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THURSDAY, 21 JUNE 2012

The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

Madam Speaker (Hon. Fiona Simpson, Maroochydore) read prayers and took the chair.

PRIVILEGE

Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House by a Minister

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (9.30 am): Madam Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege regarding the answer given by the Hon. Steve Dickson MP, Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing, to a question without notice that he was asked on Wednesday, 20 June 2012 by the member for Whitsunday, where the minister was asked about the financial circumstances of the state. The answer provided by the minister could have been interpreted as misleading.

I respectfully request that you consider whether this is a matter where Minister Dickson should be referred to the Ethics Committee to consider whether he is in contempt of the parliament. I advise that I will be writing to you about the matter.

Madam SPEAKER: Write to me about that matter and I will consider it.

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Glasson, Mr WH

 **Hon. CKT NEWMAN** (Ashgrove—LNP) (Premier) (9.31 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

1. That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered to this State by the late Honourable William Hamline Glasson, a former member of the Parliament of Queensland and Minister of the Crown.
2. That Madam Speaker be requested to convey to the family of the deceased gentleman the above resolution, together with an expression of the sympathy and sorrow of the Members of the Parliament of Queensland, in the loss they have sustained.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the presence of Mr Glasson's family here in the Assembly this morning: his three sons, Douglas, Bill and Cameron, and his only daughter, Sharon. The Hon. William Hamline Glasson, better known to all who knew him as Bill, was born in Toowoomba on 23 February 1925. Mr Glasson was educated via correspondence, state schools and at the Church of England Grammar School. Throughout his life, Mr Glasson worked as a grazier, pastoralist, jackeroo, drover and station manager, and from 1955 to 1957 he served as a councillor on the Winton shire council. From 1943 to 1945 during World War II, aged just in his late teens, Mr Glasson served as a flying officer in the Royal Australian Air Force. Sadly, in Mr Glasson we note the passing of another person who served his country with distinction at the time of its greatest need.

At the state election in December 1974, the then member for Gregory, Sir Wallace Rae of the National Party, had announced his retirement and Mr Glasson was subsequently selected by the National Party to contest the seat. He was successful at the election on 7 December 1974 and he went on to serve as the member for Gregory until his resignation from the parliament on 30 November 1989, just a few days before the 1989 state election.

During his time in the parliament, Mr Glasson was a member of a parliamentary delegation to South-East Asia in 1977; was leader of a parliamentary delegation to Pacific Rim countries in 1988; and served on a number of the National Party's government party committees across a wide range of portfolios. Mr Glasson also served as a minister of the Crown from 1980 to 1989 in both the Bjelke-Petersen and Ahern governments. In the Bjelke-Petersen government Mr Glasson served as minister for lands and forestry from December 1980 to December 1982; as minister for lands, forestry and police from December 1982 to February 1986; and as minister for lands, forestry, mapping and surveying from February 1986 to December 1987. In the Ahern government Mr Glasson served as minister for land management from December 1987 to September 1989.

I am also advised that Mr Glasson was a longstanding member of the Queensland Parliamentary Bowls Club, both while he was a member of this House and later as a former member. Mr Glasson was the club's president from 1983 to 1990 and he and his late wife, Shirley, were regular attendees at the annual interstate parliamentary bowling carnivals held across Australia where they were both very fondly regarded by all.

The Hon. William Hamline Glasson passed away on 20 March 2012. A service of thanksgiving for his life was held at St John's Anglican Cathedral, Ann Street, Brisbane, on 28 March 2012. He was another of the generation who served our country in World War II and later went on to represent their communities in the parliaments of Australia. Former Speaker of the Queensland Parliament John Mickel said of Mr Glasson that he was 'well liked and widely respected'. He said, 'He was widely regarded as the epitome of a very decent person, which is an accolade not easily come by in politics.'

I place on record the government's thanks for the years of service Mr Glasson gave to the institutions of our democracy and to the Queensland community, and on behalf of the government I take this opportunity to extend my sympathy and that of this House to Mr Glasson's family and friends.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.36 am): William Hamline Glasson, better known by his friends and his colleagues whom he served with as Bill, was born in Toowoomba on 25 February 1925. During his primary school years he was educated by correspondence, as the Premier said, before boarding and completing his senior at Church of England Grammar School in Brisbane. By 1943 Mr Glasson had joined the Royal Australian Air Force and served his country as a pilot of Kittyhawks during World War II. He was discharged from the RAAF on 1 July 1947. Shortly after, Mr Glasson married Shirley Margaret Lockhart and raised three sons and one daughter whilst working on the land as a jackeroo, a drover, a station manager and later a grazier at Winton. It was during his time at Winton that Mr Glasson commenced his political life as a councillor on the Winton shire council. Mr Glasson was elected to the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 7 December 1974 for the National Party and served the parliament and the people of Queensland in a variety of different roles, most notably as minister for lands, forestry, mapping and surveying, as well as minister for police during the Bjelke-Petersen government and he was, of course, as the Premier mentioned, an esteemed member of the Queensland Parliamentary Bowls Club.

My father, Henry, had the privilege of serving in the parliament with Bill Glasson and had a great affection and respect for him as a parliamentarian. According to my father, Bill was part of the old breed of National Party members where a handshake meant a deal and a person's word was gospel. He was liked by both sides of the House and was a very popular man, always willing to stop for a chat and lend a hand if he could. He was followed in this House as the member for Gregory by the current member for Gregory, Vaughan Johnson, and was very good friends with the Johnson family. Henry attended Bill Glasson's funeral and says that Vaughan's tribute to Bill was very moving and touched all in the large crowd that packed St John's Cathedral.

The proudest moment, and the real highlight of Bill's life, as his daughter pointed out at his funeral service, was when he was asked to lead the Tagalong Ride from Longreach to the Ekka Showgrounds in 2002. This was part of the Year of the Outback celebrations and it was a real tribute to Bill by the RNA. This was a ride of around 1,300 kilometres. He did this in the middle of winter. He traversed the outback of Queensland, camped out with his fellow riders and entertained them around the campfire with his stories and bush poetry.

Bill's heart was in the bush. He was a true bushman who always stood up for the interests of his community. From all reports, Mr Glasson was a humble man, not one to big-note his personal or family achievements. He was indeed a man of the bush, strongly representing his consistency on issues of deep importance to him, such as legislative reforms to convert family sized leases into perpetual title leases and advocating for strong and better hospitals in Longreach and Barcaldine. Upon retirement, Mr Glasson's passion for the bush did not fade and he continued to support campdraft and horseracing, in particular at the Gregory Turf Club and Winton Rodeo Association.

Mr Glasson passed away on 20 March 2012, aged 87 years. As I have said, my father was amongst the hundreds of mourners who attended the service to celebrate his life at Saint John's Anglican Cathedral on 28 March. I wish to place on the record the opposition's appreciation for the years of service that Mr Glasson gave to the people of Queensland and extend our deepest sympathies to his family.

 **Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory—LNP) (9.40 am): I am humbled and somewhat taken aback to be able to speak to this condolence motion for the late William Hamline Glasson. Today in the gallery I recognise Dougie, Dr Bill, Sharon and Cam, as well as Sharon and Daryl's three children. As the Premier rightfully said, William Hamline Glasson, better known as Bill Glasson, was born on 25 February 1925 at

Toowoomba. He was the son of Rupert Hamline Glasson and Melda Olive, nee Lane. During his primary school years he was educated by correspondence and at state schools. His secondary education was completed at the Church of England Grammar School at East Brisbane. Between 1942 and 1947, Bill served in the Royal Australian Air Force as a flying officer pilot. After World War II, he became a representative of Brisbane Legacy. He was well known in Western Queensland where, each year, he was one of the broadcasters for Legacy's annual Legacy Good Friday Appeal on radio 4LG Longreach, which still broadcasts today.

Bill Glasson touched many lives and, as the Leader of the Opposition just said so beautifully, he had friends everywhere. The person who was his greatest friend and who most touched his heart was a lady called Shirley Margaret Lockhart, whom he married on 18 August 1949. That union produced three sons and one daughter: Douglas, William Jr, Sharon and Cameron. Bill commenced working in the pastoral industry as a jackaroo, station hand, drover and station manager. In 1950 he was a grazier at 'Kiwong' at Winton, and in 1968 he took up his own property, 'Aurteil', at Aramac. In later years, he owned a magnificent property, 'Mount Arthur', at Barcaldine. Mr Glasson was an astute stockman and an astute businessman but, more importantly, he was a wonderful family man. He was a wonderful husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

While at Winton, Mr Glasson served a term as a councillor on the Winton shire council. On 7 December 1974, he was elected to Queensland parliament as the National Party member for Gregory, replacing the then member, Sir Wallace Rae, who was appointed Queensland's Agent-General in London. As he was elected in 1974, Bill was part of the huge swing against the state Labor Party. Because of the unpopularity of the Whitlam Labor government, particularly in rural areas, the state Labor Party had its numbers reduced from 33 members to 11. It is funny how history repeats itself. We should never forget what happens in history.

On 23 December 1980, Bill was appointed as minister for lands and forestry. He was responsible for the amendment of the Land Act. The Leader of the Opposition made reference to that today. Yesterday, I spoke to Bill's dear friend and colleague Mark Stoneman, the former member for Burdekin. In his eulogy address at Saint John's Cathedral on 28 March, Mark said—

As Lands Minister, Bill understood the security issues confronted by the old Land Act in that family-sized grazing homestead leases had to be renewed every 30 years and were subject to uncertainty in the last 10 years of that period. Bill convinced the government—

of which Mark Stoneman was a part—

that these leases should become perpetual—one of the great improvements for those living in a land of many unknowns, most of all rain and income droughts. A wonderful legacy from this great man.

Bill Glasson passed away on 20 March this year after a long period of confinement in a nursing home in New Farm, Brisbane. In latter years, his health was failing him. In the end I think it was a reward not only for Bill himself but also for his family, including his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

The legacy that Bill Glasson left is unmatched. It will never be matched in Western Queensland. After my own father, he was one of the finest men I have ever known. It is an absolute honour for me to stand here in this House today and speak of such a gentleman, such a scholar and such a friend. Over the passage of time, Bill always displayed that he was a man amongst men and, more importantly, he was a gentleman amongst women. Of all things, he was a man of care—a comforter, a confidante, a mate. He was a good husband, a good father, a good grandfather and a good great-grandfather. He was a champion bloke and a champion for all people, regardless of what side of politics they were on.

Whilst Bill was a man of vision and understanding, the greatest weapon in his arsenal was his wife, Shirley. She was the most magnificent woman that anyone could have for a wife. She stood beside him through tough times and good times. She was the mother of his four children. She was the nurturer of life in more ways than as a wife and mother. Still today Shirley Glasson is highly revered in Western Queensland and she will be indefinitely. Together Bill and Shirley Glasson made the electorate of Gregory the safe seat that it was when I was fortunate enough to be selected to stand in the seat in 1989.

Bill Glasson was one of those people who had good people around him. I recognise here today Sidonie Stormonth, who was Bill's electorate officer for the almost 15 years that he was the member for Gregory. There were people like Keith and Barbara Moreton. For many years Keith was the electorate council chairman. He was also a stockman and a gentleman amongst gentlemen and women. That combination made Bill Glasson's tenure successful.

Bill cared about people. I can tell plenty of stories about Bill. In 1977 I had to go to Hungerford with a bloke from Thargomindah, Billy Hall, to put up Bill's election posters. We had a few drinks at Hungerford. I remember it well because a new beer had come out.

Mr Cripps: That's not like you, Vaughan.

Mr JOHNSON: True, but I was taught by some good people. Hungerford is on the border of what is now the electorate of Warrego. The new beer was called Tooheys New, so we had a few. That night I had to drive back to Thargomindah. It is 90 miles from Hungerford to Thargo, and then back to Quilpie is a distance of 200 miles in the old scale. About 25 miles from my place, I took a shortcut through the back and hit a cow. The next day I was supposed to pick up Bill in Quilpie. I rang him and said, 'Mate, I can't pick you up.' He said, 'Why?' I said, 'I got a motor on the front seat of my car.' He said, 'Can't you shift it?' I said, 'It's got a bloody cow in front of it.' That was one story.

Another time, we had bad bushfires at Quilpie. Bill came down with his friend Tony Richardson. Together, we flew around for a bit in a little light aircraft. The next minute, we were flying over the fires. The red light on the dashboard of Charlie's aeroplane came on. I said, 'Bill, what's the red light?' He said, 'Mate, the oil's boiling. We're too low over the fires.' I said, 'What's that mean?' He said, 'The motor will blow up if we don't go up.' I said, 'For God's sake, get out of here!' We got out of there and went back to Quilpie. I was never so pleased in all my life to get on the ground.

I think the story of all stories is the one told by his daughter, Sharon. Sharon told this story herself at her dad's funeral on 28 March. One day when she was a young girl she was coming from 'Aurteil' at Aramac across to Longreach. She had her foot on the throttle a bit and the police officer from Ilfracombe picked her up between there and Longreach. He let her go, like good country coppers do. Jack, you know what they are like. They are pretty good. When she got to Longreach she told her dad how lucky she was. He said, 'My girl, you are not lucky at all.' So he frogmarched her around to the police station and said to the officer in charge, 'Sharon has just been let go for a speeding offence. Now I want you to issue the ticket.' So Sharon copped a ticket. That is the honesty of the man Bill Glasson. That typifies the honesty, sincerity and dignity of the man. There were no favours. Whether it was his daughter or his sons or any of us, we were all treated the same.

I always remember in 1986 the Hall of Fame endurance ride from Winton to Longreach. A mate of mine from Quilpie, Bobby Hall, and I participated in that. I got vetted out at Natural Bore and Bobby got vetted out at Alice Tank. So we moved our plant down to Manneroo where they all camped the night after the 200 kilometres that first day. That night Bill was there and so was the Governor at the time, Sir Walter Campbell, and a few other dignitaries. Bill came over to us and said, 'Have you blokes been drinking?' I said no. He said, 'We've run out of alcohol over here. Here's a couple of hundred dollars. Will you go into Longreach and get us some supplies? It's only 50 kilometres in.'

So Bobby and I packed our plant up and we went to town all right. We put Bill's \$200 on the bar at the Central Hotel and we drank it out. The next day he said, 'You bugger, where did you get to?' I said, 'We got into town, Bill, and we decided that we would try to win you some votes so we put your \$200 on the bar and drank it out.' I said to him, 'There are more votes for you at the Central Hotel in Longreach than there are back here.' He got over that in a hurry. That was the calibre of the bloke. Unbeknown to me at the time, three years later I was to be the candidate for Gregory.

I want to say in closing today that there are couple of poems on a slab of granite outside the Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame in Longreach. One is called *The Men of the Open Spaces*. The other one is called *The Women of the West*. I believe that they demonstrate the quality of both Bill Glasson and his lovely wife, Shirley. I want to recite *The Men of the Open Spaces* by William H Ogilvie. It reads—

These are the men with the sun-tanned faces
and the keen far-sighted eyes—
the men of the open spaces,
and the land where the mirage lies.
The men who have learnt to master
the forces of fire and drought
and the demon Flood's disaster
in the fields of furthest out.
The men who have stood together
and shared in the fight with fate
and known the strength of the tether
that holds a mate to his mate.
Who ride with a gallant bearing
Where every saddle's a throne,
and each is an emperor sharing
an empire enough for his own.
They are strangers to airs and graces,
and scornful of power and pride—
the Men of the Open Spaces,
who rule the world when they ride.

That was Bill Glasson. The world he is riding in today is in God's paradise with his beautiful wife, Shirley. He has left a tribute to Western Queensland, as the Leader of the Opposition said, due to the great things he did. He was respected by both sides of politics. He was respected by people everywhere. I know that the late Ken Vaughan was one of his great bowling mates in the parliamentary bowls tournaments. They would be up there together telling some stories about bowls.

His funeral service at St John's Anglican Cathedral was packed with people from all walks of life and people of every political persuasion, former members and former ministers of the Crown from both sides.

Madam Speaker and colleagues, there is one person whom I have looked up to in my life and that is the great American civil rights leader the great Dr Martin Luther King. One of things that Dr Martin Luther King said was, 'When you reach the top of mountain, never forget the valley below.' I have to say that Bill Glasson never forgot the valley below. When he rose to the top he was still Bill Glasson. He was still Bill Glasson the gentleman. He was still Bill Glasson the ringer. He was still Bill Glasson the everyday man, the father, the husband, the grandfather and the great-grandfather and, more importantly, the mate.

Madam Speaker and colleagues, Western Queensland and Queensland is a greater place for the presence for 87 years of Bill Glasson and, more importantly, the assistance, love and care that Shirley gave him to be the great man that he was. May Bill Glasson rest in peace and may he remain in our minds in Western Queensland forever. Thank you to his family for being here today. Our thoughts and prayers are with you all.

 **Mr HOBBS** (Warrego—LNP) (9.54 am): On 20 March 1975—exactly 37 years to the day before Bill passed away, on 20 March 2012—Bill Glasson in his maiden speech in this parliament expressed his loyalty to the electors of Gregory and Her Majesty the Queen. He kept that loyalty throughout his parliamentary career and never deviated. He said that he intended to represent the people of Gregory without fear or favour. To any section of the community, his word was his bond: it was rock solid; it was bankable. He also expected the same of others. Someone once said that he was disarmingly trusting. His long-term horse trainer, Billy Wall, once put it, 'I can't work that Bill Glasson out. He even trusts horse trainers and jockeys.' That was a measure of the man.

