giving it a fair go and we will have a vigorous but very fair assessment of the outcomes of this approach to dealing with these problems. I hope that those opposite on the government benches share my hope that in the near future we see Indigenous opportunities in Queensland and the measures that indicate the social wellbeing of discrete Indigenous communities improve significantly. In my view, nothing really is acceptable short of reaching the same standards of education, health, housing, employment and economic opportunity that every other Queenslanders takes for granted.

 **Ms DAVIS** (Aspley—LNP) (9.12 pm): I rise to speak to the Family Responsibilities Commission and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2011. I will be confining my comments largely to those sections of the bill pertaining to the Child Protection Act 1999 and the Adoption Act 2009. The amendments to the Adoption Act apply to an adoptive parent who has been assessed under the Adoption Act as suitable prior to the adoption—

Mr O'Brien interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Order! The member for Cook will come to order.

Ms DAVIS: As I was saying, the amendments to the Adoption Act apply to an adoptive parent who has been assessed under the Adoption Act as suitable prior to the adoption but who adopts the child from a country other than Australia or New Zealand. The adopted person or a relative may request the adoption be recorded in the adopted children register. This will enable them to obtain a birth certificate from the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

This is overdue reform. I have heard firsthand, both from my constituents and individuals contacting me in my role as shadow minister for child safety, of the difficulties faced by parents who adopt children from overseas. Where adoptive parents lack formal identification documents for their adopted children, a whole host of other difficulties arise. Without this documentation, something as simple as school enrolment can become a complicated, drawn-out and in some instances quite embarrassing process for these families.

Earlier this year, I was contacted by a lady who with her husband adopted a child from the People's Republic of China in 2002. The only documentation in their possession was a bundle of papers that detailed the child's abandonment and stated a believed or estimated date of birth. This presented a number of problems for the family—not least that these papers were irreplaceable. They have had considerable difficulty over the years enrolling their daughter at school and in sporting clubs. They have been discouraged from planning family holidays due to the prospect of applying for a passport with minimal identification documents. At its core, this issue is one of identity. A young girl who has spent almost all of her life growing up in Australia in the care of a loving adoptive family, enjoying the same activities as other children in her local community, surely deserves this simple documentation that would alleviate so much burden for her and her family. One of the letters that the parents sent me captures the family's ongoing difficulties. It states—

It's sign-on day at the local soccer club and you and your daughter head off with your pile of paper to sign her up ... The chap at the table glances through the completed paperwork, looks up and smiles telling you that you've done well and everything looks 'OK' and asks for her birth certificate.

You quietly, as confidentially as you can in a hall full of people, explain that your daughter is adopted from overseas and this is her paperwork, which confirms her identity and date of birth. He looks up startled and begins to leaf through the papers. Then he stands and calls out to the chap in charge, "Hey mate this kid's from China and she doesn't have a real birth certificate because she was abandoned and how can we know if that's her real age?"

...

How do you feel? Do you feel like a good parent? Do you feel that you have protected your child from this awful situation?

This woman has fought for her daughter's right to obtain a Queensland birth certificate for some time, having written to a couple of ministers in the Bligh cabinet and the federal Attorney-General. These overdue amendments to the Adoption Act and the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act allow for notice to be submitted by the chief executive to the registrar in cases of international adoptions for inclusion of this record in the adopted children register. Ultimately, this means that a Queensland birth certificate can be issued.


I understand well that some adoptive parents in Queensland have fought for these simple changes for some time now, and the LNP will not oppose the proposed amendments to the Adoption Act. I would note, however, that these reforms are limited to those adoptions performed under the agreement between international authority and the chief executive. Private arrangements are not accounted for, despite the fact that some of these families have thorough paperwork pertaining to their international adoption process.

I now wish to direct my comments to those sections of the bill pertaining to the Child Protection Act. These are administrative amendments that deal with an aspect of the child safety system seen as completely unsatisfactory by the LNP at the time of its introduction. The LNP opposed the temporary custody orders introduced in the Child Protection and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2010. Our position at that time was that the introduction of a temporary custody order would remove the obligation of the department to notify the parents of the action, which flew in the face of a more family focused approach.

These amendments are technical and enable the legislation to cover temporary protection orders. These custody orders came into effect some weeks ago and are not adequately covered by this legislation. For this reason, we will not be opposing the amendments. A temporary custody order allows for the removal of a child by the department for up to three business days without assessment. This may occur where there is perceived immediate risk, and in such a case the chief executive becomes responsible for the care of that child.

The introduction of these orders typifies the government's bureaucratic attitude towards child safety. Like the current minister who spends his days meekly hiding behind the provisions of the Privacy Act, this has unfortunately become a system preoccupied with process rather than the welfare of the child. The LNP is committed to providing this family focused approach which will be to the advantage of each and every child in the Queensland child safety system. Children require a sense of structure and normality during their formative years, not an alienating and intimidating environment created by layers of red tape and bureaucracy. Sadly, this will be the legacy of the Bligh Labor government when it comes to child safety in this state.


Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Order! Before calling the honourable member for Keppel, we need to go back a step. In our enthusiasm to get on to this particular business, we omitted to move the second reading. I now call the Minister for Disability Services, Mental Health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships.

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services, Mental Health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (9.19 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I note that the Community Affairs Committee completed its report to the parliament on 12 October 2011. Its only recommendation was that the bill be passed without amendment. The government is very pleased to accept the committee's recommendation in this regard.

I take this opportunity to place on record my thanks to the chair, Mr Paul Hoolihan, and the committee for their speedy consideration of and reporting on the bill. The bill is an omnibus bill that includes amendments to adoption, child protection and births, deaths and marriages legislation. As I outlined to the House in my introduction and referral speech, the bill has been prepared to extend the Cape York welfare reform trial and the operation of the Family Responsibilities Commission—the FRC—by 12 months. As the current legislation is due to expire on 1 January 2012 and the FRC is due to cease on 31 December 2011, the bill is being progressed as a matter of urgency to ensure that the amendments contained in the bill are in place to support the continuation of the trial into 2012.

 **Mr HOOLIHAN** (Keppel—ALP) (9.20 pm): In speaking to the Family Responsibilities Commission and Other Acts Amendment Bill, I thank the members of the Community Affairs Committee for their input in relation to the report produced. As we heard from the minister, the bill proposes amendments to the Family Responsibilities Commission Act, the Adoption Act, the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act and the Child Protection Act.

The Adoption Act and the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act amendments go purely and simply to the ability for the registrar of intercountry adoptions to notify the registrar of births, deaths and marriages that an adoption order is finalised from overseas. It will then be possible for a Queensland birth certificate to be issued to those adopted persons. I thank the member of the public who originally raised the issue, because it is something which had not at that time been considered. The amendments to the Child Protection Act are quite minor, technical amendments necessary to fulfil the policy intent of the Child Protection and Other Acts Amendment Act 2010.

The major thrust of the bill is to extend the Cape York welfare reform trial. That reform trial actually operates in only four Cape York communities—Hope Vale, Aurukun, Mossman Gorge and Coen. It is a partnership between the Queensland government, the Australian government and the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership. I thank the commissioner and his staff—particularly his registrar, Tammy Sovenyhazi—for assisting the members of the committee who could travel to Cape York to see the operation of the commission.

The member for Moggill mentioned scrutinising spending. In actual fact, after discussion with and meeting the staff in Cairns and across the cape it is apparent that a lot of the work done by the commission, compared to some Public Service departments, is done on a shoestring. But they do it very well. The commissioner, Mr David Glasgow, is a very caring and committed person. He works very well with the local commissioners, who are in fact members of the individual clans. The five commissioners from Aurukun represent the five clans.


Personally, having regard to the length of time over which there has been a lack of local authority or difficulties with attendance at school, I do not believe that things can be turned around fully in three or four years. Certainly, there has been quite a change, particularly in Aurukun, which has the Aboriginal Australian Academy run by the Cape York institute. They offer direct instruction for children and have had some spectacular results with regard to returning children to school and raising literacy levels. I am not sure of the exact figures from memory, but regular school attendance rates went up from about 37½ per cent to roughly 65 per cent.

There are certainly a lot of matters which impact on children's attendance at school. Some of that comes from the specific requirements of the individual Indigenous group. Incidentally, the local Indigenous commissioners in some instances were really surprising. They are tougher on their own people, in terms of requiring things to be done, than anyone sitting in this House or anyone outside the communities could ever understand. Having talked to the commissioners and to the Aurukun council particularly, I believe that there is support for the continuation of the trial. Support for the trial was not complete in the beginning, but reservations have been addressed and this has resulted in all four communities actually supporting a continuation of the trial.

The Aurukun council is also very supportive of what has been done. The people themselves are a lot more able to care for their own lives and to make decisions. I believe that, ultimately, proper decisions cannot really be made from outside. In terms of decisions about changing welfare dependency and social disadvantage, whilst the general community can give assistance, the final decision has to be within each one of the people who reside in those communities.

The actual effect of the act is to extend the period of operation from 1 January 2012 to 1 January 2013 and also to extend the period of office for the FRC member or board member for the same period of time. There were a couple of matters raised by the Scrutiny of Legislation Secretariat in relation to fundamental legislative principles but, because all of the communities are supportive of the extension and it is for a 12-month period only, I do not believe that they are matters which will impact on specific individuals.

I would like to commend the whole staff of the commission for their work. As I indicated at the start, I would also like to thank the members of my committee, some of whom will also speak in the debate. I believe that this is the best course of action to ensure that any assistance that can be given to those communities is given by the general community. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr O'BRIEN** (Cook—ALP) (9.28 pm): Social change is hard. Even in the most dysfunctional communities, when the need for change is completely apparent to all but those who live inside the community, the resistance by people to social change—to change the way they live and to change the way they behave—is great. We have seen here today how difficult it can be to change regulations and legislation to change communities and change society, even when that society is changing all around us.

This bill before the House is what I call a 'Cook' bill. They come up every two or three months. They are bills that pertain particularly to my electorate. The four communities that this bill pertains to are all in my electorate and they are communities that I know and love well. Four or five years ago, the need for social change in those communities was completely apparent but the resistance to change was large. There is still some resistance to change in those communities, though it is dissipating rapidly. It is dissipating rapidly because people in those communities are seeing the benefits of change and seeing what can happen when social change occurs. It benefits them as individuals, and the community itself becomes a better place in which to live, to raise children and to prosper.

The catalyst for change is government legislation such as that which we pass here this evening but, more than that, the catalyst for change is leadership—leadership here and leadership in the community. The people in the communities who are showing an abundance of leadership and the people we should be supporting—and this is what we are doing here tonight—are the family commissioners that the bill refers to. I know most of the family commissioners in Hope Vale, Mossman, Coen and Aurukun. I know them all well. They are real leaders who are driving change and driving social improvement in those four communities in my electorate, and it is hard.

They cop the flak. They are the ones who live in the community every day. They are the ones who sit in the rooms with people before them. They are the ones who have to tell the people in no uncertain terms that they need to change. They are the ones who put their family members and their community members on financial management. They are the ones who say to those people, 'You're not going to get your dole. You no longer have control of your social support. That control is being handed over to a card,' which means that they no longer have discretion to spend and they can only spend their money in certain places. They are the ones who make the hard decisions and have to face the music every day. They are real leaders showing real leadership in the toughest of circumstances anywhere in Queensland and anywhere in Australia. I commend them for the job that they do. These commissioners are mostly elders. There are a couple of young people here and there, but they are mostly older people in these communities.

I have sat in on a couple of hearings involving people brought before the commission for whatever reason. There are four triggers for a person to be brought before the commission. I have sat in on some hearings and I can say that they are not for the faint-hearted, that is for sure. The one I sat in on in Aurukun was done in a mixture of Wik-Mungkan and English. When someone is being growled out in Wik-Mungkan you cannot really understand the words, but you can certainly understand the tone. You can see the people who are being growled out drop their head and you can see their displeasure at the circumstances in which they find themselves. The good news is that many of those people are changing their lives.

The problem with the commission is that, because of privacy provisions, it is actually difficult for them to report good news. People who are brought before the commission actually have the benefit, quite rightly, of the Privacy Act. So the commission cannot go out and tell the good-news stories that are happening in communities, which is a shame. There are many good-news stories out there; it is just that it is difficult to get some publicity about those stories simply because of the provisions of the Privacy Act. I know—and the statistics bear witness to the fact—that these communities are changing and they are changing for the better.