Before I became an MP I was a mayor of a Western Queensland shire council. I recall one Sunday night I was in Tambo and was surprised to see Bill Glasson get off a Greyhound bus to have a break. He was on his way to Brisbane to parliament. He said he often travelled by bus. I realised he had to be in cabinet at 9.30 the next morning. It was an all-night trip and he would have been lucky to be in Brisbane by six o'clock the next morning. I realised then the dedication he had to his job and his responsibilities as a local member.

Bill had a good grounding for politics being a businessman, a grazier, a flying officer in the RAAF in World War II—in Kittyhawks helping to push back the Japanese in the South Pacific—a Winton shire councillor and through his involvement in many community groups. He had many mates. One comes to mind, Tony Richardson. He was a great bloke. He had an aeroplane—a Cessna 182—and he and Bill would cover the vast area of Gregory that spread from Urandangi to Hungerford. Tony had a rule not to drink within eight feet of the plane and he religiously stuck by that rule!

I will never forget the time I led a delegation of graziers to meet Bill as minister for lands to discuss an outbreak of parthenium weed in their district. Bill listened to their story and request for assistance. He then asked them what they had done to fight the outbreak. When they were very short of words as to what they had actually done, he did what I can only explain as walking around the ceiling waving his arms and asking why the government should help people who will not help themselves. These graziers were big operators and I thought this was going to be interesting. The end of the story was that Bill provided significant funding in the next budget for this project and those graziers put in more than three times the government contribution. It was a good and calculated outcome.

Bill was a very energetic person. He never stopped. We always walked quickly. Even when he left politics and should have put his feet up he did not. He and his mate Randal Chandler were part of a group who organised a Year of the Outback tagalong horse ride from Longreach to the Ekka. They encouraged many people to travel with them as they went on their way. My daughter, Katherine, and I rode with them for a day on their journey. Many people enjoyed their company as they travelled the long paddock on their last big ride. As a matter of interest, one of Bill Glasson's properties, 'Mount Arthur' near Barcaldine, is now owned by my daughter and son-in-law in their family aggregation.

I offer my sincere condolences to the Glasson family. Bill was a great mate, a fine man and someone who was always interested in how you were going. He will be sadly missed but never forgotten. His words and deeds have been etched in history and archived forever in the *Hansard* of this Queensland parliament.

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

Whereupon honourable members stood in silence.

TABLED PAPER

MINISTERIAL PAPER Tabled BY THE CLERK

The following ministerial paper was tabled by the Clerk—

Minister for Police and Community Safety (Mr Dempsey)—

- [373](#) Response from the Minister for Police and Community Safety (Mr Dempsey) to an ePetition (1852-12) sponsored by Mr Fraser, from 17 petitioners, requesting the House to legislate to restrict prostitutes from operating in suburban, residential neighbourhoods and to ensure residents can directly contact the owner of a rental property to discuss the operation of prostitutes on their property through disclosure of current contact details for premises under such use

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

DestinationQ

 **Hon. CKT NEWMAN** (Ashgrove—LNP) (Premier) (10.00 am): Today I would like to update the House on an important development to come from the first 100 days of this new government. Previously the House has been informed of the progress we have made in fulfilling one of our most vital progressive tourism commitments, DestinationQ. DestinationQ is a groundbreaking, whole-of-government approach to tourism. This initiative will grow tourism and will reposition this state to be once again the No. 1 tourism destination in Australia.

Next Monday more than 300 industry representatives, from microbusinesses to multinationals, will converge on Cairns for this event. They will travel the length and breadth of this great state to get there and take part in the inaugural DestinationQ forum, which is being held at the Pullman Reef Hotel Casino on 25 and 26 June.

There has been nothing like this forum in Queensland in more than a quarter of a century. The interest from industry has been massive, with over 450 expressions of interest registered in just two weeks. This forum will see tourism representatives from across Queensland join together with government to create a united vision and pathway to drive economic growth, job creation and prosperity for the industry.

This forum is also about restoring confidence and creating opportunities for the tourism industry, with input from operators, regional tourism organisations, peak industry bodies, Tourism Queensland, Events Queensland and of course the government.

The six major themes that will be explored at the forum are: investment, infrastructure and access; quality, skills and capacity; tourism partnerships; our whole marketing approach; ecotourism, including nature based and adventure tourism; and product and experience development.

The aim is to enable government and industry to agree to clearly defined actions, assign responsible organisations and set deadlines for delivery of each action. I expect reducing red tape and bureaucratic logjams will be high on everyone's agenda and I also anticipate that the future structure and funding of the regional tourism organisations will be keenly debated.

Members of the Tourism Cabinet Committee will be joining me in Cairns, providing an excellent opportunity for the industry to engage directly with key ministers in the cabinet. This forum will be hard work, identifying priorities and opportunities and setting an agenda for success by building a strong partnership between government and industry and reversing the enormous damage to the industry caused by the former Labor government.

Because of our relentless commitment to the tourism industry as one of the four pillars of the Queensland economy, DestinationQ will become an annual event so that we can revisit our efforts and measure our progress each year. Outcomes against DestinationQ will be reported in the annual report of Tourism Queensland. I ask honourable members to get behind DestinationQ and follow our progress as we breathe life back into tourism in this great state of Queensland.

Great Barrier Reef

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (10.04 am): The Great Barrier Reef is truly one of the world's greatest treasures. Queenslanders, more than anyone else in the world, know this because it is our greatest treasure and one of our greatest assets. It therefore should not need to be said that every Queenslanders knows of the importance of protecting and caring for this vast living natural wonder and every Queenslanders is committed to protecting its future.

This government will safeguard the reef's future, as every Queenslanders would expect us to do. It is part of our home and we will protect it as such. We will not shy away from or shirk the responsibility that we have to future generations. But in protecting the Great Barrier Reef we will not walk away from our responsibility to grow the economy of Queensland. We will not walk away from our responsibility to provide for the future prosperity of generations of Queenslanders. What this government will do is ensure that the development necessary to support that prosperity occurs in a planned, responsible and balanced way—always ensuring that the environment is considered, protected and cared for.

UNESCO released its report on the Great Barrier Reef after a very short visit by a very small delegation earlier this year. I point out that it has been a Labor government in power in Queensland for almost all of the last 20 years. The care of the Barrier Reef has been in the Labor Party's hands. The only reason we are talking about the UNESCO report this morning is that the Bligh and Beattie governments and their federal counterparts, including Minister Tony Burke, failed to properly inform UNESCO of planned developments around Gladstone.

Foremost among UNESCO's concerns and noted in the report was the project developments at Abbot Point, where the former Labor government proposed 10 new coal terminals which would have provided for a capacity of 400 million tonnes of coal exports a year—a trebling of Queensland's coal exports through one port. They also proposed a multicargo port facility that would have required dredging of 40 million cubic metres of seabed to enable the construction of 12 shipping berths.

The UNESCO report was written before this government halted those irresponsible plans. The report that we are discussing this morning was written before the responsible LNP government shelved the irresponsible plans that were put forward by the ALP government. We have taken the Abbot Point coal terminals known as T4 to T10 off the agenda. We have also taken the multicargo facility off the agenda, opting instead for a much more measured and smaller scale development. That is the balanced, reasonable, incremental approach that this government brings to the issue of development and care for the environment.

Further still, we have removed from the drawing board four of the six rail corridors that Labor was prepared to let loose across the Galilee Basin because it could not make sensible, responsible decisions about how the resources of this region should be developed. We have made those sensible, responsible decisions.

Minister Burke has expressed some concern about this government's approval of the Alpha Coal Project and its possible impacts on the reef. Again I point out that the Queensland Coordinator-General has placed strict conditions on the Alpha development that ensure all of the matters raised are mitigated and the effects minimised. There are clear erosion and run-off controls placed on this project in the Coordinator-General's report, and those erosion and run-off controls apply to all of the development including the rail line at Abbot Point.

I reiterate: the Great Barrier Reef is part of Queensland and it is part of our heritage. We will ensure it is cared for and we will ensure it is preserved for future generations of Queenslanders and the world. Let me conclude by quoting Keith De Lacy, a former Labor Treasurer of this state, who wrote about the reef recently—

... it is a massive self-correcting eco-system with great powers of renewal. It is under no threat from fishing or tourism or shipping.

Keith De Lacy was right. I could not agree with him more. The Barrier Reef will certainly be under no threat from any further development proposals that this government may approve.

State Finances

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade) (10.09 am): As outlined in the independent Commission of Audit, the Queensland government is faced with a huge task to arrest any further deterioration of the state's finances. People ask how the task became so big. Members of this House would have already heard me outline Labor's appalling record of financial mismanagement—a six-year spending spree that began just as government receipts were shrinking; capital expenditure funded almost entirely out of borrowings; employee expenses in the government sector growing at 8.7 per cent in the last decade; and the debt-to-revenue ratio reaching more than 100 per cent in 2011-12.

All this led to the public debt interest becoming the fastest growing expense of the Queensland government over the last 10 years. But I stand here today to update the House on the action the Newman government will take to fix these systemic problems—a product of the former government's recklessness. That task cannot be underestimated considering that Queensland will post a fiscal deficit of \$6.6 billion in 2011-12 and \$9½ billion next financial year. The government understands that it cannot spend more than it earns; that the state must start living within its means. We have already started by

finding savings across all government departments. We will ensure that employee expenses grow at a sustainable rate. The government can simply not afford to let those expenses grow at the rate they did under Labor.

In the July sitting weeks before I travel overseas to talk to our bond holders, I will be presenting to the House an updated fiscal strategy for the Queensland government in light of the Commission of Audit's report. This updated strategy will include a revision to Treasury's overly optimistic forecast and confirmation of the government's savings target over the next three years. It is expected that this savings target will be over the recommended figure contained in the Commission of Audit report. This government clearly understands the message of the Commission of Audit and will work to rein in expenses across government. We will put an end to the departmental cost overruns that became the hallmark of Labor's administration and which the Commission of Audit interim report notes as a continuing liability for the government.

It must also be pointed out that the state also faces a decline in GST payments received from the federal government. A number of court decisions in relation to the GST base in recent years have resulted in the erosion of the state's GST share. The falling Queensland share has been greater than the national average because of the GST revenue sharing methodology—or horizontal fiscal equalisation—and the way that has worked against Queensland. To that end, I am meeting the GST review panel in Canberra next week to argue for a fairer share for Queensland. One of the things I will be raising is the need for the federal government to close any loopholes in the law—loopholes which contributed to a loss of more than \$1 billion over the last 10 years. The Newman government will continue to fight for Queensland.

Independent Public Schools

 **Hon. JH LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Minister for Education, Training and Employment) (10.12 am): Prior to the election, the LNP went to Queenslanders with a plan to give schools more autonomy and empower them to make local decisions to improve local outcomes. The promise was to introduce 120 independent public schools over four years. These independent public schools will be better placed to respond to the needs and aspirations of the schools' local community.

In stark contrast from the previous government, what the Newman government promises, the Newman government delivers. Later today I will be at Rainworth State School in the electorate of Mount Coot-tha—and isn't it great to go to Mount Coot-tha nowadays?—to open expressions of interest for the first 30 independent public schools which will commence in 2013. The member for Mount Coot-tha, like other members of this House, has informed me that schools in her electorate are excited about applying to be an independent public school. The reason for this excitement is that school principals know their local communities and know what a wonderful opportunity this initiative presents to innovate and deliver quality outcomes in the classroom.

Many of those principals are members of the Queensland Teachers Union. Sadly, the union that is established to represent them is playing politics with independent public schools. As was raised in this place yesterday, this government is currently negotiating enterprise bargaining agreement 7 with Queensland teachers. We are currently working towards an outcome. What has been disheartening is that the QTU has wrapped up the issue of independent public schools into the enterprise bargaining debate.

Let me be clear: the Newman government was elected with a clear mandate to deliver change across Queensland. In the education portfolio, a core element of that mandate is a shift to greater school autonomy. On 24 March at state schools around Queensland there were teachers, parents and community members who voted for a change, and we are delivering that change. I encourage the union not to play politics with this important initiative. I encourage the union to listen to their members who know the potential of independent public schools. Queenslanders share our belief that the key stakeholders in guiding the direction of a local school are students, parents and teachers. From those groups, school communities are built. It is those school communities that know what is best for their local school and that will drive innovation and learning outcomes.

Gas Market Review

 **Hon. MF McARDLE** (Caloundra—LNP) (Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (10.15 am): I am pleased to announce the release for consultation of the draft annual Gas Market Review. The 2012 Gas Market Review has a strong focus aimed at establishing reserves, allocations and development rates, and identifying and quantifying any constraints on reserves that may impact on gas supply availability, gas market development, security of supply, and likely wholesale gas price outcomes in Queensland and in the broader eastern Australian gas market.

The eastern Australian gas market is, in reality, a series of state markets. Queensland, more so than any other eastern Australian state, also has a series of submarkets with different characteristics that are captured in the modelling done for the review. Gas exploration and production in Queensland has a cyclical development pattern, with the state undergoing a lengthy period of incremental development interspersed with periods of major investment, projects and growth. Since 2008, Queensland has experienced incredible growth with the development of the coal seam gas to liquefied natural gas export industry. Queensland has a gas consumption of around 240 petajoules per year, and the eastern Australia gas market consumption is around 718 petajoules per year.

The Queensland gas market advisor, Kay Gardiner, is responsible for leading the Gas Market Review process and advising the government on review outcomes. In this draft review she advises that the Queensland gas market lacks liquidity, with gas in short supply for new domestic market contracts both pre and post 2015. This is adding to a high level of uncertainty in the market, which is also impacted by the uncertainties of domestic and international LNG and future gas prices.

In the 12 months to June 2012, customers seeking new domestic supply contracts for gas post 2015 reported a continued lack of access to basic market information including forward prices, volumes available and potential delivery timeframes needed for forward contracting. No customers seeking domestic supply of gas reported achieving a term sheet, binding or non-binding, for a large volume of gas. A small number of customers report offers of small volumes of gas for short-term supply.

Major industrial customers in the domestic market are effectively unable to resolve future contracting requirements and business plans due to lack of access to future gas supply contracting information—in market terms, the market is unable to ‘clear’. Balance has not been achieved between demand for export supply and demand for domestic gas supply. I hope this debate will be encouraged by the release of the 2012 review for consultation.

The gas market advisor cautions that, if in the next 12 months we do not see the domestic supply situation improve, there could be insufficient time for development, consideration, consultation and implementation of measures that could be implemented by government to address a domestic supply constraint in the period 2015 to 2020. I table a copy of the draft Gas Market Review 2012.

Tabled paper: 2011 Gas Market Review Queensland, Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation [\[374\]](#).

Pineapples, Imports

 **Hon. JJ McVEIGH** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) (10.18 am): The new LNP government will stand up for Queensland primary producers, especially when the federal government wants to open the door to allow Malaysian pineapples to be imported into Australia. Queensland pineapple farmers are very concerned with the prospect of having pineapples imported from Malaysia for the simple reason that there is a considerable and unnecessary risk from disease. Queensland is the major producing state and has been for 100 years. Our pineapple industry is valued at \$80 million a year and underpins more than 1,000 jobs on farms and throughout the supply chain during the peak season.

Putting our industry at risk from imported fruit carrying disease is absolute madness. I have grave concerns that Canberra’s decision will lead to an unacceptable disease risk to our industry. Of particular concern is bacterial heart rot and fruit collapse. In Malaysia, field crop losses of up to 40 per cent have been recorded due to fruit collapse symptoms alone. Australia has similar climatic conditions to Malaysia and we grow many of the same pineapple varieties. Letting diseases in from Malaysia would prove devastating.

I commend Queensland Senator Ron Boswell for taking a stand in federal parliament yesterday by referring the matter to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee, and I will be working closely with industry and the Senate to scrap this madness. I note that the Senate inquiry will also test the federal government’s proposal to allow in fresh ginger from Fiji which risks further bacterial diseases and contaminated soil. I must acknowledge and commend the member for Keppel for working so diligently on this issue on behalf of his constituents and the pineapple industry of Queensland. Unlike those opposite and their Labor mates in Canberra, the LNP Newman government is determined to stand up and fight for Queensland producers to keep our state disease free.

CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Allocation of Time Limit Order

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (10.20 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That the Civil Partnerships and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, having already been declared an urgent bill under standing order 137, be debated today to enable the bill to pass through its remaining stages at this day's sitting.

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (10.20 am): I oppose the motion moved by the Manager of Government Business. We will not be long in opposing this. We simply put on the record again that this is just another opportunity for the government to make a mockery of the committee system of the parliament. We oppose this motion.

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (10.21 am): I agree that this is a rushed motion. LNP members and other member have not had time to stay in contact with and speak to their representatives. LNP members—that is, the 14,000 members—also have not had the opportunity to speak—

Government members interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! I warn members on my right.

Mr KNUTH: I think this bill should be referred to the committee to be scrutinised.

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

AYES, 75—Barton, Bennett, Berry, Bleijie, Boothman, Cavallucci, Choat, Costigan, Cox, Crandon, Cripps, Crisafulli, Davies, C Davis, T Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Dillaway, Douglas, Dowling, Driscoll, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, France, Frecklington, Gibson, Grant, Grimwade, Gulley, Hart, Hathaway, Hobbs, Holswich, Johnson, Judge, Kaye, Kempton, King, Krause, Langbroek, Latter, Maddern, Malone, Mander, McArdle, McVeigh, Millard, Minnikin, Molhoek, Newman, Nicholls, Ostapovitch, Powell, Pucci, Rice, Rickuss, Robinson, Ruthenberg, Seeney, Shorten, Shuttleworth, Smith, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Symes, Trout, Walker, Watts, Woodforth, Young. Tellers: Menkens, Sorensen

NOES, 11—Byrne, Cunningham, Katter, Knuth, Mulherin, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Trad, Wellington. Tellers: Miller, Scott

Resolved in the affirmative.

TRANSPORT, HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

Report

 **Mr HOBBS** (Warrego—LNP) (10.28 am): I table report No. 1 of the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee, *Portfolio subordinate legislation tabled between 25 October 2011 and 14 February 2012*.

Tabled paper: Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee: Report No. 1—Portfolio subordinate legislation tabled between 25 October 2011 and 14 February 2012 [[375](#)].

STATE DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND INDUSTRY COMMITTEE

Report

 **Mr MALONE** (Mirani—LNP) (10.28 am): I lay upon the table of the House report No. 3 of the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee. The report examines subordinate legislation tabled on 14 February 2012 considered by the committee. The subordinate legislation has a disallowance date of 11 July 2012. The committee did not identify any significant policy issues or technical concerns regarding consistency with fundamental legislative principles. The committee therefore concludes that the subordinate legislation examined is lawful. I commend the report to the House.

Tabled paper: State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee: Report No. 3—Subordinate legislation tabled on 14 February 2012 [[376](#)].

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Report

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (10.29 am): I lay upon the table of the House report No. 15 of the Finance and Administration Committee. This report covers the portfolio subordinate legislation tabled between 15 November 2011 and 14 February 2012 considered by the committee. The subordinate legislation has a disallowance date of 11 July 2012. The committee did not identify any significant issues regarding consistency with fundamental legislative principles or the lawfulness of the subordinate legislation. I commend the report to the House.

Tabled paper: Finance and Administration Committee: Report No. 15—Portfolio subordinate legislation tabled between 15 November 2011 and 14 February 2012 [[377](#)].

EDUCATION AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE

Report

 **Mrs MENKENS** (Burdekin—LNP) (10.30 am): I lay upon the table of the House the Education and Innovation Committee's report No. 4, *Subordinate legislation considered between 31 May 2012 and 20 June 2012*. This report covers subordinate legislation tabled on 14 February 2012 that is within the committee's portfolio. The subordinate legislation proclaims commencement dates for provisions of the Education and Care Services National Law (Queensland) Act 2011 and the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Act 2011. A third regulation also nominates central governing bodies as required under the Education and Care Services National Law (Queensland) Act. The three pieces of subordinate legislation have a disallowance date of 11 July. The committee did not identify any significant issues regarding consistency with fundamental legislative principles or the lawfulness of the subordinate legislation and recommends that the Legislative Assembly note the subordinate legislation. I commend the report to the House.

Tabled paper: Education and Innovation Committee: Report No. 4—Subordinate legislation considered between 31 May 2012 and 20 June 2012 [\[378\]](#).

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

School Group Tours

Madam SPEAKER: I acknowledge a school visiting today from the Nanango electorate, Nanango State High School.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing, Jobs

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (10.31 am): My question is to the Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing. I refer to the term 'critical front-line jobs' now being applied by the government, and I ask: will the minister advise whether national park rangers fall into the critical front-line category and are they all safe from the government's jobs purge?

Mr DICKSON: I thank the member very much for the question. The LNP is always going to support front-line services, particularly in national parks. There are roughly 750 national park rangers. Their jobs entail not just looking after the tourists who come from overseas and others; they have very important jobs. They have to fight fires. They pre-empt if there are going to be any fires. They are proactive in that they fight fires in advance in that they light spot fires and burn areas out so that if there are any fires they have done that proactive work to lessen the impact of that fire. We will not be firing any front-line services. We are looking after our front-line services, and not only in national parks. We are doing exactly the same thing throughout Sport. We are looking after front-line services, and we will not make any apology for doing so.

However, the member must be aware that this state has a huge debt and we have to overcome that debt, and we will be doing everything that we humanly can to do that. I will tell members something that the opposition really needs to get its head around. When we all say '\$100 billion', those opposite should think of \$100 notes and stack them on top of each other and just think how much room that would take up. I do not think it would fit inside this parliament, because that is how big our debt is. Those opposite need to get their heads around that because we have to pay that back.

The answer is very clear: we will look after front-line services, and we make no apology for saying that—unlike the Labor government, which went out and continued to employ people in areas that just were not needed. We have to do the right thing. We have to manage this business like you do your household. We have to continue to look after the interests of the people of Queensland—unlike the Labor government, which never did and never tried to do. It continued to build on debt and it continued to employ people when there were not really jobs for them. It is a bit like the question that I answered yesterday relating to the PCYC. You went out there and you said that you were going to spend a whole lot of money. You could not find people to put in those positions. We saved \$1.9 million of money that was just sitting there doing nothing. We are paying that money off the debt. That is what we are about. We are not about creating debt; we are about solving problems. But you guys just went out of your way to create problems.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, will you refer to others by their appropriate titles.

Mr DICKSON: I withdraw that statement and I apologise. The opposition continued to waste money and continued to employ people in areas that just were not appropriate. We will always look after front-line services and, again, we do not apologise for doing that.

Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing, Jobs

Ms PALASZCZUK: My question is to the Premier. I refer to cutbacks in the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing affecting staff responsible for developing the fire management plans to be implemented by national park rangers, and I ask: will the Premier outline the number of staff sacked so far where the rangers themselves are now expected to draft fire management plans? Can he outline whether Queensland's national park estate adjoining private properties and nearby population centres will not be adversely affected during the coming bushfire season?

Mr NEWMAN: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. As usual, there are a heck of a lot of assertions being made that are false—about cuts and things like that and whether front-line services are going to be backed. I will say this: we made a commitment to increase the number of rangers, particularly Indigenous rangers, on Cape York and in other parts of Queensland with traditional owners being employed, and we intend to deliver on that commitment in terms of a substantial boost in the number of rangers. Again, why are we looking across the whole of government, including the national parks area, to ensure that we get the budget into balance? Because, as the minister said, if we stacked all of those \$100 notes up to try to give people an idea about what \$100 billion worth of debt looks like, I think it would be a pretty dramatic sight. In fact, the mathematically inclined might want to start doing the work or the calculation right now. How many suitcases containing \$1 million each does one need to have \$100 billion worth of debt? \$100 billion worth of debt is \$100,000 million. That \$100,000 million is the legacy bequeathed by those opposite through their poor and reckless financial management.

In terms of the issue of fire safety, I am fascinated by the question, because all of the dealings that I had with the former minister for the environment, the former member for Ashgrove, Kate Jones, and her department indicated that they did not like fire management too much. This is a bit of a free kick, because the people who sit opposite were captured by the green lobby. If members want to see an example of where the green lobby took over—

Ms Palaszczuk: Have the jobs gone? Yes or no?

Mr NEWMAN: They ask the questions; they do not want to hear the answer. If members want to see an example of where the green lobby took over, they should go and look at the D'Aguilar National Park, where the former government was captured by radical green extremists. The national park, on the doorstep of Brisbane, is choked with weeds. A gentleman came into my office on Friday and he will be coming in for a meeting with the minister today. He will be coming in for a meeting today—a concerned citizen of The Gap—to talk about how the national park just west of The Gap towards Mount Nebo is choked with weeds, is full of feral pigs and feral cats, has not had proper fire management and excluded the public. We will have rangers, but we will have the community getting access again. We are going to cast aside the radical green agenda and give Queenslanders back their national parks!

Cost of Living

Mr DAVIES: My question without notice is to the Premier. Premier, after years of soaring costs of living under Labor, families across my electorate of Capalaba stand to save up to \$7,000 when buying a family home as a result of the government's determination to reduce the costs of living. Premier, are there any threats to this cost-of-living relief?

Mr NEWMAN: I thank the honourable member for his question. Yes, we are putting real cost-of-living measures on the table for families and the \$7,000 stamp duty concession on the family home, which is being restored from 1 July, is there for people in the member's electorate. All Queenslanders—not just the member's local constituents—will get that benefit from 1 July. We know who ripped away that concession last year in the budget as a desperate measure to prop up their financial incompetence. That is right, it was the Labor Party. There are two people across the way who sat in cabinet and agreed to such perverse—

Government members: Three!

Mr NEWMAN: Three! I withdraw the comment. I do not want to mislead the House. Three of them participated in these perverse and unsatisfactory decisions. That is their legacy. Their legacy is debt, deficits and deceit. Their legacy is to crank up the cost of living, but we are working hard to redress those terrible decisions that they made.

I say to honourable members that things are under threat. The ability to offer cost-of-living relief is a finely balanced one because we have a Public Service that is bigger than the taxpayers can afford. It is too big. We have said that, and we have said that openly and honestly. We have had the guts as a government to tell people what the problem is, and that is why we now move forward to try to work with the unions to save jobs. We want to save jobs. We are calling on unions to help us save those jobs by being sensible about the pay deal that we negotiate for hardworking public servants over the coming weeks.

To put it in context, South Australia, with a total public sector of 80,000, has had to cut 5,000 public servants in the past year and the federal government is cutting 12,000 jobs. Perhaps they need to do a bit more heavy lifting. Most of those cuts have been permanent jobs. We have no choice but to deal with the fact that we have 20,000 more than we can afford. I say again today that every 0.1 per cent increase in public sector pay above the 2.2 per cent that we are offering equals 800 additional jobs that we will not be able to afford by 2015-16. We are trying to save jobs. We are trying to cut the cost of living. The biggest threat is that we may not actually get the budget into a balanced position.

Finally, the interesting thing is that we have this very important review, this very important report, the Costello report. The Labor opposition were offered a briefing on it. Did they attend the briefing? No, they did not. They refused the briefing. These economic illiterates do not even want to know the facts about their poor and reckless financial management.

Water Charges

Mr MULHERIN: My question without notice is to the Minister for Energy and Water Supply. I refer the minister to his public statement on Monday in which he said—

The Newman Government will deliver on its election commitment to cut south-east Queensland families' water bills by up to \$80.

I ask: does the minister stand by his party's original commitment to cut water bills for all Queensland households by \$80, not only those living in the south-east corner?

Mr McARDLE: It is great to receive my first question in the House from the opposition. I cannot recall how many days or how many sessions have passed. If I recall correctly, the commitment was made to the south-east corner. But let us go back a bit. I think it is very important to look at the history of water in this state and understand why we are here in this absolute mess.

When honourable members go back they will find that the Beattie-Bligh government did nothing in the lead-up to the drought. They did absolutely nothing to secure water supply right across this state. They did absolutely nothing except spend money on ridiculous projects and also incur additional debt. They had no money in the bank.

Mr Rickuss: Panicked.

Mr McARDLE: They panicked. The drought kicked in and what happened? The Beattie and Bligh governments absolutely panicked. Then we had a system rollout such that if people wanted to put in a pipe they said to the government, 'Pay me whatever I want and I will do it,' and the government paid them whatever they wanted. In addition to that the previous government went and put in a water grid and, believe it or not, they started to build the Traveston Dam. The member for Gympie will remember the Traveston Dam as one of the greatest fiascos that the Labor government ever created. That cost the state \$500 million. The total water grid cost something like \$7.5 billion—all on the tick—that we are paying for even today. Every minute, every single day, every single week every Queenslanders is paying for the disgraceful situation that this government got us in. In addition to that, we have a water bill debt of something like \$1.7 billion—again, money on the tick—and we have to pick up the mess.

The Newman government made a commitment that we will straighten out this mess. We are going to amalgamate the bulk-water entities and we are going to help drive prices down right across South-East Queensland. That was our commitment and that will be our commitment in time to come. We are not going to stand by and wait for the debt tsunami to grow and grow and grow as the Bligh and Beattie governments did over and over again. That rump put us in a position in which our grandchildren will be paying year in, year out for the mistakes, the mess and the disasters that were delivered to this wonderful state.

The Newman government is led by Premier Campbell Newman. He is a man who has a vision, a direction and a future and he is forging this state ahead. This government will make certain that in years to come they will look back and they will say, 'This was the golden time for Queensland because we took the reins, we took the courage, we took the action and we made the great leap forward.' Please ask a second question.

Great Barrier Reef

Ms MILLARD: My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning. Can the Deputy Premier please outline the Newman government's progress in developing a balance between protecting the Great Barrier Reef and sustainable economic development?

Mr SEENEY: I thank the member for Sandgate for the question because it is a very sensible and valid question. There is one word in the question that I believe typifies this government's approach and the approach of all sensible people to these questions of balancing environmental protection with economic development, and that is the word 'balance'. It is about achieving a balance. It is about achieving a balance that ensures our great natural assets are protected and that the tourism industries that depend on those natural assets like the Great Barrier Reef are able to grow and drive and make a contribution to the economy of Queensland. It is balancing that with ensuring that we are able to develop the Queensland economy; we are able to earn the money that Queenslanders need now and for generations in the future to pay for the schools, the hospitals, the infrastructure and the services that all Queenslanders need and which the previous government so comprehensively failed to deliver.

In the short time since we were elected, the LNP government has been about restoring that balance. As I indicated to the House this morning, we have been about removing the ridiculously overly optimistic projects that the previous government had proposed: about taking off the table the 10 coal terminals that were going to treble Queensland's coal capacity in one single port; about reducing six railways down to two; about reducing the dredging impact; about taking away the multi-cargo facility with its absurdly over-the-top 10-berth proposal. We have been doing those things to get back to a more sensible, balanced, incremental growth that can grow Queensland's economy and, at the same time, protect our natural environment.

We have also moved to ensure that those facilities are administered properly. We have appointed capable, sensible people to the chairmanship of the Gladstone Port Authority and North Queensland Bulk Ports. We have appointed Mark Brodie to the Gladstone Port Authority, a man who can deal with the problems that have become apparent in Gladstone Harbour. We have appointed Peter Milton to North Queensland Bulk Ports. They are men of capability; people of wit and wherewithal to address the problems; people who have background and experience and who can deal with the problems to ensure that these facilities are administered properly.

We are starting to look at the planning instruments that the previous government put in place—planning instruments that were all about political philosophy rather than outcomes that could strike that balance between economic development and environmental protection. We will be reviewing all of those planning instruments to make sure that they are instructed by our government's policy—our government's policy of finding that balance, building a future for Queenslanders and making sure that future generations can enjoy an economic future and a wonderful environment. I say to the member for Sandgate that that is the balance. That is the balance that we will get which those opposite missed so badly.

Public Service, Jobs

Mr PITT: My question is to the Treasurer. I refer the Treasurer to his comment in the House earlier this week—

We on this side know that a real job is in the private sector.

I ask: what impact will this statement have on the morale of teachers, nurses, police, ambos, fires and other government workers who work so hard for Queenslanders every day?

Mr NICHOLLS: I thank the member opposite for his question in relation to jobs in Queensland. What do we know about the care that those opposite have for jobs in Queensland? Did they put those 40,000 public servants—the ones they talk about, the ones they say they care about—on the permanent workforce? No, they did not. They left them languishing on temporary contracts for the duration of their time in government. Some of those employees that the member professes to care for have been on temporary contracts for year after year after year with no security, making it hard for them to get a mortgage and hard for them to make commitments. In the meantime, what did those opposite do? As the Commission of Audit so eloquently says, they went on a debt splurge. They went out and borrowed and borrowed and borrowed.

We recall also the promise made by those opposite to create 100,000 jobs for 100,000 breadwinners. Did they deliver on that promise? The answer is a resounding no. They failed by more than 40,000 jobs to provide 100,000 jobs for 100,000 breadwinners. So cockeyed was the then government's calculation of what constitutes a job—a real job—that they thought working one hour a week counted as a real job, a breadwinner's job. I do not know about you, Madam Speaker, and I do not

know about members on this side, but if they think someone can survive, pay a mortgage, look after their kids, maybe go and see a movie, maybe take a holiday once a year by working one hour a week then that shows just how perverse is their idea of a job.

Opposition members interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! There are too many interjections from my left. I warn members.

Mr NICHOLLS: When it comes to creating jobs, when it comes to finding a real job for people that actually pays a wage that meets the mortgage commitments, those opposite have no standing. They have no standing in terms of preaching to us on this side about what constitutes a real job. We are working hard to protect jobs. We are working hard to grow the four pillars of the economy. When those opposite were so unceremoniously relieved of their obligations by the voting public of Queensland, Queensland had the highest unemployment rate in mainland Australia during one of the biggest mining and resources booms in Australia's history. That is their record.

Cost of Living

Mr WALKER: My question without notice is to the Treasurer and Minister for Trade. Can the Treasurer inform the House why the government's cost-of-living bill is important to Queensland families in light of the findings of the independent Commission of Audit interim report, and is the Treasurer aware of any resistance to the Commission of Audit interim report?

Mr NICHOLLS: I thank the member for Mansfield for his question. I know that the member for Mansfield spent considerable time doorknocking in his electorate in the lead-up to the election and also raised with me on a number of occasions issues pertaining to the cost of living. I also note that the member for Mansfield in his role as assistant minister is working to try to grow the economy and grow the property and construction sector of the economy, an area that was so shamelessly abandoned by the former Labor government when it withdrew the \$7,000 principal place of residence concession from families trying to get on in life and trying to make a living. I know that the member for Mansfield is concerned, unlike those opposite and unlike his late and unlamented predecessor, who could not care less.