I have been visiting the community of Aurukun for over 15 years now. I visited it last week and I can testify that the community has never looked better. Physically, I have never seen more local people engaged in employment. I have never seen more local people engaged in their community, engaged in the political process, engaged in what is going on and wanting to see their community grow and prosper. The reason for that is the reforms that have been brought forward by this government. It started with

alcohol management plans. It has been built on with things like the Family Reform Commission. I am proud to be part of a government that is driving change and standing by these commissioners as they improve these communities. The same applies to Mossman, to Hope Vale and to Coen.

One of the key planks of the Cape York welfare reform trial is the Family Responsibilities Commission, and it is progressing well. A key success factor is the local commissioners, who are assisting to restore Indigenous authority and build stronger and more resilient communities in the four targeted communities. Local commissioners are elders or respected community members who encourage individuals appearing before the commission to take the steps needed to make lasting changes which will benefit their health, wellbeing, home and community life. There are 18 local commissioners, though a few more new ones have just been appointed. I look forward to meeting the new commissioners and working with them as well.

The additional local commissioners were all recommended to the minister by their community's justice groups or relevant community groups and they represent a broad cross-section of the leadership of the communities including the congress members in Hope Vale, respected elders, traditional owners and justice group members. They try to get representation across clans as well so that they are not dealing with direct family members. That can be a problem in some communities some of the time.

I do not believe that the commission would be as successful as it is without local commissioners working under the guidance of Commissioner David Glasgow. David is a particularly impressive man who has taken on that role with great gusto. David's strength is that he empowers his local commissioners to take charge. He is there to support them and give guidance. He takes his role of empowering these local commissioners and empowering the local authority very seriously. I have seen him do that firsthand to make sure that it is not seen as the government that is enforcing these things but as local people taking responsibility for their local community.


These commissioners have continued to lead the commission in educating their people and the general public on welfare reform. Many commissioners fulfil roles outside the commission such as members of the local advisory groups, health action teams, local justice groups, women's and men's groups and other Indigenous organisations as well as their normal employment duties. Local commissioners play a vitally important role in ensuring the activities of the commission are conducted appropriately, for example using the Wik-Mungkan language in Aurukun. The use of local languages ensures that people understand the processes of the commission and feel engaged with the processes of the commission. This is one of the key reasons the commission has had such good success.

Record attendance at conferences, together with a cooperative attitude by most clients, indicates widespread acceptance and recognition of the local commissioners and the conference process. The commission continues to make steady progress in rebuilding stronger and more resilient communities and restoring local Indigenous authority, and local commissioners are a key part of this. Mr Garry Port of Coen is a good friend of mine. He was quoted saying—

... this is the first time I have ever been involved with this type of thing. I have never really had the strength to say to someone 'hey you can change your life' and there are people and services here to help you. I have never in my life made a public speech, the Commission encouraged me to do so and I was part of a School presentation. I am feeling stronger and feel that my words at the conferences may help someone. It is good to see the follow up after someone goes to Court or someone is being a slack parent. This helps people to seek out help they may need. I am enjoying it so far.

This speaks volumes about the role that the commission is playing in people's lives and the work that they are doing to restore the authority of Indigenous people in the trial communities.


As I said, this is a 'Cook' bill. Cape York communities are changing and they are changing for the better. They are changing for the better because this government is investing in infrastructure and services. But, most importantly, it is investing in Indigenous leadership and ensuring that Indigenous people have the power to take control of their own lives. I am proud to be part of a government of reform. I am proud to support the bill currently before the House.

 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (9.39 pm): I rise to speak to the Family Responsibilities Commission and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2011. I acknowledge that the member for Cook is directly involved in these communities. My comments are based more on what I have learnt than what I have been directly involved in. I remember when the commission was established there were concerns—justifiable concerns—about the discriminatory nature of selecting four communities in the state and providing assistance to them. I think it could still be said that it is discriminatory, but it is a positive approach to empower people who live in these communities to be able to help one another. There is a lot of wisdom amongst older people, particularly the elders in Aboriginal communities, who have seen not only the positives in the places that they live and the people that they live with but also the negatives. They have seen destructive behaviours. They have seen learned behaviours that are not conducive to the protection of either their culture or their families and their children.

My understanding of the commission is a very positive one in that the commissioner, David Glasgow, as has already been said, is not only very clear in his intent and in his responsibilities but also very clear in empowering the local commissioners to be able to provide direct involvement and direct

help and support to the community in which they live. That involves at times some risk to those commissioners, because at their heart is the protection of children, the protection of the family and the protection of the community.

There are four major areas where the commission and the commissioners can become involved in the day-to-day living of people in the Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman communities. That is in the areas of child safety, tenancy breaches, school attendance and Magistrate Court matters. Again, it is my understanding that the involvement of the commissioners is not taken lightly. There is a lot of mediation that goes on on a one-to-one basis and within the communities to try to get a solid and sound direction for individuals and for families. I know that the commission has been very well acquainted with the men, women and children in their communities and does its best to get a positive outcome without a lot of authority overlaid. When it is needed it is there. I believe that the extension of 12 months is welcome in the area of the commission. I wish David Glasgow and all of the commissioners the very, very best because I know that their hearts are in the right place and their actions demonstrate that. There may be some in this chamber who do not support wholesomeness in a community. I certainly do and I think the vast bulk of people here do. I commend the commissioner and the local commissioners and wish them well in their endeavours. In relation to the matter of birth certificates, I would just seek a clarification from the minister that it will apply to adoption only. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Hon. D BOYLE** (Cairns—ALP) (9.43 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Family Responsibilities Commission and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2011 before the House—an important bill indeed. It is gratifying that all members of this House will be supporting this bill. That will send a message of confidence to all those in the Cape communities engaged in this important work. I pause for a moment—I do not often in this House, but I certainly do tonight—to recognise the traditional owners of the land on which we are gathered. It is a fine tradition that we increasingly pause to do that on special and formal occasions. It is even more appropriate tonight, because I also have in mind the traditional owners of all of the lands on which this trial of the Family Responsibilities Commission is being carried out.