As all members will be aware, Labor's waste and debt binge will see Queenslanders facing a massive debt of \$100 billion by 2018-19. This is an enormous figure. I think it is a figure far too big for most people to comprehend. How much is \$100 billion? We have actually done a quick calculation—and I thank the health minister and the Premier. \$100 billion would be a pile of \$100 bills stacked 100 kilometres high—\$100 bills stacked 100 kilometres high is \$100 billion worth of Labor debt. Imagine that. When we talk about stratospheric debt, we are not joking. At 100 kilometres we are almost in outer space. That is the level of debt that the people of Queensland have been bequeathed. Here we are at 60 kilometres, \$60 billion—\$64 billion by the end of June—heading towards a \$100 billion, 100-kilometre debt by 2018-19. It is an amazing number to contemplate. What does it actually mean in terms that people can understand, perhaps according to their take-home pay? In today's terms, a person bringing home an average wage will take almost 15½ years to earn one hour's interest—\$685,000—payable on Queensland's debt.

One would think the opposition would want to find out just how this debt occurred on its watch. That is why I offered them a briefing on the Commission of Audit report. Last week I wrote to the opposition—and I table the letter—advising it that I would be prepared to give it the same briefing that I gave the cabinet room, the party room and business and that I am giving unions later today. Do members know what? Those opposite do not want to know. Even now they do not want to know.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 15 June 2012, from Hon. Tim Nicholls MP, Treasurer and Minister for Trade, to Ms Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, Leader of the Opposition, offering a briefing on the Commission of Audit Interim Report [379].

Queensland Health, Cost Savings

Mrs MILLER: My question is to the Premier. I refer the Premier to today's revelations that doctors will be denied tea and coffee in hospitals under the LNP's spending cuts. Will the Premier assure the people of Queensland that this penny pinching will have no impact on patient care and safety in Queensland hospitals?

Mr Choat interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Before I call the Premier I warn the member. I will not tolerate interjections while people are asking questions.

Mr NEWMAN: In answering the honourable member I need to develop a bit of an argument about why cost savings have to be found across government because, clearly, honourable members directly across from me have not been listening. They did not want a briefing on the Commission of Audit, so perhaps we will have to keep explaining it week after week. The issue is saving money across the Queensland government. That is what we need to do. As the Treasurer has told us, these are remarkable visual images to contemplate. Right now the debt pile is about 60 kilometres high. Shortly it will be a pile of \$100 notes 64 kilometres high. Ten \$100 notes form a millimetre of this sandwich, all the way up there. It must be to the stratosphere right now. It will be in a few years time. If we do not act, it will be 100 kilometres high. It is all rather breathtaking, isn't it?

For the benefit of the opposition, the people who did this to Queensland, we have to find savings. I will bring butcher's paper in here, I will use a crayon and I will write it in big letters: 'we have to find savings'. We have ministers and directors-general who are committed to finding savings so we reduce the cost-of-living pressures on Queenslanders. We are not going to crank up taxes and charges in the way that those opposite did to pay off this debt. We are going to work very hard to find the savings. Every minister, every director-general and their teams have been given the job of finding savings in their department. Let me be very clear: I do not care whether the coffee or the pot plants are there; what I care about is finding proper practical savings. If you want to know exactly what is going on in the health department, ask the minister. Ask the minister about the coffee. If the minister thinks it is worthwhile having coffee for doctors, if it is good strategy, I am sure it will be retained.

Ms Palaszczuk interjected.

Mr NEWMAN: They just do not want to know the answer. Honourable members who are new to the parliament will see what the Australian Labor Party is about: huff and puff, smoke and mirrors, and politics over substance and real delivery—every day of the week. Those opposite never want to know the answer. The answer is this: ministers and directors-general have been empowered to find savings. At the end of the day, if something works it will be funded; if it does not work, if it is not value for money, it will go. I do not make any apologies for that at all. We need to be focusing on finding those efficiencies and savings to give cost-of-living relief to Queensland families and to protect hardworking public servants right across the organisation.

Public Transport, Fares

Mr KAYE: My question without notice is to the Premier. As of 1 July 2012, in my electorate of Greenslopes a zone 3 commuter holding a go card will save approximately \$200 a year. As such, can the Premier please outline why these cost-of-living savings are important and are there any threats to the savings?

Mr NEWMAN: I thank the honourable member for the question. I note that the member's predecessor as the representative of the people of that seat was part of the distinguished Labor royalty family, the Dick family. The member's predecessor sat in cabinet and supported the current Leader of the Opposition, who said that they were going to increase public transport fares by 15 per cent—that is right, 15 per cent—in year 1, year 2, year 3, year 4 and year 5, if I recall correctly. The Minister for Transport is nodding. I seem to have that correct. It was the decision of the current Leader of the Opposition to impose incredible pain on commuters.

What are we doing about that? What are we doing for the people who live in Greenslopes and those from right across South-East Queensland? We are providing real public transport fare relief. There are two aspects: we are not going to put up the fares by 15 per cent each year for the next two years, as they would have done. We are halving those increases. More significantly, for the information of the honourable member, next Monday, 25 June, we are delivering on our commitment—after nine journeys have been taken on go card to provide the rest of the week's travel on the system totally free of charge. Members might ask, 'What does that mean for the people of Greenslopes?' It is a \$200-plus saving each year for those people. Those are real and tangible savings. When you add that to things such as the stamp duty concession, the freeze on motor vehicle registration, the initiative with the freeze on tariff 11, they all come together to show that the government is delivering real cost-of-living relief to hardworking men, women and families across South-East Queensland and, indeed, the whole of Queensland.

That shows the difference between us and the Australian Labor Party. We actually deliver. We make promises in elections, we come in and we deliver. We are delivering cost-of-living relief. Members should write to people in their electorates about this and tell them to look at the zonal system. People in my electorate, people at Milton and people at The Gap will save \$200-plus a year. People in Virginia, Rocklea, Nudgee or Oxley will have similar savings. What about people further out in the system? What will be the savings for people at Varsity Lakes or Palmwoods? It will be a massive \$600 a year. Those are real savings. That is real money going back into people's pockets. It is going to get people back on public transport. It will make the system deliver a better service for people. Again it is an example of how the LNP government in this place, in fewer than 90 days, is delivering for Queenslanders.

Cross River Rail

Ms TRAD: My question without notice is to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Lockyer under standing order 253A.

Ms TRAD: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for your protection. I refer the Minister for Transport and Main Roads to his plans to increase capacity on our rail network. I ask: how many seats will be removed from Queensland trains to compensate for the LNP's delayed delivery of cross river rail?

A government member: What about the new trains with no seats?

Madam SPEAKER: Order! I have already warned the member. I now warn the member under standing order 253A.

Mr EMERSON: I assume the question is for me, because obviously the shadow minister was a bit confused last night. Last night I heard Channel 10 describe her as 'confused' when she was trying to ask some of these questions. It is wonderful to hear her talk about cross river rail, because it is a great project that we announced yesterday. It is a leaner LNP project.

Ms Palaszczuk: Oh!

Mr EMERSON: I hear a groan from the Leader of the Opposition. I can understand why she wants to groan. Let us look at her record on that project. Let us get a snapshot of her performance on cross river rail during the election campaign itself. As members would remember, that election campaign ran for about six weeks. At the beginning of the campaign, how much was Labor's cross river rail plan going to cost? \$8.3 billion. Halfway through the election campaign, on ABC Radio she said, 'It'll be just a little bit less.' She had to be asked over and over and over again, 'How much is "a little bit less"?' Suddenly, she told Steve Austin's radio audience, 'It's now \$7 billion.' Three weeks earlier, it was \$8.3 billion; three weeks later, it is \$7 billion. That is 'just a little bit less'. If a figure drops by \$1.3 billion in three weeks and is described as 'just a little bit less', we can understand why Labor left us in such a diabolical mess.

However, that was not the end of it. At the beginning of the campaign it was \$8.3 billion and halfway through the campaign it was \$7 billion. Then, three days from the election, the number they were putting out was \$6.4 billion. At the beginning it was \$8.3 billion; halfway through it was \$7 billion; and at the end it was \$6.4 billion. They are rubbery figures. The reality was that the now Leader of the Opposition, who was then the transport minister, had no idea about what was happening with cross river rail.

That is why it was so important to have an expert panel look at the plan. What did it come up with? It came up with a plan that will deliver a project for \$4.5 billion, which is almost \$4 billion less than the \$8.3 billion that the Leader of the Opposition talked about initially, but it will have the same benefits. We are doubling the capacity, improving reliability and improving times, for \$4 billion less.

Opposition members interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Minister, resume your seat. I have warned members on my left. If I continue to hear interjections, I will start warning them under the standing orders.

Mr EMERSON: It is \$4 billion less than Labor's plan. The former transport minister, now the Leader of the Opposition, had no idea. I make the point that our plan can only go ahead if we get that money from the federal government. Now is the time for Labor in Canberra to step up to the plate and deliver for Queensland.

Cost of Living

Mr JUDGE: My question without notice is to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. Will the minister please outline how the government is relieving cost-of-living pressures for Queensland motorists?

Mr EMERSON: I thank the honourable member for his question. I know he is committed to improving the cost of living for his electorate's residents—his constituents—including motorists. Let us recap Labor's record in terms of motorists in Queensland. According to the RACQ, Queensland had become the most expensive state in Australia in which to own and run a motor vehicle. Why was it so expensive in Queensland? Let us go back and think about it. Before the 2009 election, members might recall that Labor claimed it would keep the fuel subsidy. It made a strong election promise to keep the fuel subsidy. Ahead of that election campaign, the late and unlamented Treasurer and member for Mount Coot-tha claimed, 'We'll be keeping the fuel subsidy.' The now departed former Premier, Anna Bligh, told the electorate and ABC Radio, 'We won't kick Queenslanders when they are down. We'll be

keeping the fuel subsidy.' She crossed her heart and said, 'We'll be keeping it.' It was an election promise in 2009. What happened? It is what happens always with Labor promises. They con the voters, they get to the election and after they win they break their election promises. When they returned to power, they scrapped the fuel subsidy.

What was Labor's record on car registration? Since 2008 there has been a 30 per cent increase. Many members were not here last year, so I will recall for them what happened. There was a debate on a motion moved by the LNP in this parliament to stop the most recent increase in car registration. We wanted to freeze it. But who opposed that freeze? Who spoke against it? Who voted against it? Who voted to ramp up car registration over and over again? It was Labor. Who led that charge to increase car registration? The now Leader of the Opposition and then transport minister. She argued over and over again that we had to increase car registration. We wanted to freeze it and those opposite wanted to keep ramping it up.

That is why I am so pleased that the LNP is keeping its election promise to freeze car registration for family vehicles. We are keeping our election promise. That car registration freeze comes into force on 1 July. We keep our election promises. We are looking after motorists. We are unlike Labor who break its election promises and vote to put up car registration over and over again.

Madam SPEAKER: Before calling the member for Gladstone, I clarify for the House that question time will finish at 11.31 am due to the condolence motion this morning.

Gladstone Electorate, Infrastructure

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning. Yesterday the minister outlined the high level of locals living within 60 kilometres of Gladstone and employed by Bechtel, a major contractor to the LNG construction project. Given that there are no background statistics relating to how long people have lived in the 4608 area—and I assure the minister that many of those are very new—will the minister actively support the funding for infrastructure critically needed for Gladstone to support this new population, such as affordable housing, hospital services and emergency services?

Mr SEENEY: I thank the member for Gladstone for the question. The short answer of course is, yes, but I never give short answers. Could I say to the member for Gladstone, she and I share a similar concern about the extent to which the previous government failed to plan for resource developments right across Central Queensland. But that failure to plan is nowhere more evident than in Gladstone. What is happening in Gladstone is a massive construction project. It is probably—and I have heard it said—one of the 10 biggest construction sites in the world, and I could believe that.

It did not happen overnight. We all knew it was coming. The previous government knew it was happening, but they did not plan. They did not put the infrastructure in place. They did not require the large multinational corporations that are involved in that construction effort to make efforts ahead of the construction starting to avoid the impacts on the communities.

As I have said in this place many times, while we welcome the economic activity that comes from these resource developments, we have a responsibility to protect our communities in Central Queensland and to protect the people who are long-term residents of those communities and ensure that those communities do not become just major construction camps but retain the essence of a community and function as a community. That is being threatened in Gladstone at the moment. That is certainly being threatened in Moranbah, Emerald and Mackay—places that are bearing the brunt of the resources boom.

It is all about planning. It is all about a government that is prepared to get involved. It is all about a government that has the wit and the wherewithal to understand that these things need to be done and that they need to be required to be done not just by the proponents but by the government itself. We need to make sure that all of the necessary prerequisites are provided.

Housing is a classic example. The housing crisis in Gladstone is acute. There is no question about it. And yet we are still talking about building houses. The problem is now. It takes months to build a house. It takes months to provide accommodation and yet we are trying to deal with a problem that is acute now.

The ULDA was the previous government's response. What a hopeless failure it has been in terms of trying to address that problem. I inspected the ULDA's puny efforts in Gladstone the other day, member for Gladstone. What is there is fine, but it is tiny. It is a tiny flea bite on an elephant of a problem. It represents the success the previous government had. We have moved quickly to refocus the ULDA, to take over the efforts of the ULDA in those resource communities to make sure that we can use that mechanism to address these housing issues before they become the crisis that Gladstone is suffering. We will continue to do that in conjunction with the member for Gladstone and other local members who have to deal with these problems in their electorates.

Cost of Living

Mr DRISCOLL: My question without notice is to the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games. Can the minister advise the House on how the government's commitment to reducing the cost of living for Queenslanders will help small businesses in my electorate of Redcliffe and across the state of Queensland?

Mrs STUCKEY: I would like to thank the honourable member for Redcliffe for his question. I would like to acknowledge his advocacy for small businesses in his own right over a long period and through his association for the past several years with the United Retail Federation.

Like so many members in the House on our side of politics, he understands what makes small business tick. As I look around this House and I see so many honourable members who have backgrounds in small business, whether that be through sport and fitness, farming, grazing, IT, law, medicine—

A government member: Financial planning.

Mrs STUCKEY: Financial planning, we will probably have a few more calling out for that. As members can see, there are so many honourable members on the LNP side of the House who understand exactly what makes small business tick. They also understand the sacrifices that are made and they understand the suffering that they have experienced over so many years of Labor rule.

Therefore, it is heartening for all of us on this side of the House to recognise that tourism is being run by a Newman government through a four-pillar economy; one that recognises tourism, agriculture, resources and mining and one that is dedicated to lowering the cost of living not only for small business owners but people right across Queensland. It is interesting to note that the policy we took to the election in our economic blueprint was a commitment of a four per cent unemployment rate and a cut in red tape of 20 per cent over six years. These are not small targets. These are very important targets that need to be achieved, especially when one considers the burden that has been left for us in some 92,000 pages of red tape and regulation. I say shame on Labor for crushing our small businesses. But then they did not care about small business; they were more concerned about themselves.

We on this side of the House know that small business is the backbone of our economy. We understand there are 412,000 small businesses. That is why we have pledged to increase the exemption from payroll tax from \$1 million to \$1.6 million over six years. That exemption will amount to \$100,000 per year. This is great news for small business and an incentive to create jobs. We have also established the Office of Best Practice Regulation to further cut red tape.

(Time expired)

Public Service, Jobs

Mr BYRNE: My question is to the Premier. I refer the Premier to his email to all public servants which foreshadows cuts to permanent jobs in the Public Service, and I ask: will the Premier now reconsider his jobs purge and instead stand up for teachers, nurses, ambos and other government workers who are concerned about their job security?

Mr NEWMAN: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am happy to go around the world again. I want to protect the jobs of permanent public servants. I have said that day after day in this place. That is what we are about.

Mr Pitt interjected.

Mr NEWMAN: The member for Mulgrave is interjecting and I will take the interjection. He says, 'What about the temporaries and what about the casuals?' A temporary job is a temporary job. It is a temporary contract. I have said that already.

Mr Pitt interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! I warn the Leader of Opposition Business. I call the Premier.

Mr NEWMAN: A temporary job is a temporary job. A casual job is a casual job. The reason that something like at least 37,000 people had that employment status was due to the employment policies of—and this is very sarcastic and let the *Hansard* reflect the sarcasm—the job friendly Labor Party government that we had in Queensland for basically most of the last 20 years.

What actually sickens me about the Labor Party is the way they go on and on—they have been going on since Kevin Rudd in 2007—about working families. They do not care two hoots about families whether they are working or not. They do not care at all. It is a complete nonsense. It is the Labor Party spin machine. What we are trying to do is protect—

Ms Palaszczuk: 20,000 more public sector jobs.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! I call the Premier.

Mr NEWMAN: We are doing our best to protect public servant jobs. What we will be doing is this: those on casual employment arrangements or temporary contracts who are not on the front line, when their contracts expire, sadly, will not have jobs. I am saying it today but I have said it previously. What we then want to do is redeploy permanent public servants to backfill positions where they are necessarily directed towards those front-line services. Where public servants with permanent job status leave the Public Service, we will not be re-recruiting. That is what the government has been saying for weeks. When will these people listen? I have come here honestly and openly to talk about the issues but they will not listen.

The member for Rockhampton has asked a question today that I have answered on multiple occasions. The reason we are making these changes and cutting costs in the way that we are—and we acknowledge the human cost of that—is that we are trying to balance the budget and we are trying to take the pressure off the cost of living for Queensland families, because, unlike Labor, we will not plaster over mistakes by raising taxes.