As the member for Cook has eloquently said to us, it is through them and through many representatives of the traditional owners who have become the commissioners of the Family Responsibilities Commission that we are seeing the greatest and the best results. The facts are that the Family Responsibilities Commission is an expensive trial for the federal government and for the Bligh government, but it is money that is being well spent through Aboriginal leaders in these communities and is already making a real and substantial difference. There has been some mention by numbers of members so far about the importance of giving to the remote Aboriginal communities of Cape York and elsewhere in Queensland some real hope that things will really change, that the despair that they have felt going back decades and decades, the hopelessness that they have felt for themselves and for their children, the difficult—dreadful even—conditions in which they have had to live are at last changing. The Family Responsibilities Commission is a key plank in those changes. It is our responsibility as a government to find better ways to use the tremendous extent of funds and programming available to these communities to improve the lot of everybody's lives in those communities, although most especially the children who grow up in these communities.

I note, however, that the Family Responsibilities Commission is not just handing out to these communities. It is not just about providing services, giving to the communities in ways that obviously government should give; it is more than that. It is also putting on the community, particularly on the adults of the communities, their own responsibilities to participate and to ensure that their children participate as children do all over Queensland and so it is more truly a partnership rather than a service provided by government.

I, too, wish to recognise the tremendous contributions being made by the commissioners—an essential contribution, more than any other element of the Family Responsibilities program. The leadership that they have shown means that they are winning awards. They are being tremendously encouraged by Minister Pitt, their local member, by the member for Cook, Jason O'Brien, and by other leaders in Indigenous circles. At the same time they are forced to put up with the displeasure of those within their own communities who they call very seriously to account.

We have heard a little about the opportunity that there is for the commission in certain circumstances to control income, to take care of and to limit the ways in which the income received from government can be spent by those who are not doing the right thing by their children and families and where there are criminal or violence problems and a failure of children to attend school without proper supervision and support from their parents. One of the matters that I do not think has been mentioned about the Family Responsibilities Commission, and which is another indicator of its success, is that there is now the opportunity for voluntary income management. As the last year has passed we have seen an increasing number of people in these four communities take up that option by knocking on the door of the commission and asking that their money be managed. One very sad story that was told to me when I had the privilege of being minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships was by a young woman in one of these communities who said that voluntary income management had changed her life. She had been a single parent for some time and had been put upon in various ways by males within her family as well as other males in the community when they needed money and


sometimes when they needed that money for grog or for gambling. It was very hard for her as a young woman, and a vulnerable young woman at that with children to care for, to stand up to these males, some of whom were elders in a family network, some others of whom were intimidating, bullying or even threatening.

The young woman said that having her income managed has meant that she does not have the money to give, which has stopped that kind of bullying and strongarming from male members of the community. She said it has meant that, for the first time, each week she knows that she will have enough food in the fridge to feed her children. Those kinds of stories are remarkable to many of us who have grown up in much more privileged circumstances. However, we need to understand that, family by family, child by child, the Family Responsibilities Commission is doing what has not been done before. I am pleased that all members of the House will support it.

I will spend a few moments talking about the other services that are provided, beyond what is done by the commissioners, to support the Family Responsibilities Commission. I note that the Queensland government has committed approximately \$20 million in funds to enhance support services in the four trial communities. Those may be services through the wellbeing centres related to assistance with parenting, family violence, gambling and other social issues; programs such as the student education trusts scheme and the Pride of Place Project; programs such as the Ending Family Violence Program, which has been rolled out through 28 programs in the four communities, resulting in 114 clients successfully graduating from the program. Those are community-wide initiatives. While there are punitive elements, there are tremendously supportive elements. I recognise those and all the staff associated with the commission, as well as other departments that are providing those programs.

The Family Responsibilities Commission would not be so successful if it was the only initiative of the Bligh government. It is being matched by a huge rollout of new housing funded by the federal and the state government, which is equally important. We are spending a lot of time and money on education, employment opportunities and future economic opportunities for those communities, which also are equally as important. Important work is being done through the Department of Local Government and Planning to build capacity for community leadership in all Aboriginal councils and not just those of the four trial communities.

I support what the member for Cook said about Aurukun. I can tell those who have not visited Aurukun recently that it is a completely different town and a very different community to what it was 10 years ago. That is due to all of the initiatives, for which the federal government and the Bligh government can take some credit, but also it is due to increasing leadership from the local government. I recognise Mayor Neville Pootchemunka and the councillors. Although initially they were not all supportive of the Family Responsibilities Commission, they have all taken up the challenge and in many ways are providing a better arrangement for their community. I hope that all members will support the bill before the House.

 **Mrs SCOTT** (Woodridge—ALP) (9.53 pm): It has been over three years since the Family Responsibilities Commission Bill was passed in early 2008, so now it is timely to look at what has been achieved and, most importantly, to seek the views of those affected by the legislation. This is a very different process from the one outlined by the government in 2008 when the Family Responsibilities Commission Bill was passed, which described previous debates about Aboriginal welfare. I understand that an extensive consultation process was undertaken to inform the government's decision to extend the Cape York welfare reform trial. I was pleased to see that the Department of Communities team that undertook the consultation visited each of the trial communities and spoke with a range of stakeholders, including community members and their leadership.

As a member of the Social Development Committee prior to our new committee system, as part of our committee work I was privileged to meet with the commissioner, David Glasgow, on a number of occasions. While there are complex challenges and each of the four communities is different, we heard many positive outcomes. Similarly, community members reported more children going to school, people regularly paying rent and communities that are generally quieter. The feedback from community members shows that the Queensland and Australian governments are making inroads into improving outcomes for those in the trial communities, particularly those most vulnerable in the community, that is, the women and children.

It is reported regularly that the trial has been a key driver of improved school attendance and school readiness in the communities. The focus on school attendance and valuing education is commendable and needs to continue. A number of opportunity products were put in place, including student education trusts, Pride of Place projects and community action funds. The value of the opportunity products aimed at schooling and education, including student education trusts, was widely accepted and supported. The student education trusts scheme is a valuable program that enables families to put money into trust accounts for their children's educational needs. There are a total of 555 of those trust accounts across the four trial communities.

As with any new initiative, it has taken community members time to realise how the Family Responsibilities Commission works. People now understand how it can assist in addressing their problems. People now know where to go for help. The trial has created new places in communities, including the Family Responsibilities Commission, the local program offices and the village opportunity hubs for people to seek assistance.