Electricity Prices

Mr SYMES: My question without notice is to the Minister for Energy and Water Supply. Can the minister please advise the House why the government froze electricity tariff 11?

Mr McARDLE: I thank the member for Lytton for the question. He is a young man with a long way to go but he is keen to ensure the cost of living in this state is under control. It is so great to see a new member for Lytton taking up the cudgels that the former member developed four or five years ago. I start by reminding the House that we are 10 days out from the introduction of the carbon tax, and that is a tax that will impact every electricity bill as long as Labor stays in power in the Commonwealth government. As long as Labor stays in power, we will see a 10 per cent increase in our power bills purely because of the carbon tax. Of course, those opposite have had many chances, even during this sittings of parliament, to say that they are averse to, opposed to or do not agree with the carbon tax, but there has been not one statement from any member of the ALP in this state to indicate that they are opposed to the carbon tax.

Let us talk about the issue of electricity because it is a very important cost-of-living item. We know that way back in September 2005 the then Premier, Peter Beattie, followed by his Treasurer at the time, Anna Bligh, made the commitment that there would be no increases in power prices when they introduced their retail initiatives. In fact, I can recall the Premier at that time saying that there would be a drop of up to \$150 in the power bills of each Queenslanders. I do not know too many Queenslanders who have received a drop of \$150 in their power bills since 2007.

Worse than that, what happened under the Bligh and Beattie governments is that we racked up debts in Ergon, Energex and Powerlink of \$12.6 billion between 2005-06 and 2010-11—again, more money on the tick, more money that we are paying every time a power bill is issued from one of these entities, and more and more money that we have to dig into our pockets to find on a regular basis as opposed to putting that money into other initiatives.

The Newman government made it quite clear that we would freeze tariff 11 in an endeavour to assist people in this state, and we have done exactly that. But more than that—that is not enough—we are going to ensure that we look at all the levers that drive the power bills up and make certain that we understand, more importantly, how we can pull those levers back to drive power prices down, not just for the short term and not just for the medium term but for the long term. That is our commitment to get the debt under control, to get the cost of living under control, and that is why we moved to freeze tariff 11. We make no apologies for that. But we say this: that is the first step in a process we will take forward to assist all Queenslanders to meet the cost of living in regard to power and also in regard to water. That is our commitment, that is our promise and that is our pledge.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the member for Woodridge, there are too many audible conversations in the chamber. I ask people to please keep the noise down. I call the member for Woodridge.

Public Housing

Mrs SCOTT: My question without notice is to the Minister for Housing and Public Works. I refer the minister to his mass mail-out to public housing residents in Queensland. For the information of members, I table this correspondence.

Tabled paper: Proforma letter, dated 12 June 2012, from Hon. Dr Bruce Flegg MP, Minister for Housing and Public Works, in relation to public housing [\[380\]](#).

I ask: will the minister rule out departmental properties being transferred to private real estate agents for managing waiting lists, properties and rent collection?

Dr FLEGG: I am delighted to get a question on the mail-out that we have done to Queensland public housing tenants because it is the first of a series of major responses to a very serious crisis in public housing in Queensland. The financing of public housing in effect collapsed under the previous government, from a substantial surplus just a few years ago to a massive and growing financial deficit. As a result, there has been a collapse in the number of people we are able to assist into housing in this state—people who desperately need housing. That has slowed to a trickle because of the mismanagement of the finances and the property portfolio within Housing.

We have also seen an explosion in the size of the waiting list of people—frequently desperately needy people—to get into housing and get assistance. We have a portfolio of houses that is old and is inappropriate. We have now a rapidly growing component of people who require public housing who have very high needs, who need more than just a roof over their head. They need support because of their background, their disability or an array of other things. I do not make any secret of this crisis or the drastic action this government will be taking to address it before it gets even worse.

In answer to the question, there are no current plans to outsource management, as I understood the question to be, to private real estate agents. That is not an option that has been looked at. But I can tell the honourable member now that, if it became a mechanism by which I could house more desperately needy Queenslanders and repair the shambles that the finances of public housing are in, I would happily consider it. It is not one of the options, but I can advise the member—and I know that the member has many public housing units in her electorate, and I look forward to working with all members—that she can look forward to many more announcements in the public housing area both aimed at fixing the appalling state of finances that saw the previous government selling houses to pay for the deficit in public housing and aimed specifically at providing housing for the thousands of desperately needy Queenslanders.

(Time expired)

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the next member, there are still too many conversations in this chamber that are not related to the debate, and I will start warning people for discussions that we can hear. I call the member for Springwood.

Local Government

Mr GRANT: My question without notice is to the Minister for Local Government. The Australian Productivity Commission says that Australia-wide regulatory activities take up 11 per cent of local government time and around eight per cent of their expenditure. As such, can the minister please update the House on any actions he intends to take to help ease the burden on councils and in doing so reduce costs for ratepayers?

Mr CRISAFULLI: I thank the member for Springwood for the question—a great friend of local government. It would be remiss of me now not to thank all of the members from his part of the world who, with me, attended a meeting with the Logan City Council the other night. The comment was made at that meeting that it has been a long time since the Logan City Council members saw so many state members of parliament turn up to meet them and hear their views. I made the comment that it has been a long time since the Logan City Council was represented by such fine members. I congratulate each and every one of them for giving their time.

Let us focus very clearly on the question, because it is a great question. The Productivity Commission says that regulatory activities take up 11 per cent of local government's time and eight per cent of the expenditure of local government. In Queensland, local government operating expenses are about \$9.5 billion annually. That is \$760 million down the toilet each and every year administering government regulations.

The question was: what can we do? We can change the Local Government Act—a dog of an act—and put mayors and councillors back in charge to again allow councils to work together with joint local government arrangements, not forcing them to amalgamate, not making rules from above but giving them the opportunity to come together and get results for their community.

We will cut red tape and green tape. As the Deputy Premier said earlier, there is an opportunity for councils to be more efficient in their planning process and, with the assistance of the member for Mansfield, what a golden opportunity for councils to be able to make real decisions, for councils to be able to cut through what has dogged them for many years.

Local government in this state has been treated with contempt. It has been a level of government that has been used as the dumping ground for failed state government policies like waste levies. Local government woke up one day to be told, 'Not only will you collect this insidious tax for us but the sting in the tail is you can pay it as well through your commercial business units.' This government will reduce the cost of local councils doing business and, therefore, we will assist lowering the cost of living for ratepayers across the state.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! The time for question time has expired.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Error in Answer to Question; Cost of Living

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade) (11.31 am), by leave: I wish to correct the record. During answers in question time I made reference to some figures and statistics that I now find are not correct. Madam Speaker, you will recall that I said we thought the stack of \$100 bills was going to be—100 kilometres high?

Mr Newman: One hundred kilometres.

Mr NICHOLLS: One hundred kilometres. I have in fact taken the opportunity to check with the Reserve Bank of Australia on the thickness and size of banknotes, and I find that we are not at 100 kilometres for \$100 billion debt. Members will be pleased to know, and I want to correct the record, that we will in fact be 140 kilometres high given that the average thickness—

Mr PITT: Madam Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I think that is a frivolous ministerial statement.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! That is a frivolous point of order. I warn the Manager of Opposition Business under standing order 253A.

Mr NICHOLLS: I wish to ensure that members are properly informed that the thickness of 1,000 \$100 Australian polymer bank bills is in fact 140.8 kilometres give or take a five per cent margin on either side.

The Premier is also distressed in relation to an answer he gave that may have been misleading when he said that \$60 billion was something in the order of only 63 kilometres, so I take this opportunity to say that \$60 billion is in the order of 84 kilometres. To give members a sense of where that sits in the earth's atmosphere, I also have some information from NASA in relation to when we hit the stratosphere. The stratosphere starts at 40 kilometres, so we are well into the stratospheric level. The mesosphere starts at 50 kilometres and the thermosphere, which is the level at which satellites start operating, starts at 90 kilometres.

Mr Cripps: You can see the debt from space.

Mr NICHOLLS: I am reliably informed that space itself starts at 100 kilometres. In order that the record accurately reflect the facts and figures, at \$100 billion we will well and truly be into outer space when it comes to the debt left by this Labor government.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (COMMONWEALTH POWERS) BILL

Resumed from 29 May (see p. 195).

Second Reading

 **Hon. JH LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Minister for Education, Training and Employment) (11.34 am): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I would like to thank the Education and Innovation Committee for its report on the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012 tabled on 8 June 2011. Although the committee only had a short time to examine the bill, it has received a detailed briefing from the Department of Education, Training and Employment and has prepared a comprehensive report on the bill. I also acknowledge the work of the former Industry, Education, Training and Industrial Relations Committee, which reported on an earlier version of this bill.

I am pleased to note that the committee was supportive of the bill and recommended that it be passed. The committee made two recommendations in relation to annually monitoring and reporting on the impact of registered training organisation fees on small registered training organisations—or

RTOs—and on schools. The government has carefully considered the committee's report and has decided to accept the recommendation to report on the impact of RTO fees on schools but to reject the recommendation about reporting on small RTOs. I now table the government's response to the committee's report.

Tabled paper: Education and Innovation Committee: Report No. 3—Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill, government response [381].

The government acknowledges that the referral of power will result in Queensland RTOs paying a higher level of fees because Queensland's fees are subsidised, whereas the national regulator's fees are full cost recovery. The committee's second recommendation that the government should monitor the impact of RTO fees on small RTOs was made in response to concerns about the impact of fee increases on this cohort of providers. The government is not accepting this recommendation for a range of reasons.

The Department of Education, Training and Employment does not currently gather information about the financial performance of RTOs. The department will not have the power to request this information from RTOs following a referral of powers because the regulation of RTOs will be the responsibility of the national VET regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority, or ASQA. Requiring RTOs to provide this information may be seen as an increase in red tape. RTOs will be providing information to their regulator, ASQA, but also having to respond to requests for information from my department.

Reliability of the data might be questionable, as the department cannot access data about an RTO's financial performance. It can only categorise an RTO's size based on its scope of registration. An RTO's scope of registration is not indicative of turnover or number of its employees. A report targeting small RTOs by scope of registration may not accurately capture the impact of fee increases on RTOs that are small businesses. Also, in a national scheme of registration it may be difficult to identify Queensland RTOs.

There are a number of significant changes occurring in the VET sector at present and it may not be possible for RTOs to isolate the impact of fee increases from all of the other changes currently occurring. Examples of other reforms impacting on RTOs include the National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform and changes in the regulation of overseas student training.

The Commonwealth government has already conducted public consultation on ASQA's fees and RTOs have had an opportunity to make submissions on the proposed fee structure. In May 2011 the Commonwealth government released a cost recovery impact statement and received over 140 submissions. ASQA responded to concerns about the structure of the registration fee and decided to split this fee into five yearly payments instead of full payment upfront. It is also worth noting that the number of RTOs regulated by ASQA has increased since the establishment of ASQA in July 2011, indicating that its fees do not represent a significant barrier to entering the training market.

The Newman government considers it more appropriate for ASQA and the Commonwealth government to monitor the impact of its fees. Therefore, I am writing to the Commonwealth government and requesting that it monitor the impact of its fees on RTOs generally but particularly on Queensland's RTOs.

The government accepts the committee's third recommendation to monitor the impact of RTO fees on schools. My department will work with the schooling sectors to ensure high-quality VET continues to be offered in our schools. In the first 12 months after referral, schools will, as is currently the case, have their RTO registration managed by the Queensland Studies Authority and will not be required to pay RTO registration fees. My department has committed to adequately funding school RTOs to ensure that they are able to meet any changes in cost. Nevertheless, the government will report on the impact on school RTOs for three years after the referral, starting in 2013. The need for ongoing reporting can be reviewed after that time.

I will be moving two amendments during consideration in detail of this bill. The first amendment will fix the commencement date of the bill as 29 June 2012. This will ensure the referral takes effect before 1 July 2012, promoting a smooth transition to national regulation and maximising the savings to the Queensland government from a referral. The second amendment will ensure that vocational placement schemes in chapter 4 of the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000 can continue to be applied after a referral. Technically, this scheme would be invalid after a referral as it includes some incidental regulation of RTOs. The Commonwealth government agrees that Queensland should be able to apply this regime after referral. During the two-year period, my department will develop an alternative vocational placement process and amendments will be made to ensure it is consistent with the national regulation of RTOs.

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.41 am): I rise to make a contribution on the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012. From the outset, I would like to advise that the opposition will not be opposing this bill. This is the second time this

bill has been introduced into the Queensland parliament. It was first introduced by Minister Hinchliffe in October 2011 and it was referred to the Industry, Education, Training and Industrial Relations Committee for report back by 6 February 2012. The committee reported in December 2011, however, due to the election the first bill had lapsed. The second bill was then introduced on 29 May this year and the committee was to report by 12 June. There was a public briefing on 6 June. However, the bill differed from the first bill in only a small number of respects—one was to adopt one of the recommendations of the previous committee and another was to correct a small oversight that had been missed in the first bill.

I welcome what the minister said in relation to the recommendations that were discussed by the committee. I thank the chair of the committee and everybody else. The briefings that we received from the department were more than satisfactory. They were able to answer all of our questions.

Perhaps whilst the minister is here, I will ask him to correct me if I am wrong in relation to what I thought he just said—that is, that the government supports recommendations Nos 1 and 3 of the committee, but in relation to recommendation No. 2, whilst not accepting it from a Queensland level, the minister will be writing to the Commonwealth minister to ask them to monitor the impact of fees on small and registered training organisations.

Mr Langbroek: Yes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I note that the minister has indicated that that is his reasoning. Because of that, we will support this bill. Essentially, the bill aims to give effect to a COAG agreement whereby Queensland, along with other jurisdictions, agrees to refer power to the Commonwealth to regulate vocational education and training providers. New South Wales, the ACT, the Northern Territory, South Australia and Tasmania have all referred powers already, and Victoria and Western Australia have referred powers in relation to providers who operate in a referring jurisdiction or who train overseas students. These jurisdictions have not referred powers in relation to all of their training providers. Queensland has until 30 June 2012 to refer power to the Commonwealth or it will become a non-referring jurisdiction. If this is not done, there would in effect be two different regulatory bodies operating in Queensland applying two different sets of standards. The confusion and duplication would make this situation simply unworkable.

When the Commonwealth enacted its legislation, it created the new national VET regulator—the Australian Skills Quality Authority—and it is already regulating training providers in other jurisdictions. There are two areas where Queensland currently has legislative provisions dealing with the training that is required by certain occupational groups. These would become invalid on the passage of this legislation because of inconsistency with the Commonwealth legislation, if not for the further amendments included in this bill. The first is pool safety inspectors and the other is those who provide training in the responsible service of alcohol and gambling.

In relation to pool safety inspectors, the Pool Safety Council was previously authorised to approve courses under guidelines issued by the chief executive of the department of public works. Under this bill, the Pool Safety Council will still be able to approve courses but these will be accredited under the VET system. In relation to the responsible service of alcohol and responsible service of gambling training providers, the RTOs currently have to be approved to deliver training by the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation, which then decides the way that training should be delivered. Because these RTOs have been delivering this training for a few years now, it was decided to allow them to transition to the national scheme over a two-year period. The bill therefore includes a displacement provision so that the national law will not apply to these providers during this period but the current arrangement will continue to apply until the RTOs transition fully to the new scheme.

The fee structure is something that has been noted by the committee—at both the most recent committee hearing and the hearing of the previous committee last year. For the benefit of the House, I note that one of the differences between the last bill and this bill is in relation to the fee charges of the small RTOs, the medium RTOs and the large RTOs. Essentially, we see some small changes as outlined in the committee report on page 7. I thank the chair of the committee because we thought it was important to incorporate the updated figures as part of the discussions for today's debate in parliament. What we do see is some slight variations from what was put forward under the previous bill. The department was able to explain the changes and we were satisfied with its explanation.

The committee noted a number of large increases particularly for the small training organisations. The department advised at the public briefing that because there is a move across government for a full cost recovery of fees there could still be an increase in fees of the same scale, even if Queensland did not refer the power to the Commonwealth. Because of the increased costs, particularly for small registered training organisations, the committee has recommended that the department annually monitor and report on the impact of these fee increases. But, as the minister stated prior to my speech, essentially he will be writing to the Commonwealth minister and I think that will be acceptable to both sides of the House.

For the next 12 months ASQA will continue to not charge schools who offer VET courses the accreditation fees. However, this agreement expires in 12 months and there is no indication whether it will be continued. I was reassured by the statements made by the director-general at the committee hearing, as she advised the committee that the department is looking at various ways of ensuring that schools are not impacted in their ability to deliver training courses. She explained the different things they were looking at, including having one RTO for all schools or for schools within a particular region so that each school did not have to pay the fees. The minister also said in his explanatory speech that the government will ensure that schools are not adversely affected by the move to the national regulation of VET.

The committee also recommended that the department monitor and report annually on the impact of registered training organisation fees on schools. I think this is important because many students leave school with a head start on the job stakes, taking with them a VET qualification. There are also a couple of procedural matters that the previous committee noted—one was the fact that the minister had not tabled a copy of the national law in the parliament when the bill was introduced. I note that the minister in introducing this bill has tabled copies of the national laws, and I commend him for taking the recommendation of the committee on board.