The expressions of the community members relayed to the consultation team show that we are on the right path and I applaud the courage of the community members in showing their authority and speaking their minds about this matter. Their feedback is grounded and realistically acknowledges that change takes time. As one Aurukun leader said, 'We are on the way, but we are not there yet.' A Hope Vale FRC commissioner said, 'We're not yet at the top of the hill, but we are getting there. We need some more time.' An Aurukun councillor said, 'Communities have been in the process of developing welfare reform and it has taken time to put things together.' A Mossman Gorge community member said that if the trial were to stop 'it would be like the other government services—we just get used to them and then they are taken away.'

I note—and this is what one would expect from a robust consultation process—that some Hope Vale community members were not supportive of the trial continuing. I recall a visit I made to Hope Vale with the member for Cook. I witnessed the close relationship that he has with that community. I also remember how forthright he was in his speech to them. I congratulate the minister in being proactive and meeting with the Hope Vale mayor and the council to gain their agreement to the trial continuing for another year. I agree with the minister that there is always more to be done in relation to communicating with Indigenous communities. It is vitally important when we partner with them to influence change.

Other benefits reported by community members included that the communities are quieter now and there is less partying. In Mossman Gorge, Hope Vale and Coen it was reported that more men are becoming actively involved in supporting their families and children. In Aurukun, Coen and Mossman Gorge it was reported that community members have more confidence in themselves and are making changes. The BasicsCard, the mechanism through which income management is implemented, is ensuring money is available for food for the family. Overwhelmingly, those consulted felt that the trial's journey had not reached a point where the momentum created so far could sustain ongoing positive changes in the communities.


Common comments included that the communities could go backwards or that the community could revert to the old days of drinking and children not attending school or falling asleep at school. The community itself does not want this to occur. Both sides of government need to satisfy themselves that this work needs to continue to improve the lives of the Aboriginal people in these communities. This program has positive, far-reaching consequences and can sustain a generation and beyond into the future.

Education is the key to a bright future for our children, regardless of whether a youngster is in Aurukun, Townsville or Woodridge. We need parents who are engaged and who understand and wish to see improved opportunities for our youngsters. Change may take time, but to see communities and individuals turning their lives and attitudes around is absolutely worthwhile.


I want to thank Minister Pitt for his interest in coming to my community recently and having a meeting with the Logan elders. That was a very worthwhile exercise. I am pleased to support the bill.

Debate, on motion of Mrs Scott, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (10.00 pm): I move—
That the House do now adjourn.

Social Housing

 **Mrs MENKENS** (Burdakin—LNP) (10.01 pm): This morning the member for Hervey Bay asked the Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women why social housing is so badly managed that there are 30,000 people on the waiting list but new units, such as ones completed three months ago in his electorate, are standing empty and unused. During the last sitting of parliament, on 11 October, the member for Nanango asked why new units in Kingaroy did not comply with the state government's own Queensland Development Code, which mandates the installation of water tanks in all new class 1 residences, and therefore had not yet been passed by council.

The honourable Minister Struthers has dodged her way around these questions, preferring instead to talk about the 'more than 4,000 new units of social housing right around the state as part of the massive investment in social housing that this government is responsible for—a \$500 million


Queensland Future Growth Fund that we continue to roll out'. The minister is correct that this government is responsible. Is this government also going to accept responsibility for any rectification works that may be necessary to bring buildings up to the standards expected of private developers? Can she also reveal who exactly is certifying these buildings?

In my electorate of Burdekin, the lives of Ayr public housing tenants are being put at risk because the Bligh Labor government is ignoring its own fire safety regulations. I was shocked to learn that a multistorey eight-unit public housing complex constructed at 30 Wickham Street, Ayr, has only one entry/exit access point. These units have wheelchair bound residents and single mothers with young ones living in upstairs and downstairs units where there is only one common set of steps to the upstairs units. I have been told that these units would not have been passed by local government certifiers if a private developer had submitted the plans. However, the state government is the exception to the rule.

Following the Childers Palace Backpackers Hostel fire in June 2000 which resulted in 15 tragic deaths, the Queensland government implemented new fire safety regulations to try to prevent any future tragedies. Why is the housing minister dodging questions about public housing? Why is this government allowing two safety standards for private and public housing developments? What is the point of delivering more public housing if work on these projects is not being done correctly and will inevitably cost Queensland taxpayers more in the long run? Why are the most vulnerable people in our community being put at risk by being placed in accommodation that does not meet community safety guidelines and expectations? Premier Bligh and housing minister Struthers must, as a matter of urgency, guarantee that all social housing dwellings in Queensland will be regulated equally with private developments.

(Time expired)

Newman, Mr C

 **Ms JONES** (Ashgrove—ALP) (10.04 pm): In recent weeks we have seen Campbell Newman consistently fail a series of tests of his leadership. The failure by Mr Newman to meet accepted standards of accountability has already made him the first person seeking the premiership in 20 years to resist Fitzgerald report standards of openness and honesty.

Two weeks ago he effectively endorsed the use of 'dirt files' by the LNP by buckling under pressure from LNP president, Bruce McIver, and accepting old National Party standards of behaviour. Mr Newman refused to insist on the sacking of those in the LNP organisation responsible for trading in political 'dirt files' that include large parts unfit for publication and highly personal information, including details such as where the children of government MPs go to school.

The first words out of his mouth were to advise journalists that they needed to talk to Mr McIver. Incidentally, that is the very same response he gave to questions about his personal position on One Nation—a position he has still failed to clearly spell out. The 'dirt file' traders in the LNP—state director Michael O'Dwyer and campaign director James McGrath—are still in their jobs. In fact, Mr McGrath has been promoted by the LNP to stand for election. So that is what Campbell Newman meant when he said that Mr McGrath had been severely disciplined!

Just last week we saw a further failure of leadership by Campbell Newman after the former LNP candidate for Cairns, Paul Freebody, released taped evidence revealing the continuing influence of old-style Nationals in the LNP. When asked what he would do about LNP treasurer Barry O'Sullivan's behaviour and treatment of Mr Freebody, Mr Newman again deferred to Mr McIver.


Today, when even John Bjelke-Petersen called on Campbell Newman to step up and set some principles and force O'Sullivan to resign, what did we hear from the so-called leader of the LNP? Mr Newman again squibbed the question and argued that the LNP was not Campbell Newman's plaything. It might not be his plaything, but it certainly is his 'paything'. He was dragged kicking and screaming to reveal that Mr McIver is paying him \$12,000 a month.

Campbell Newman will not stand up to Mr McIver either because he is being bought or because he does not have the gumption necessary for a leader—and it shows. How can Campbell Newman front up at a school in the Ashgrove electorate and tell students that they should not put up with bullying? How can Campbell Newman walk into any workplace in the Ashgrove electorate or anywhere in Queensland and say to workers that they deserve to turn up to work and be treated fairly?

Either he endorses Mr O'Sullivan's behaviour or he rejects it. It is that simple. What we have seen is that, quite clearly, Campbell Newman is being paid by the LNP—paid by Mr McIver—and that is why he is refusing to stand up and show leadership on these key areas of his character. We deserve better than this and it is about time he listened to John Bjelke-Petersen.

(Time expired)

TS Walrus

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (10.07 pm): On Tuesday, 23 August I reported on the success of *TS Walrus*, a training ship based at Eagleby in my electorate. At that time I told members about Sub Lieutenant Tracey Hagan and unit staff, all volunteers, who brought a growing group of naval cadets near to the pinnacle of success. They had just been awarded best unit within their flotilla. As such, they were nominated for national assessment and were up against seven other units from right around Australia, each of them being the best in their respective flotillas.

I attended the inspection on 4 September at which National Commander Captain John Gill ANC and Director of Flotillas Commander Darren McDonald ANC conducted their inspection. The inspection was to determine the training ship that is the premier unit. The success they achieved in winning best in flotilla, which led to this latest inspection, was no surprise really. These naval cadets were well on their way to success as early as around this time in 2010.

At that time I had the pleasure of presenting them with a dedicated commitment award at the Eagleby awards ceremony. At that time they were regarded as the best of the best within their local community. They were up against stiff competition from other community based organisations and shone through. Then it was their time this year to, once again, shine through as the best in flotilla. And now we have this latest inspection to determine the premier unit.


The categories for this latest challenge were from right across the spectrum of their activities: leadership, teamwork, dress and bearing, maritime activities, emergency response procedures and ceremonial standards. I must say that the highlight of the inspection for me was the precision used in a special drill segment by a group named by *TS Walrus* as the F88 Steier Precision Drill Team. This team put on an amazing performance where they demonstrated their skills and talents in a carefully coordinated routine. It is a very entertaining segment of their drill work and it was very well received by the audience.

Once the assessments were done the results were forwarded to the Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Ray Griggs AM CSC Royal Australian Navy, for a final decision. So here we have *TS Walrus*, a training ship in Eagleby in the Coomera electorate, having already achieved so much, up against the best from every other flotilla in Australia. Members, I received correspondence from Sub Lieutenant Hagan just last week, and it is worth using her words to announce the result to this House as follows—

It gives me great pleasure to announce that out of the 92 Training Ships across Australia, *TS Walrus* has been awarded the ANC Navy League of Australia Trophy Award, for the most efficient Training Ship.

So I am proud to announce that the Coomera electorate and the community of Eagleby now have the best of the best training ships in Australia and *TS Walrus* will forever be recognised for that achievement.

Bulimba Electorate, Schools

 **Ms FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (10.10 pm): The families of the Bulimba electorate are served by the most impressive selection of schools. Not a week goes by that I am not helping one of these schools celebrate a remarkable achievement, a significant anniversary, an act of goodwill, the spirit of the school community or some other feat—

Mr Watt: Not a day goes by.

Ms FARMER: I take that interjection—which makes a difference in a small or big way to all involved.

In the last week I was privileged to be with two of my local schools when they received acknowledgement for remarkable achievements. In both cases, the award was the result of the efforts of the entire school community. In both cases, despite their humility, those school communities burst with pride that their efforts had been acknowledged—and they deserved to be.

Last Friday I joined my colleagues the members for Greenslopes and Chatsworth in attending the special assembly of the Camp Hill State Infants and Primary School, where the school was awarded 'Gold Menu status' by Nutrition Australia for their Foodsmart Schools Strategy. This award places the school at the top of the tree in Queensland in terms of its preparation and service of nutritious food at its tuckshop supporting, at the highest level, the Queensland government's Smart Choices Strategy, aimed at encouraging healthy eating amongst our schoolchildren.

I have seen this tuckshop in action and have sampled its wares—and it is amazing. Canteen convenor Lois Mackie and her team—Belinda Watson, Tracey Rossow and Sally Camuglia-May—organise the 50 to 80 parents who volunteer with them to feed the 800-odd students who use the

tuckshop every week. These dedicated people produce food in an economical way that belies the innovative way they organise behind the scenes. Most importantly, the food is healthy, delicious and is what students want to eat.


That same day I had the great pleasure of being part of the Bulimba State School contingent when it received the excellence in innovation award at the 2011 Showcase Awards for Excellence in Schools for their 'Young minds grow in this garden' project. This school community believes we all have a responsibility for the future and for creating an environment for students where they are excited about their place in the world and the difference they can make. This has resulted in a whole school learning environment where everyone has the chance to learn the values, behaviour and lifestyles that are needed for a sustainable future and for positive societal transformation.

I have seen this approach in action at this school, and I know how lucky we are to have such a shining example in our community, setting the standards for what is good and important. My visits are always a surprise and a delight, and there is never a time when I do not look forward to hearing the excited stories of the students about what they have just learnt—whether its through the Stephanie Alexander program, through the Green Army initiative, through their environment club, or through the myriad other ways that sustainability is encompassed in what they learn.

An outcome like this does not happen by itself. It is only because of the outstanding leadership of Principal Michael Zeuschner and the work of people like the wonderful deputy Sheryl Kennedy, Mardi Seccombe, Sue Filips, Rebecca Ramsden, Kate Dascombe, Phil Young and all current school staff, students and community members that the school is what it is.

I congratulate both of these astonishing schools for their achievements and thank them for allowing me to share in their pleasure at being acknowledged.

Justices of the Peace


 **Mr ELMES** (Noosa—LNP) (10.13 pm): On Saturday, 15 October, I was honoured to attend and speak at the Queensland Justice Association's 2011 state conference, which was held in Noosa and hosted by the Noosa branch of the association. I would like at the outset to convey my thanks and appreciation for an excellent conference to Anne-Marie Bligh, president of the Noosa branch, and my good friend Peter Burbidge-King, who compered the event on behalf of his branch.