The other matter is that the previous committee also recommended that a provision be included in the bill requiring the minister to table a copy of any amendments made to the national law in the Queensland parliament. This is because when Queensland referred the power to the Commonwealth the Commonwealth can amend the law without reference to the parliament. This is a safeguard to ensure that parliament maintains authority over its powers that have been referred. I note that this recommendation has been taken into account and there is such a provision in the latest version of the bill. I am pleased to see the bill brought back to the parliament, and I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mrs MENKENS** (Burdekin—LNP) (11.49 am): As chairman of the Education and Innovation Committee, I am very happy to support the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012. This bill was introduced into the parliament and referred to the committee by the Hon. John-Paul Langbroek, Minister for Education, Training and Employment, on 29 May this year and the reporting date was set for 12 June this year. I want to particularly acknowledge the work of the previous parliament's Industry, Education, Training and Industrial Relations Committee, which had commenced examining an earlier version of the bill and had in fact tabled its report on that bill at the end of 2011. This bill lapsed when parliament was dissolved on 19 February 2012 prior to the second reading debate taking place.

That inquiry into the bill was advertised in the *Courier-Mail* and on the parliament's website on 29 October last year and the previous committee also wrote to specific stakeholders inviting written submissions on that bill. Officers from the department also briefed the previous committee in October in a session that was open to the general public. The Education and Innovation Committee was also briefed on this new bill by the Department of Education, Training and Employment on 6 June this year before deliberating on this bill. Witnesses at this public hearing, whom we express our appreciation to, were from the Department of Education, Training and Employment and included Director-General Ms Julie Grantham, Mr Michael Bopf and Mr Christopher Roney. Members of the current committee were given considerable advantage because of the previous committee's work, because it had already run a public consultation process, completed a report and made recommendations that were accepted by the new government, and this has been reflected in the new bill. Because of the work it had done, this committee did not go out to public consultation.

The Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012 will refer power from the Queensland government to the Commonwealth government to regulate the vocational education and training sector, facilitating a national regulatory framework to improve the quality of VET services and increase consumer and employer confidence in the sector. Excluded from the referral are school education, tertiary education other than VET, apprenticeships and traineeships, non-VET qualifications, state funding of VET or the establishment or management of any agency of the state that provides VET training such as technical and further education—that is, TAFE colleges. This bill will abolish the Queensland Training and Employment Recognition Council, with the referral exclusions moving to Skills Queensland's control.

The committee has endorsed the previous committee's report—the Industry, Education, Training and Industrial Relations Committee's report—and recommendations on the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2011, and that of course, as we know, was tabled last year. The government has adopted the recommendations of that former committee that amendments to the national law are required to be tabled in the Queensland parliament and, on the introduction of this 2012 version of the bill, accepted the invitation to table a copy of the national law. The government has accepted those recommendations.

Our committee noted the extent of the fee increases to registered training organisations, RTOs, that will result from the Australian Skills Quality Authority, ASQA, fee regime being altered since the previous committee considered this matter. Our committee also shared the concerns of the previous committee about the impact of fees on schools that provided VET services and also has concerns about the cost implications for smaller RTOs. The Queensland fees for RTOs have been subsidised for some time, and the advice of the department was that ongoing subsidisations would by no means be certain in the event that referral did not proceed. This means that a fee increase for RTOs could occur irrespective of the referral to the Commonwealth. The Department of Education, Training and Employment advised that RTO fees could increase regardless of whether Queensland referred power to the Commonwealth. Currently, registration and course accreditation fees for Queensland RTOs are subsidised by the state. However, under this bill, ASQA will become the single national VET regulator and charge fees reflecting full cost recovery.

The committee examined current fees in Queensland with the projected fees which will be charged by ASQA after the transition period, with fee increases ranging from \$64 per year for a medium RTO to \$8,800 per year for a large RTO. The potential impact on small RTOs was noted by the committee given the large percentage increases in fees for these organisations and the capacity of smaller organisations to pay. The committee agreed with the view of the previous committee that, on balance, benefits to the sector outweigh the increased cost of a national regulator.

Support for the bill has also been received from the Australian Council for Private Education and Training, the peak body for RTOs. However, to ensure any impact on small RTOs was managed appropriately, our committee did recommend that the department annually monitor and report on the impact of fee increases for these small organisations. I do note that this recommendation was not supported by the government, for very good reason, in that the government believed that it was more appropriate for ASQA to actually monitor the impact of those fees. I am very pleased to hear the minister say that the government will write to the Commonwealth ministers responsible requesting ASQA to monitor the impacts of its fees on the RTOs generally but particularly the Queensland RTOs, given that they are moving from subsidised fees to full cost-recovery fees.

Our committee strongly agreed that schools should not be adversely affected by the move to national regulation of vocational education and training, and I note that the government has supported our recommendation to that effect. This was also endorsed by the minister, the Hon. John-Paul Langbroek, in his introductory speech on this bill with his confirmation that DETE will review existing funding arrangements for the delivery of VET in schools to ensure that schools receive sufficient funding to meet the cost of RTO fees and work with school sectors to develop alternative registration models that reduce the RTO fees payable to ASQA and implement these strategies if ASQA does not continue the delegation to the Queensland Studies Authority.

The former committee considered the consistency of the previous bill with fundamental legislative principles contained in the Legislative Standards Act 1992 and concluded that, although national legislation has some associated costs in terms of those principles, the fundamental legislative principles considered were a Henry VIII clause which allow subordinate legislation to amend the act and a new penalty for failure of an organisation to give a true and non-misleading notice. The committee has examined the application of fundamental legislative principles to this new bill and considers the Henry VIII clause as necessary to facilitate the transition to the new national legislative scheme. The new penalty introduced by the legislation is considered as having sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals being commensurate with the nature of the offence and important to ensure the reputation of the sector.

Referring power to the Commonwealth will ensure that Queensland will continue to deliver and maintain the highest quality standard. It will also further support the Newman government's commitment to reducing regulatory burden on business. This bill also includes a clause requiring that any amendments to the national VET legislation must be tabled before the Queensland parliament. The bill includes an amendment referral which allows the Commonwealth parliament to amend the national VET legislation with respect to prescribed VET matters.

The Department of Education, Training and Employment is working in close consultation with the national regulator, which is the Australian Skills Quality Authority—ASQA—to ensure a smooth transition from state to national regulation. The education minister, the Hon. John-Paul Langbroek, has assured honourable members of this House that the Newman government will ensure that schools are not adversely affected by the move to national VET regulation. In fact, this government is committed to ensuring that Queensland school students continue to have access to the highest quality vocational education and training.

Currently, school RTOs have their RTO registration managed by the Queensland Studies Authority—QSA—through a delegation from the TERC under the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000, which effectively means they have not been paying RTO registration fees.

However, after the Queensland parliament refers its power to the Commonwealth, this arrangement will remain in force for at least 12 months until ASQA undertakes its review. Over this 12-month transitional period the department will work with schools to develop strategies to minimise the impact of fees if the delegation is terminated. Firstly, the department will review existing funding arrangements for the delivery of VET in schools to ensure that schools receive sufficient funding to meet the cost of RTO fees. Secondly, the department will work with school sectors to develop alternative registration models that reduce the RTO fees payable to ASQA. These strategies can then be implemented if ASQA does not continue the delegation to the QSA. Our committee was completely confident that referring power to the Commonwealth to regulate Queensland RTOs would ensure that this state continues to maintain its reputation as a high-quality training provider. It will also deliver substantial benefits to the training industry including the very tangible benefits associated with the reduction of the red tape regulatory burden on businesses.

The policy objectives of the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012, which, of course, is this bill—the bill we are debating this year—remain the same as those that were introduced in 2011 in the previous bill. This bill will facilitate the regulation of RTOs under the Liquor Act 1992 and the Gaming Machine Act 1991. The bill includes a displacement provision which will expire two years after commencement to allow training to continue to be regulated under this legislation. During this time the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation will consider alternative options for regulating these industries consistent with national VET legislation.

The committee requested further information from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, which administers the responsible service of alcohol training, regarding the fee structure for RTOs after the displacement provision expiry. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General advised that, while it is not currently in a position to comment on any future fee regime, it is working to identify options which may minimise any additional financial impact to RTOs as a result of the referral of power.

This bill will also amend the Building Act 1975 in relation to the training of pool safety inspectors. Providers of training for pool safety inspectors are currently regulated at state level by the Pool Safety Council. However, under the bill, training courses will be accredited by ASQA and providers will also be regulated by ASQA. Under the proposed new scheme, only training organisations with the Australian Skills Quality Authority—ASQA—established under the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011, Commonwealth, will be eligible to deliver pool safety inspector training courses. This is different from the current scheme, which allows entities registered as training organisations under state legislation—the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000—and also any other entities prescribed under a state regulation to deliver the courses. Information provided to the committee by the Department of Local Government and Planning is that the licensing requirements for pool safety inspectors will remain unchanged except that applicants for a licence will need to hold a qualification or statement of attainment for an approved training course under the Commonwealth scheme rather than a certificate of competency issued by an eligible course provider. Further, similar provisions to the present will apply in relation to cancellation or amendment of course accreditation by ASQA.

The department also advised that the NVR act contains an extensive array of offence provisions that cover the offences currently under the Building Act and generally provide for harsher penalties. For example, the offence of falsely claiming to be an NVR training organisation contained in section 114 carries a maximum penalty of 300 penalty units, which is a fine of \$33,000, in comparison to the building authority provisions contained in section 246DZ, which carry a maximum penalty of 80 penalty units, or \$8,800. So there is a discrepancy there.

In summing up, I would particularly like to thank the Department of Education, Training and Employment for the assistance that it has given this committee, especially for briefing this committee; for its second briefing to a parliamentary committee on substantially similar bills; and for providing an increased understanding of the portfolio. I particularly thank those members of the department who gave their time. I would also like to particularly put on record our appreciation of the parliamentary research staff of the Education and Innovation Committee for their support and work in the presentation of the committee's report: the research director, Ms Bernice Watson, Ms Emily Booth, who is the principal research officer, and Ms Carolyn Heffernan, the executive assistant. I thank them so much for their efforts. They are a pleasure to work with and their assistance is immeasurable. I also want to thank the members of the committee for their interest and their input. We look forward to a meaningful parliamentary term in the very important areas of education, training and employment and in science, information technology, innovation and the arts.

Our committee recommends that the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012 be passed. The committee's recommendations in respect of the bill are unanimous. This bill will ensure that Queensland school students will continue to have access to high-quality vocational education and training. The Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill will refer power from the Queensland government to the Commonwealth government to regulate the

vocational education and training sector, facilitating a national regulatory framework to improve the quality of VET services and increasing consumer and employer confidence in the sector. The Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012 will honour the Newman government's commitment to reducing the regulatory red tape burden on business, and I wholeheartedly support its passing through this House.

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (12.07 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012. It truly is an honour to follow our Madam Chair, who I find extremely pleasant to work with and who achieves great outcomes, and I thank Madam Chair for that. I also thank the committee members who I am getting to know better. I am sure we will have a productive year. In echoing Madam Chair's remarks, I want to thank Bernice, Emily and Carolyn as well. They are wonderful staff and are truly an asset.

At the outset, I would also like to recognise and apologise for the number of acronyms I will use in my contribution—something that is inevitable in some of these presentations. As a member of the Education and Innovation Committee, which has reviewed the proposed legislation, I am happy that areas such as Technical and Further Education—TAFE—colleges are excluded from the referral as my children and I are products of the VET sector: my daughter studied business, my boys both completed school based apprenticeships and I studied and obtained qualifications in business, building and construction. I am personally happy that the bill aims to improve the quality and outcomes of students in Australia's VET business.

Since 2000 the Training and Employment Recognition Council, known as TERC, and its predecessor, the Training Recognition Council, have provided strong and consistent leadership of the regulation of vocational education and training, known as VET, in Queensland. TERC has a diverse membership with its membership drawn from experienced practitioners in industry, unions, private and public training providers, group training organisations and Australian apprenticeship centres.

Foundation chair, Mr Barry Nutter, a retired industrial commissioner and former director-general of the department of employment, vocational education, training and industrial relations remains the chair to this day. TERC has been responsible for implementing a number of significant reforms in regulation. TERC was instrumental in establishing a risk based approach to regulation of training providers in Queensland. This same approach is being adopted by the National VET Regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority, known as ASQA, because of its most effective and efficient way of regulating.

It is a measure of TERC's effectiveness and attention to detail that regulatory decisions made by TERC when reviewed by external bodies, such as the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal, have always been found sound. Similarly, Queensland has a 100 per cent success rate of prosecuting providers who have breached the requirements of the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000. With such a track record of consistency and success it is responsible to ask: why then do we need to change the national model of regulation? Quite simply, Queensland cannot stand alone in a market that ignores state borders. The state based model of regulation has significant weaknesses in responding to concerns about interstate providers. The TERC has little capacity to sanction such providers should they fail to meet the required standard.

In addition to the referral power, the bill also introduces transfer of responsibility for managing apprenticeships and traineeships from TERC to Skills Queensland. Skills Queensland was established in late 2010 as an advisory body for government on skills and workforce development priorities. Skills Queensland has a strong industry representation and is well placed to assume responsibility for managing apprenticeships and traineeships. Skills Queensland is supported by Public Service officers to perform its role, and the staff who currently support TERC will now support Skills Queensland in performing its new functions. Having worked as chair of Skills Queensland's predecessor, Construction Training Queensland, from 2005 to 2008 I have intimate knowledge and faith in Skills Queensland's capacity to deliver for Queensland.

The bill also makes amendments to the Building Act 1975, the Liquor Act 1992 and the Gaming Machine Act 1991. The referral power has highlighted that some of Queensland's legislation is inconsistent with the scheme of national regulation of RTOs because it imposes additional requirements on RTOs over and above the registration requirements of ASQA. In an environment where delivery of training is increasingly mobile and flexible, including dramatic increases to online delivery, a national agency is able to respond quickly and effectively to emerging issues. This capacity is crucial if Queensland industry is to continue to have confidence in the qualifications delivered by Queensland registered training organisations and, indeed, those from other jurisdictions.

Queensland has also played a leading role in the establishment of ASQA. The national VET regulator task force established to develop ASQA included a significant number of staff from the Queensland regulatory body. Most notably, the former head of the Queensland agency, Dr Dianne Orr, headed the task force charged with developing ASQA's regulatory strategy. Dr Orr has since been

appointed as one of those three ASQA commissioners. ASQA's chief commissioner, Mr Chris Robinson, is a former deputy director-general of the Queensland department of employment and training. Both Dr Orr and Mr Robinson are based in the Brisbane office of ASQA. While ASQA's third commissioner, the Hon. Michael Lavarch AO, is based in ASQA's Sydney office, he has strong ties to Queensland. It is clear that Queenslanders will continue to play a pivotal role in monitoring the quality of training provided in Australia.

Under the current model an RTO is registered by a state and can then deliver training nationally. Queensland's capacity to monitor or take action against these providers registered in other states was severely limited under this model. Two states, Victoria and Western Australia, have decided not to refer their powers. The Commonwealth has advised that it will continue to work with these two non-referring states to encourage them to also refer their powers. All providers operating in Queensland will be subject to regulation by ASQA, ensuring the quality of training delivered here.

We do need a national approach to deliver a more mobile workforce with qualifications recognised throughout Australia. This would mean employers would be assured of the standard a prospective employee has obtained whichever state the qualification has been obtained in. Think of the opportunities into the future with our skills shortages and our future needs. This bill is a much-needed reform that will bring the standard of regulation of VET across Australia up to the high standard of regulation we have enjoyed for some time in Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr LATTER** (Waterford—LNP) (12.14 pm): I rise today to talk in support of the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012. Before I do that I would like to acknowledge the great pleasure and privilege it is for me to work on the Education and Innovation Committee to review bills such as this one and also recognise the enthusiasm of my colleagues from both sides of the House who sit on that committee. There is a great enthusiasm towards education.

As we have heard, this bill seeks to bring Queensland into line with several other jurisdictions and place vocational education and training under the national regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority—under a national framework. This means that accreditations will be consistent and recognised nationally. To put it simply, it allows for a greater flexibility for employment options across the country and affords business a certain degree of assurance with particular regard to a consistent standard of training and/or qualification of those potential employees.

Taking into consideration the great diversity in learning and career path opportunities, vocational education and training plays a vitally important role for the future of our youth and continuing opportunities for a diversifying workforce. To ensure that training and accreditation meets a nationally recognised standard makes sense.

The introduction of this bill is not just about ensuring nationally recognised accreditation, it is about creating confidence in and for these training providers and/or RTOs; it is the confidence in industry that those providers are meeting a uniform standard under the regulation and registration of ASQA; it is about the confidence of those consumers—the people seeking training and accreditation from those training providers—that their accreditation is worth something and that it will be recognised by industry across jurisdictions; and it is also about providing confidence to those training providers or RTOs that under this system they will see a uniform approach to a standard of regulation in terms of their interstate operations and that they are not overburdened by yet more red tape that would effectively see those providers having to meet both state and Commonwealth regulation. That is something that the Newman government is working towards. In the past weeks we have heard the different ways in which the Newman government is working towards effectively cutting out red tape. This will be one of those mechanisms to help achieve that.

This bill will also bring into line some of the inconsistencies that exist whereby training regulation is governed under the jurisdiction of various other pieces of legislation. For example, this bill will seek to amend the Building Act 1975 in relation to the training of pool safety inspectors to ensure that the training course will be accredited with ASQA and providers will be regulated by ASQA. What this all means is that there will be a more standardised approach in terms of ensuring that appropriate competencies, accreditations and/or qualifications are being attained by service providers. It is my hope that this will promote greater consumer confidence towards vocational education and training and, of course, the end product: the services and skills obtained.