The range and quality of all the presenters was outstanding—in particular, that of the last speaker for the day, the shadow Attorney-General, the honourable member for Kawana. In my short presentation, I referred to some details sent to me only a few days previously by the Attorney-General with regards to Justices of the Peace and the fact that throughout Queensland and across all categories there are 89,500 men and women who hold this office. Further research shows that there are 774 JPs, C.decs and old-style JPs who live in the Noosa electorate alone.

It is often said to me by people who require the services of a JP or C.dec that they cannot find them. While I know that there are public registers and there are those very dedicated citizens who staff signing sessions at shopping centres, it seems to me that the number of these volunteers is exceptionally small when compared with the nearly 90,000 registered across the state. As the local member, I receive at least one or two applications per week, so this number continues to grow. My question is: are we, through no-one's fault, putting quantity ahead of quality? Is it not possible that these upstanding men and women who hold what is an ancient and honourable office, which came into existence in the 14th century, be encouraged or even required to be far more available to the public to whom they have volunteered to serve than is currently the case?

As a justice of the peace, now commissioner for declarations, for over 30 years myself, I believe that there is a case of limiting the number of officers through attrition and promoting the whereabouts of a smaller but more available number of continuing office holders. In the case of the Noosa electorate, I fail to see how 100 to 150 JPs who are active and well known in the community could not achieve the same results that the 774 we currently have. I would not for one instant discourage anyone from taking the step to become a JP or C.dec. Volunteers from across all areas of our communities are hard enough to come by, but being a 'peace officer' is a special category, and I believe this carries with it a greater responsibility than is currently shown by a large number of these voluntary legal officers.

Chatsworth Electorate, Schools

 **Mr KILBURN** (Chatsworth—ALP) (10.16 pm): I also would like to take the opportunity to recognise some of the great work being done in schools in the Chatsworth electorate. Firstly, I would like to talk about a student from Mayfield State School who earlier this week was presented with a medal as part of the NAIDOC Week celebrations. Chloe Morrow from grade 5/6B at Mayfield State School entered


a poem in a competition. Out of 115,008 entries from schools around the state, her poem was chosen and was recognised by the Prime Minister's award. The theme was 'Reconciliation'. I would like to take this opportunity to read Chloe's poem—

Your skin is brown
 My skin is white
 We should not fight
 Because we look all alike in the same light
 Deep down we are all the same
 We know our past it is very dark
 But we have come to make it normal again
 That was a poem by Chloe which won her an award in the NAIDOC Week competition.

Also, like the member for Bulimba, I would like to acknowledge the Camp Hill State Infants and Primary School for obtaining a Gold Menu Award on Friday last week. I also joined with the member for Bulimba and the member for Greenslopes, the Minister for Education, for the presentation of the award. I would like to congratulate the convenor of the Camp Hill tuckshop, Lois Mackie, and her team—Belinda Watson, Sally and John Camuglia-May and Tracey Rossow—for the great work they are in producing a healthy and varied menu for the children of the Camp Hill school.

I would also like to acknowledge the great work done by the Gumdale State School P&C for the work they did organising the Gumdale Country Fair last Friday night. Quite a few hundred people from the Gumdale area turned out to support their school. Lots of people were there. I was fortunate enough—if you want to look at it that way—to be placed on the dunking machine to help raise some money for the school. Thanks to the member for Ashgrove for starting a great tradition where we now all volunteer to be placed in dunking machines at school fetes. This will be a great fundraiser for the school. Gumdale State School is a fantastic school. I look forward to continuing to support the Gumdale P&C in their work with the Gumdale State School.

Mary Valley Scarecrow Festival

 **Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—Ind) (10.18 pm): Recently, I performed the very enjoyable task as a judge in the Mary Valley scarecrow competition. During that time I had the chance to travel from Conondale through Kenilworth down to Imbil. The category I was judging was the traditional category. The range of scarecrows that people come up with is amazing.


The winner in the traditional category was 'Hippee Dracula'. 'Hippee Dracula' was a six-foot-tall scarecrow in the traditional form and he even had crows on his feet and above the arms. 'Hippee Dracula' was located at Ridgewood. In second place was 'Waltzing Ma-deer-Ita' at Cambroon Caravan Park. In a tie for third place were Carters Ridge entrant 'Sid and Hilda' and 'Gourdy Gertrude' from Kenilworth.

As we travelled through the valley we met some Sunshine Coast council workers who were working on a bridge near the Cambroon Caravan Park and they even had a workman done up as a scarecrow. As we travelled along the road we could see this shape ahead and I thought, 'There's a workman.' I thought he was a stop-and-go man. He had the right uniform on with the gumboots and the hat. As we got closer we realised that, lo and behold, it was a scarecrow. So well done to the Sunshine Coast crew who were working on that site. It was great to see that they got into the spirit of the competition.

As we got down to Imbil we almost got lost, but we thought we would persevere and see where we got to. We came to Little Bella Creek Road at the back of Imbil, and as we drove along this dirt road we saw so many scarecrows. Most of them were not even officially entered. We were inspired by the fact that so many people got involved.

One of the real benefits of the scarecrow competition in Mary Valley was that a lot of community groups and senior citizens groups hired buses and went for a tour through the valley. They were able to see the valley and, more importantly, they were able to stop and spend some dollars on a cup of coffee or a scone and talk about the valley. Although we had the debacle of the Traveston Dam, life is coming back into our valley. Maybe it has been inspired by our schools and the community people; many people are involved. If we run this competition again next year, I invite everyone to come to the Mary Valley and inspect our wonderful range of scarecrows.

Anzac Avenue

 **Ms O'NEILL** (Kallangur—ALP) (10.21 pm): A hardworking committee has been established in my electorate to make sure Anzac Avenue, which runs from Redcliffe to Petrie, is properly prepared and refurbished in time to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the First World War. The committee consists of members of the local RSL Pine Rivers Sub-Branch, the Pine Rivers Historical Society, the Pine Rivers Heritage Museum, Pine Rivers Women's Auxiliary, members of the community, local councillor David Dwyer, naval and RAAF associations, the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia

Brisbane North, me, the federal member for Dickson and other interested folk or experts as we might need them. Councillor David Dwyer and I meet regularly to discuss the avenue and plans to be truly ready for the anniversary of WWI.


After the First World War, memorials to fallen servicemen were erected across Queensland and often became prominent features in their communities. Anzac Avenue was one such memorial, albeit a very unusual one, built along a route first surveyed in the 1860s and designed to provide a reliable link to Redcliffe. The road was first opened to traffic in 1925. The new road was the longest memorial avenue in Queensland.

Shortly after the road was opened, as a further significant part of the project, tree planting to make a true avenue and memorial began. By mid-1927, 1,000 trees had been planted, and by November 1929 over 2,000 trees had been established. Due to the ever-increasing population, the road has had to be widened. This widening, although required in order to manage traffic congestion, resulted in the need to remove or relocate some of the tree plantings along the route, a move that was not without controversy. The road was inducted into the Queensland Heritage Register in 2009. As such, it is something of a treasure in our electorates, and the enthusiasm of the committee is evidence that it is a deeply felt issue. A petition has been drawn up in support of changing the name to Anzac Memorial Avenue and it is attracting a lot of support.

Another aim of the committee is to replant the thousands of trees that formed the original concept. The team hopes to decide on the best variety and placement of the trees and begin planting early in the new year to ensure the trees are of a suitable height by 2015. It was suggested that community groups, local businesses and other interested groups plus the public could be approached for sponsorship of individual trees. Positioning of touch-screen information kiosks to provide information to the public on Australia's military history has been suggested and could be positioned at various bus stops along the avenue. These could also encompass details on local civilian history.

I wholeheartedly support the committee's aspirations. I commend them for the professional and efficient way they work together. I look forward to working with this marvellous group of people to restore and refurbish our wonderful Anzac memorial, including the formal change of name to Anzac Memorial Avenue.

Children

 **Dr DOUGLAS** (Gaven—LNP) (10.24 pm): New evidence supplied by Dr Sharon Bessell of the ANU and supported by Australia's oldest charity, the Benevolent Society, sheds new light on the concerns of primary school age children and how negatively these concerns impact on their lives. This is at a time when Australia is spending nearly \$10 billion in health care for couples conceiving and having a baby and then billions more in baby bonuses, child-care rebates and other payments such as child support which go from there.

In the Gaven electorate there was a 17 per cent increase in the total number of domestic violence order applications, to a total of 2,971 applications, in 2009-10. Even despite population growth, there was still a 14 per cent increase in the rate per 100,000 persons to a total of 721 orders per 100,000 persons in 2009-10. Have children in Australia become just another tradeable commodity to be desired, abused and then discarded when parents become bored or find their behaviour unacceptable? What we do to children is what makes them do what they do and become what they become as adults. They reflect or mirror what we do and say to them as they grow up. Why are people not confronting the reality of their own behaviours?


The financial climate of high unemployment and underemployment and the rising cost of living is causing unprecedented levels of crime as well as stress in the family home. As well, it must be analysed in the way it negatively impacts on the way children develop throughout their childhood into adolescence and then adulthood. The general public would be surprised just how highly children are prioritising their need for protection from 'bad' people, including those who drink excessively—particularly those close to them—speed and drive recklessly on our roads, try to exclude them and verbally abuse them, in other words shout at them. They are very worried about people who drink excessively and do different things to them when they are intoxicated. They are not getting the level of protection needed, and they are saying it.

In 1959, we had the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child, with the sixth principle being the right to understanding and love by parents and society. I table that document.

Tabled paper: Document titled '1959—The Declaration of the Rights of the Child lays down ten principles' [5711].

Then in 1979 we had the International Year of the Child. In 1989 the UN held the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Not enough has come from this. We are hearing daily reports of child trafficking, increased levels of sex abuse of children and now, tragically, rising levels of drug and alcohol abuse in children. The principle behind this implies that we are expecting children to behave like adults; tragically, when they do it all goes wrong. What is needed is a proactive, bipartisan approach to the very real concerns of children in Queensland and Australia and the proclamation of 2012 as the Queensland Year of the Child.

Ipswich West, Community Services

 **Mr WENDT** (Ipswich West—ALP) (10.27 pm): I am proud to announce that the state government has invested \$400,000 to purchase and renovate a home which will house three local people with disabilities. Last week I had great pleasure in welcoming the Minister for Disability Services, Curtis Pitt, to Ipswich, where he visited the Brassall property which will be run by Centacare. We are providing Centacare with \$400,000 to purchase and renovate a four-bedroom house which will be fully wheelchair accessible. Once modified, Centacare will be able to provide 24-hour onsite support to the three new residents.

This house is being funded through the joint state-Commonwealth Disability Assistance Package, DAP. Under the program, Queensland receives \$18.3 million in capital funding over four years to 2012 to provide more housing like this for people with a disability in Ipswich West. This is great news for three Ipswich residents in Ipswich West who will soon have a new place to call home. It is about ensuring that Queenslanders with a disability can live independently in their own communities. The DAP program has provided housing to something like 130 Queenslanders with a disability in recent times.

While he was there, and following hot on the heels of Mental Health Week, the minister assisted me in the official launch of the Queensland government's resident recovery program in Ipswich. We did this at the Ipswich RSL club last week in concert with FSG Australia, a not-for-profit community organisation. They have received \$314,000 in Queensland government funding to deliver their Towards Inner Discovery Enabling Self-hood program, or TIDES program. TIDES is a resident recovery program funded by the Australian government and the Queensland government through the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness. The program takes a recovery based approach to its service, providing invaluable assistance to people with mental ill-health to break the cycle of moving through acute-care facilities, boarding houses, hostels and homelessness. TIDES also assists people with mental ill-health to discover new opportunities, try new things and work towards reaching their goals. It is about giving them a helping hand to find the right accommodation, employment options and hobbies and to build relationships with their family, friends and communities.

I spoke to two of the recipients of this program last week, and I was very moved to hear how well they had adapted to the program and what it was doing for them and their families. Importantly, TIDES undertakes a self-determinant approach to recovery planning, where the individual decides what they want to achieve and how they want to achieve it. The minister said when he was there that since the commencement of the program last year 16 people had been supported under the program.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.30 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Attwood, Bates, Bleijie, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, Crandon, Cripps, Croft, Cunningham, Darling, Davis, Dempsey, Dick, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Farmer, Finn, Flegg, Foley, Fraser, Gibson, Grace, Hinchliffe, Hobbs, Hoolihan, Hopper, 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