I am a staunch advocate for education and the opportunities made available to those who obtain a good solid education, but I am also acutely aware that the methods of obtaining that education are as varied as the professions, trades or industry employment options that potential future employees may seek.

As I said, I am acutely aware that we are all different. We have different strengths and weaknesses. There are those of us who may not necessarily be suited to higher learning through years of intense study in academia. For some of us it may well be that a more practical applied method of

learning is appropriate for the path we may wish to pursue. On that basis alone we might consider that vocational education and training is imperative for upskilling our existing workforce and providing career pathways for our youth.

That being said, it is vitally important that we allow for a nationally standardised approach for registration and regulation for vocational education and training that will enable further opportunity. Of course, that is why I support this bill. When I am thinking of this bill and what it is hoping to achieve, I am thinking of students who are looking for alternate career path opportunities and people in our workforce who, for whatever reason, may feel they have been let down or are looking for different employment. They should have an opportunity to seek further education or skills to further their careers and home life. I have particular regard to those people in my electorate who, on numerous occasions, have expressed to me their frustration at paying often hundreds or thousands of dollars to receive accredited training, only to find out that that training may not necessarily be recognised in other jurisdictions. When I say that I am here to commend this bill for the opportunities it will create, I mean it. On that basis, I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr SYMES** (Lytton—LNP) (12.20 pm): It is my honour and privilege to support the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012 as both a parliamentarian and a member of the Education and Innovation Committee. As previously stated by other members from all sides of politics who are part of the committee that looked at this legislation, it was an absolute pleasure to have such cooperation between government members and the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

I support this bill as it successfully fulfils its five key objectives. First, it refers to the Commonwealth power to regulate RTOs and vocational education and training courses, firstly by adopting the national VET legislation and including those provisions in the Queensland legislation. It also abolishes the Training and Employment Recognition Council and transfers its remaining functions to Skills Queensland. The bill will give Skills Queensland more powers in terms of overseeing apprenticeships and traineeships throughout Queensland.

No further costs will be incurred by the Queensland government as a result of this bill, as the preparation of the referral of powers will be carried out within the existing resources of the relevant government department. I add that, because the federal government will have the responsibility of implementation, the Queensland government will actually save money in terms of accrediting VET courses and regulating RTOs. I am sure that the Treasurer will welcome that.

This bill will improve vocational education and training in Queensland by bringing our state into line with other jurisdictions, as well as creating consistency with the legislation surrounding RTOs and VET courses. For example, in February 2011 COAG reached an intergovernmental agreement for states to refer legislative powers to the Commonwealth. Unfortunately, New South Wales won the 'state of origin' on this concept by being the first state government to refer powers to the Commonwealth. However, since the 2011 COAG meeting, Queensland, South Australia, and Tasmania have agreed to refer legislative powers to the Commonwealth. Of those three states, Queensland is the only state government not to have referred its legislative powers to the Commonwealth.

This bill will improve the regulation of traineeships in the liquor, gaming machine and building sectors of the Queensland economy. Another upside of the bill relates to inserting displacement provisions in part 5A of the Liquor Act 1992 and part 10A of the Gaming Machine Act 1991 to allow the Queensland parliament to continue to apply the provisions of those acts in terms of RTOs after the referral of power.

VET courses in Queensland will benefit from the establishment of the Australian Skills Quality Authority, as it will improve employer and consumer confidence in the quality and consistency of assessment of VET qualifications by providing the framework for RTOs to consistently apply standards across jurisdictions and by providing sanctions against RTOs that do not meet the high standards that we expect in the VET sector.

I support the bill as it will finally bring Queensland into line with other jurisdictions whilst not costing the Queensland government any further expense. It will refer powers for the VET sector to the Commonwealth whilst maintaining the state's ability into the future to make amendments and provisions to regulate the sector in Queensland. I urge all parliamentarians to support the bill introduced by the Minister for Education, Employment and Training and get Queensland in line with the rest of Australia.

 **Mr PUCCI** (Logan—LNP) (12.25 pm): I am pleased to speak in support of the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012. I am honoured to be on the Education and Innovation Committee, especially as I have two young daughters currently in school. This bill was referred to the parliamentary Education and Innovation Committee, which reported to parliament on 12 June with a recommendation that the bill be passed.

This bill will help meet the LNP government's commitment to reduce the regulatory burden on business. First of all, it will refer to the Commonwealth parliament the Queensland parliament's legislative power to regulate registered training organisations and vocational education and training courses. It will then abolish the Training and Employment Recognition Council and transfer its remaining functions, mostly in relation to apprenticeships and traineeships, to Skills Queensland. It will do this by adopting the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 and the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator (Transitional Provisions) Act 2011.

After referring Queensland's legislative power to the Commonwealth, the bill makes an amendment reference to allow the Commonwealth to make amendments to the national VET legislation in relation to continuing VET matters, as outlined in clause 4 of the bill. The continuing VET matters are: the registration and regulation of VET organisations; the accreditation or recognition of VET courses or programs; the issue and cancellation of VET qualifications or statements of attainment; the standards to be complied with by the VET regulator; the collection, publication, provision and sharing of information about VET; and investigative powers, sanctions and enforcement in relation to those matters. To ensure the Queensland parliament is informed of changes to the national VET legislation, the minister will be required to table any express amendments in the Queensland parliament.

The bill also clarifies that the referral does not include primary and secondary education; higher education; apprenticeships and traineeships; qualifications to undertake or carry on a business, occupation or other work; state funding of VET; and the establishment of public training providers such as TAFE institutes. This was considered necessary because the RTOs and VET are closely related to other education and training activities that remain the responsibility of Queensland. In the event that our state no longer wishes the Commonwealth to legislate in relation to continuing VET matters, clause 7 of the bill allows us to terminate the adoption or amendment reference at any time. The termination is achieved by the Governor proclaiming, by a notice published in the *Government Gazette*, that the adoption or amendment references are terminated.

Adopting this bill means there will be only one regulator setting standards for RTOs and VET courses in Queensland, rather than two. The national VET regulator is the Australian Skills Quality Authority—ASQA. It will ensure consistent standards for the RTOs across all jurisdictions, which will improve employer and consumer confidence in the quality and consistency of the assessment of VET qualifications. Providers that train overseas students will particularly benefit from this legislation as they currently answer to multiple regulatory agencies. This legislation will reduce their regulatory burden through responding to only one regulator.

The bill will amend the Building Act 1975 to provide for the Pool Safety Council to approve a training course to be completed for the purpose of obtaining a licence as a pool safety inspector. In terms of this issue, the Building Act 1975 would currently be unworkable as it is inconsistent with the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 that we are referring our legislative power to. In future all training courses for pool safety inspectors will be a nationally accredited course delivered by the RTOs regulated with ASQA, instead of the current system where it is approved by the Pool Safety Council under the guidance of the Department of Housing and Public Works.

Similarly, displacement provisions will be inserted in part 5A of the Liquor Act 1992 and part 10A of the Gaming Machine Act 1991 to allow Queensland to continue to apply the provisions of those acts in relation to registered training organisations after the referral of power. It would otherwise be inconsistent with the National Vocational Education and Training Act 2011 that we are referring our legislative power to. The displacement provisions will allow the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation to continue to approve training with RTOs for responsible service of alcohol, responsible management of licensed venues and responsible service of gambling training. This will continue for a further two years, giving the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation time to consider an alternative option that is consistent with the national VET legislation.

An earlier version of this bill was introduced in the previous parliament. The former Industry, Training and Industrial Relations Committee issued its final report prior to parliament being dissolved for the election. The report recommended one amendment, which has been included in this bill, which required amendments to the Commonwealth legislation to be tabled in this parliament.

An alternative method of achieving national reform for vocational education and training would be for each state to implement uniform laws. This approach was previously tried in the VET sector with limited success. In 2002, all states agreed to enact legislation based on model provisions to regulate the VET sector. A set of national quality standards was also developed to be applied by each state and territory. The main limitation of this option is that the enforcement of the legislation is left to each state and can result in different standards of enforcement across Australia. In light of this experience, the Council of Australian Governments—COAG—determined that the best approach was to have a national regulator enforcing a single set of standards across the country and ASQA was established. Nearly all states and territories have referred their legislative power to the Commonwealth parliament as this bill will now do for Queensland.

As I mentioned earlier, this bill was referred to the parliament's Education and Innovation Committee to report back by 12 June. As well as recommending that this bill be passed, it also made two other recommendations. The first recommendation was that the Department of Education, Training and Employment annually monitor and report on the impact of registered training organisation fees on small registered training organisations. The committee had concerns about cost implications for smaller registered training organisations. Currently, Queensland fees for RTOs have been subsidised by the state and moving to national legislation regulated by the Australian Skills Quality Authority means fees will be charged to reflect full cost recovery. This will result in an increase in fees. However, given the state's current financial position, state subsidised fees may not have been sustainable and may have needed to be moved to a full cost recovery model similar to the fees charged by ASQA anyway.

On the whole, the committee agreed that the benefits of moving to a national regulator outweighed the increase in fees. To ensure any impact on small RTOs is managed appropriately, the committee recommended that the Department of Education, Training and Employment monitor and report on the impact of fee increases for these organisations. The committee also noted that the Australian Council for Private Education and Training, the peak body for RTOs, has given its support for this bill.

The other recommendation was that the Department of Education, Training and Employment annually monitor and report on the impact of registered training organisation fees on schools. The Department of Education, Training and Employment is working in close consultation with the national regulator—the Australian Skills Quality Authority—to ensure a smooth transition from state to national regulation.

Currently, school RTOs have their RTO registration managed by the Queensland Studies Authority and, through delegation from TERC, effectively school RTOs do not pay RTO registration fees. With the move to the national body, ASQA will issue a similar delegation to remain in force for at least 12 months, where school RTOs will not pay RTO fees. In that time ASQA and the Department of Education, Training and Employment will work together with schools to develop strategies to minimise the impact of fees. Our Minister for Education, Training and Employment, the Hon. John-Paul Langbroek, has assured us that Queensland schools will not be adversely affected by the move to the national regulation of VET and that this government is committed to ensuring that Queensland school students continue to have access to high-quality vocational education and training.

In summary, this bill will transfer the regulation of vocational education and training to a national body, ensuring a more consistent application of standards for registered training organisations. We support the establishment of a national VET regulator because it is the best way to assure the quality of training provided to Queenslanders. This bill will ensure that Queensland employers can continue to have confidence in being able to access a well trained, highly skilled workforce.

I take a moment to thank the member for Burdekin, as the chair of the committee, for her leadership during the committee proceedings. I thank the other members of the committee for their input and their work on this bill. I would like to thank the research team—Emily, Bernice and Carolyn—for their immense help. I thank the department for the very informative briefings they provided to us. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Albert—LNP) (12.36 pm): I rise today to speak in support of the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012. It is a bill about planning for the future through the reduction in red tape. This bill will help businesses reduce their paperwork requirements via a streamlined process. Before I continue any further, I wish to thank the minister for his support and the committee for its recommendations. It truly is an honour to have an individual as proactive as the education minister. So I thank John-Paul Langbroek.

The objectives of the bill are to refer legislative powers to the Commonwealth parliament to regulate registered training organisations and vocational education and training courses by adopting the National Vocational Education and Training Regulation Act 2011 and the Training Regulator (Transitional Provisions) Act. This will abolish a layer of bureaucracy and create a system to streamline education and training programs. This will create a national approach to training and allow consistency throughout Australian states that are participating in the VET program and, furthermore, allow national recognition of training programs. Most importantly, this will bring Queensland into line with other states under the national regulation.

This bill is good for Queensland and is good for jobs. It will help streamline apprenticeships and traineeships which provide skills to Queenslanders, allowing them to compete in a demanding job market. We need skilled workers to build our four-pillar economy and to diversify from a single sector. This is crucial for the future of our state. We must meet the challenge to build our agricultural sector, our construction sector, our tourism sector and our resources sector. Failure to rise to the challenge only leaves uncertainty for the next generation of workers. Furthermore, we cannot continue to venture down a path which solely relies on a single country's manufacturing potential.

The United Nations estimates the world's current food consumption is set to double by 2050. Queensland must rise to the challenge and strategically position ourselves to benefit from this increased demand. To reach this goal, we must be innovative. We can and must harness innovation through science and technology. We need to ensure that there are appropriate national training programs in place to help create a successful expansion of this industry. We need to continue to meet the demand for high-quality workers for the construction, tourism and resources sector through best training practices at a national level. Failure to do so only hinders the expansion of these important pillars of our economy.

To achieve these goals we need to be confident in the training provided by educational institutes through a national approach. We need to create nationalised standards that education providers can adhere to. Furthermore, this uniform approach cuts red tape by condensing two layers of legislation into one under the Commonwealth scheme. This allows for the efficient standardisation of training, competencies and accreditation. This scheme will provide employers with certainty and the knowledge that standard education models have been undertaken. This will allow our business operators and employers to have confidence in our education programs. Furthermore, students will obtain a solid education through a coherent education approach. It should be noted that education programs vary their requirements between different professions.

As an example, I would like to highlight the inconsistencies in education which must be undertaken to obtain a pool safety inspector's licence. I understand that the Pool Safety Council grapples with inconsistencies under the Building Act 1975. By undertaking a standardisation approach to the Building Act, there is the potential to remove inconsistencies, giving a uniform approach to Pool Safety Council training courses, which are a requirement for pool safety inspectors to obtain their licence.

If the bill is not passed, providers in Queensland will be forced to deal with two jurisdictions and an overly complex system. This is a recipe for inefficiencies and puts Queensland training programs at a disadvantage. Education is crucial. Good quality education is a right for all Queenslanders. It gives our students and our apprentices a solid base from which to launch themselves into their chosen careers.

I wish to thank the officers of the department and the staff who helped the committee, especially our Madam Chair, the member for Burdekin. Your guidance is always most welcome and we certainly thank you, Rosemary. It is an honour and a privilege to have you as our chair. I would ask the House to accept this bill without delay.

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (12.44 pm): I rise today to support the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012. Education is a building block of our state, one which will transform our state well into the future. By providing our education providers with a uniform body to regulate their industry, we provide a level of certainty to both providers and students.

The Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012 introduces a new era in regulation of vocational education and training, or VET, in Australia and sets the framework for the national regulation of the VET sector. For Queensland to realise these benefits, it is essential to have a plan in place for the effective transition from state to national regulation. I am pleased to inform the House that the groundwork has been laid for Queensland to transition seamlessly to national regulation.

The Department of Education, Training and Employment has worked with the current Queensland regulator—the Training and Employment Recognition Council, known as TERC—and the Australian Skills Quality Authority, known as ASQA, to develop and agree on transitional arrangements. The needs of registered training organisations, or RTOs, current staff undertaking regulation of VET, industry regulators and other stakeholders have been carefully considered in this agreement and in planning for the transition to ASQA.

A process to recruit staff for ASQA's Brisbane office is well underway. Many of the Queensland staff that currently regulate RTOs will take up the opportunity of working for ASQA. Staff transferring to ASQA have their entitlements protected and are offered salary and conditions no less favourable than those they enjoy with the Queensland Public Service. The Department of Education, Training and Employment consulted staff to ensure that this transition process was managed sensitively and that employee concerns were addressed.

RTOs have been kept informed of developments in the move to national regulation through the regular *RTO Mail* newsletters produced by the Department of Education, Training and Employment. Queensland RTOs have generally shown strong support for the establishment of a national VET regulator in their industry, believing that all providers should be held to the same high standards as they are and that the level of service from the regulatory agency should be of the same high standard as that in Queensland.

Southport is home to many education providers and English language schools. This bill will go towards strengthening these education providers and allowing them to grow their businesses with confidence and certainty into the future, while not having to fight with what has become a growing burden of red tape. Mr Deputy Speaker, you only have to look at the number of students enrolling in courses like nursing at the Gold Coast TAFE, 1,778 students—a 92 per cent increase in enrolments from 2009 to 2011. In the community service sector, we have seen an increase in students of 75 per cent to 1,187 over that same period. So from just these two examples you can see how vitally important vocational education is to Southport and Queensland.

National regulation means a change to a single regulator and a single consistent set of regulations. This should ultimately reduce the costs incurred by those Queensland businesses. The Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012 is another example of this government's commitment to reducing red tape, saving Queenslanders money and getting Queensland back on track.

Southport is doing it tough and so is most of Queensland. But by this government implementing the reforms and commitments that it promised at the last election, we will get Queensland back on track. We will get Queensland working again, back to being the desired and respected state that we know it can be. We have the weather, we have the lifestyle and we have the determination to see this happen.

Southport is the natural CBD of the Gold Coast. With its location and future infrastructure like the light rail, Gold Coast University Hospital, and the Health and Knowledge Precinct, it should be the most desired suburb to locate businesses and for staff to come and work on the Gold Coast. My priority for Southport is again to see Southport turned into the natural CBD of the Gold Coast, to see Southport working again. That is why I have formed the Southport Forum, an initiative to bring my office and the business community together so that together we will get Southport working.

This is no small task, but I am one for the challenge and the commitment that this task will take. My support for the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012 is part of this task of getting Southport working again, as without a properly trained and educated population the employers who will want to locate their businesses in Southport will only have a location but no staff to man them.

Just a few years ago Southport was home to many English language schools and other vocational training organisations, providing a vital link for the many international students waiting to take up courses at our further education providers or to those providers wanting to start a career as a teacher in that industry. In fact, at its peak, international education was estimated to be worth somewhere in the order of \$4 billion to South-East Queensland's economy, with an estimated 18,000 international students located and studying on the Gold Coast on any given night.

Sadly, under the previous government we have seen a significant decline in these numbers. We have seen a significant drift through policy changes of the federal government with respect to student visas. Those numbers have declined significantly. In fact, it may surprise members of the House to know that student visas have now become so expensive that many students from China, India and other parts of the Asia-Pacific region would far rather study in America because for as little as \$85 they can obtain a visa and they get guaranteed access to the institution where they wish to study. Now, under federal Labor the immigration laws have been tightened up so significantly that it will cost anywhere from \$685 for a student to get a visa for a single year and then that student would be required to reapply year after year. This has become a huge disincentive to young people studying in our nation and that quite naturally and understandably has had a huge impact on the education sector not only on the Gold Coast but right across South-East Queensland and other parts of the Australia.

English language schools like BROWNS English Language School, the Australian International College of Language and Inforum Education Australia—organisations that are based in my electorate—will at least through these legislative changes have some certainty that their industry has a regulatory system that will allow them to expand their business and for other providers, new or existing, to once again take up home in Southport providing much needed employment and economic stimulus to the local economy.

There are many other challenges and I am so pleased to be part of the Newman government, which is committed to red tape reduction. Some of the red tape reduction we will need to look at in future months are the challenges associated with the former government's Integrated Planning Act and the onerous requirements on education providers to meet all sorts of ridiculous parking requirements and other statutory requirements in wanting to set up shop in CBD areas like the Southport business district where we already have great public transport and great facilities but, unfortunately, the current planning laws in Queensland have made it quite expensive for organisations to locate there and so it has become a huge disincentive.

It is of great importance that our future education is of the highest standard to be the foundation that our economic and social lives are built on. Southport and Queensland will be the place to be educated, the place to have a career and the place to raise a family all due to the hard work and commitments from this can-do government. I am pleased to speak in favour of these amendments and I commend these amendments to the House.

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (12.53 pm): I rise to make a small contribution—probably a six-minute contribution—to the debate on the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012. The bill will refer Queensland's legislative power to regulate registered training organisations, known as RTOs, and vocational education and training—or VET—courses to the Commonwealth parliament. The Commonwealth VET regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority—ASQA—will regulate providers and courses nationally.

On 1 July 2011 ASQA commenced regulating RTOs in some other jurisdictions around Australia such as New South Wales and the Northern Territory that provide training to overseas students or which operate in a jurisdiction which has already referred powers to regulate RTOs to the Commonwealth. Earlier this year Tasmania and South Australia referred power to ASQA, and ASQA commenced regulating all RTOs in those states.

The Commonwealth minister made a determination under section 7 of the NVR act, which gives Queensland until 30 June 2012—just nine days away—to refer legislative power. If Queensland does not refer by this date, it will become a non-referring jurisdiction and ASQA will take over regulation of approximately 37 per cent of Queensland's over 1,540 RTOs—that is, those that deliver training to overseas students and/or operate in a referring jurisdiction. The bill will also abolish the Training and Employment Recognition Council—the Queensland regulator—and transfer its remaining functions mainly relating to apprenticeships and traineeships to Skills Queensland.

One of the key issues for us here in Queensland is that Queensland's referral of power excludes primary and secondary education, higher education, the establishment of public providers such as TAFE institutes, apprenticeships and traineeships, and the licensing of occupations. The Commonwealth parliament will not be able to legislate on these issues. The benefits of referring from a Queensland perspective have already been mentioned in this House. There is going to be a significant saving. The Department of Education, Training and Employment will be able to make a total saving of around \$3 million per annum through employing fewer regulatory staff. That, of course, will go towards reducing the deficit for the state that has been sadly introduced and foisted upon the people of Queensland by the previous Labor government.

Queensland RTOs will deal with only one regulator and will not have to change regulator as their business changes—that is, if they decide to deliver training in a referring jurisdiction such as New South Wales. What would happen if Queensland did not refer power? As I mentioned earlier, we have a deadline of 1 July. If Queensland does not refer power by 1 July 2012, there are serious consequences for RTOs and the department. Two regulators would operate in Queensland under different regulatory frameworks. This may be confusing for industry and consumers. It would also make it difficult to assure that quality of training is maintained. The department would not realise predicted total savings of approximately \$3 million per annum because it would need to retain regulatory staff who would otherwise transfer to the Commonwealth. There is an agreement to transition existing departmental employees to ASQA, but that agreement expires if Queensland does not refer by 1 July 2012. So that would also put employees into jeopardy. The department would need to review its RTO fees, and it is likely fees would need to increase to ensure that the Queensland regulatory model was sustainable in light of the reduced fee revenue Queensland would be receiving after 1 July 2012 when ASQA takes regulatory control of 37 per cent of Queensland's RTOs.

In the last minute that I have left, I would like to talk about the state seat of Coomera and some of the challenges that the state seat of Coomera has for young people involved in this type of training.

Mr Malone interjected.

Mr CRANDON: I take the interjection from the member. Yes, we are struggling with apprenticeships in boatbuilding. In fact, I know TAFE is reconsidering its position in that regard, but the issue goes further than that in that we are talking about transport issues. Trying to get young people who are under 17 who come from disadvantaged homes in and around the area up and down the highway into vocational education and training organisations in and around the Yatala precinct is one of those challenges. In closing, I would ask that we as a state consider transport options for young people from disadvantaged areas when we want to see them move to vocational education and training precincts in and around, for example, the Yatala precinct. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Crandon, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.30 pm.

LAND PROTECTION LEGISLATION (FLYING-FOX CONTROL) AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (2.30 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002 and the Nature Conservation Act 1992 to control the health risks posed by flying foxes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Land Protection Legislation (Flying-fox Control) Amendment Bill 2012 [\[382\]](#).

Tabled paper: Land Protection Legislation (Flying-fox Control) Amendment Bill 2012, explanatory notes [\[383\]](#).

It is with great pleasure and satisfaction that after eight years, first as the member for Charters Towers and now as the member for Dalrymple, I am finally able to say that I fully support a bill that deals with the flying fox plague that has harassed Charters Towers residents and other communities in Queensland for more than a decade. The failure of successive governments, including the current government, to adequately understand or appreciate the destruction these pests have wrought on the town of Charters Towers is no excuse for the way the lives of people in my community have taken a back seat to the welfare of these pests.

The Land Protection Legislation (Flying-fox Control) Amendment Bill 2012 empowers landowners, including local governments, to take necessary and reasonable action to address the serious health risk presented by increasing concentrations of flying fox populations in residential areas. The bill also removes unnecessary penalties applying to the taking or handling of flying foxes or disturbing a flying fox roost.

The threat of disease and the intolerable living conditions for communities who have been forced to live with flying foxes in their tens of thousands are things that most members have to deal with directly, although I am sure the Deputy Premier will appreciate the implications of this bill for the Gayndah community. Flying fox populations are known to carry viruses deadly to humans: the Australian bat lyssavirus, which is closely related to common rabies lyssavirus; salmonella; leptospirosis; SARS; and Hendra virus. The Australian bat strain of lyssavirus has caused two human fatalities since it was discovered in Australia in 1996.

More concerning is the growing number of Hendra virus outbreaks amongst horse populations and the increased exposure to humans as a result. This virus has caused over 70 horse fatalities and four human fatalities since 1994. That is a 75 per cent fatality rate in horses and a 60 per cent fatality rate in humans. The recent discovery that the virus can be transmitted to dogs further escalates the risk to humans. This has been a ticking time bomb for Charters Towers, where a colony of flying foxes in their tens of thousands has established a roost in Lissner Park, right in the centre of town. I table my introductory speech.

Tabled paper: Land Protection Legislation (Flying-fox Control) Amendment Bill 2012, introductory speech [\[395\]](#).

First Reading

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (2.33 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.

Referral to the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Cunningham): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Gold Coast, Tourism

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (2.34 pm): I rise today to highlight an exciting era for cultural and event based tourism on the Gold Coast. We are in a prime position to promote and even rename the Gold Coast as 'Festival City' to help develop tourism in the region. With the Gold Coast being the sixth largest city in Australia and tourism the unquestionable pillar of the Gold Coast economy, festivals are a great way for tourism investment in our city, and these major drawcards for international,

national and local tourists must not be ignored. From the international Magic Millions in January, to the Rugby 7s, the National Finals Rodeo, the Australian Surf Life Saving Championships, the Quiksilver Pro surfing, the Pan Pacific Masters Games, the Gold Coast Airport Marathon, the Gold Coast Triathlon, the Surfers Paradise Festival and the Coolangatta Gold—just to name a few—they all lure much needed tourism dollars to the Gold Coast.

There are seven other 'Gold Coasts' around the world and, whilst I recognise this major international moniker, the word 'festival' intimates the importance and downright magnetism of our city for people to enjoy event based tourism and cultural tourism in our great region. The Blues on Broadbeach Music Festival, which drew a crowd of 85,000 this year, along with the Broadbeach Jazz Festival, which is coming up in August, pull in tourists locally, nationally and internationally and drives the economy of Broadbeach. The V8 motor-racing carnival is a great example of sports tourism drawing tourists from everywhere across the nation and internationally.

I would like to make special mention of the Gold Coast Eisteddfod festival, with Kerry Watson and Judith Ferber doing a wonderful job of coordinating thousands of children, families and volunteers. There were 25,000 people attracted to this festival to see future young stars demonstrate their musical and artistic abilities. The end of year schoolies festival brings in much needed tourism dollars for the region from the 50,000 attendees, as does Cooly Rocks On, which is a fifties themed hot rod spectacular that is also great for the Gold Coast. Summafieldayze, Good Vibrations and the Big Day Out draw young people from across Australia and New Zealand who we would like to see return year after year to secure that ongoing tourism dollar for 'Festival City'.

With the Gold Coast rebadged as 'Festival City', it is very possible that a new dawn in event based tourism may flow through to the coast and help continue to develop the Gold Coast as the 'Festival City' on an international scale. It may even be possible to stage a world attention grabbing event like the Miss World pageant, with Donald Trump headlining an appearance at Jupiters Casino.

We have the accommodation, we have the reliable weather, we have the perfect climate and we have the magnificent geography that can only stimulate a year-long calendar of events to turn 'Festival City' into one big ongoing festival day in, day out. It is quite clearly the main driver of the Gold Coast and we look forward to 'Festival City' rocking and rolling for the future.

Headspace

 **Mr COX** (Thuringowa—LNP) (2.37 pm): I take this opportunity to highlight the important work Headspace does in our community in Thuringowa and all of Townsville. The Headspace facility is based at Riverway in my electorate of Thuringowa. It provides a range of health related prevention and early intervention mental health services, as well as a number of other services and support for youth between 12 and 25 years of age. Townsville-Mackay Medicare Local runs the Headspace program for our region. It is alarming to hear the statistics of how common mental illness is in our society. One in four young Australians suffers from mental illness in any one year, and three-quarters of all mental health problems begin before the age of 25. Suicide is one of the leading causes of death in young people.

Research carried out by Headspace shows there is an increase in the risk of young people suffering anger management, depression and anxiety related issues. That is why it is so vital that all levels of government and the community support organisations such as Headspace. Since the establishment of the centre in Thuringowa, there have been about 12,500 face-to-face consultation hours for more than 2,000 clients. A key focus of Headspace is on strengthening relationships between health service providers to assist in providing a more coordinated approach to care and support. That includes working with state government departments, agencies and non-government organisations to meet known gaps in service delivery.

There are currently 18 groups or organisations that refer young people to Headspace, including Queensland Health, state schools through guidance officers, teachers and self-referrals, private and independent schools, juvenile justice, the Police-Citizens Youth Welfare Association and Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Services. Currently, Headspace is working out of a temporary facility made up of mostly demountable offices—dongas. However, these facilities have now outgrown the high demand for its services. The Townsville-Mackay Medicare Local is looking to construct a youth hub which would house Headspace along with other youth services. It would be a one-stop-shop facility to provide youth with a place they can access support services, engage with their peers and participate in training and education. The youth hub will offer GP services, counselling services, vocational training, job-providing network services and Townsville City Council youth programs. Medicare Local has secured some funding to go towards the construction of this in stage 1. It is now looking to secure further funding. However, members would be aware that the Newman government has cut its spending due to Labor's mismanagement while this service is looking to further increase its facilities. I put on the record that I will continue to fight hard to help Medicare Local secure government funding to build this much needed youth hub facility in the electorate of Thuringowa. The sad truth is that the number of people accessing local Headspace will only grow over time, particularly with almost 5,000 residents moving to Townsville and Thuringowa each year.

Glass House Electorate

 **Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection) (2.40 pm): It is a great time of the year for the people in Glass House and it is great to see so much activity occurring in that fantastic electorate, and it is a real privilege to continue to represent the seat of Glass House. I do not know whether it is because it is the cooler time of the year, but there just seems to be an increase in activity at this time of year and it is wonderful to be a part of so many of the activities. I start by informing the House that for the third year running the Glass House Volunteer Awards were held, which is an opportunity for all community groups in the electorate to nominate an individual who goes above and beyond in terms of volunteering for our community. There are a fantastic number of community organisations, sporting organisations and environmental organisations in the electorate and a record 150 people attended the morning tea this year for the opportunity to acknowledge some 50-plus people for the volunteer efforts that they put into the local community.

It is also show season in the seat of Glass House. June sees four shows in four weeks. We kicked off with the Maleny Show followed by the Caboolture Show then the Nambour Show and we wrap up this week with the Woodford Show. Again, this is due to the tireless efforts of so many volunteers and I acknowledge all of the show societies in each of those locations for the hard work that they do and the many volunteers who make the judging, sideshow ally and all of the pavilions happen. It was great to get along to the judging of a few Show Girl and Show Princess evenings, and thank goodness I was not involved in the judging myself—far too hard a challenge! I am happy to leave that—

Mr Johnson: I'd be a better judge than you!

Mr POWELL: The member for Gregory would be a lot better judge, would he? I think he probably would, given some of the speeches I have heard him deliver in this chamber. I was also excited to be part of an open day at Bankfoot House, which is one of the heritage listed facilities in my electorate. It goes way back to the Cobb & Co. days. There was a time when travellers would stop off there on the way through to Gympie and it has been lovingly restored by the Friends of Bankfoot House. I acknowledge Ron Gillinder and his team. It was great to have the Governor present there again and for her to spend so much time with the families who are still linked to that original homestead—the Grigor family—and their many descendants. On that note and to conclude, it was also wonderful to be part of an activity with the Peachester Historical Society in officially naming the Beerwah-Kilcoy Road bridge over the Stanley River as Elizabeth Grigor Bridge. Elizabeth married one of the original settler's sons, William Grigor, and they opened a sawmill adjacent to this site. The Peachester Historical Society approached me some time ago about possibly officially naming the bridge. We managed to convince Transport and Main Roads and it was wonderful to be there with multiple generations of the Grigor family to officially unveil the naming of that bridge over the Stanley River. As I said, it is a fantastic time in Glass House. It is fantastic to be a part of it.

Rockhampton, Shadow Cabinet

 **Mr BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (2.43 pm): I rise to inform the House of last week's two-day visit to my electorate of the 'Significant 7' of the Labor shadow cabinet. There was a great cartoon in the local newspaper to commemorate the occasion. In fact, it was so poignant that I will try to get it framed. Four of the members representing southern electorates, led by the Leader of the Opposition, travelled to Rockhampton on the tilt train service. These ladies of the opposition all commented most enthusiastically about the comfort, the quality service and the timeliness of the journey. This journey also provided members with a unique opportunity to engage Queenslanders from all parts of the state in extended casual conversation and this, of course, proved to be immensely rewarding. Most importantly, we of the Australian Labor Party are very keen to encourage rail travel, and what better way to demonstrate this!

These ladies from the southern electorates were greeted at the Rockhampton station by two regional lads in the form of myself and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Labor caucus members were accommodated at The Edge Apartments overlooking the mighty Fitzroy River. What a glorious place to base yourself when visiting Central Queensland if members are ever in the region. Rockhampton is the beef capital and one of my jobs was to ensure that there was no shortage of quality protein. This was delivered on the Tuesday evening by the renowned Cambridge Hotel steakhouse, a venue that is well known to many members representing regional electorates. Labor members and their guests, including the mayor and media representatives, were not disappointed—and, surprisingly, we paid the bill when we were finished!

Wednesday commenced with a breakfast with local business and community leaders. This again provided an avenue for Labor members to engage hardworking Queenslanders in talking about their contemporary concerns. Later the shadow cabinet convened at the Central Queensland University Rockhampton campus. It was very generous of the university to provide a venue for that meeting. Our appreciation is extended to Vice-Chancellor Scott Bowman and his staff. The shadow ministers used the

afternoon to meet people and visit locations relevant to their shadow portfolios. These engagements included the Leader of the Opposition meeting with many union representatives at Trades Hall as well as meeting a broad gathering of teachers so as to hear their concerns about the future of education in Queensland. Of course, Wednesday was also State of Origin. The majority of members attended a function organised by the North Rockhampton Labor Party. Everyone present enjoyed the evening. As members already know, many of my immediate family would have been overjoyed by the result of the evening in that they claim New South Wales allegiance as their state of birth.

Honourable members: Shame!

Mr BYRNE: 'Shame!' I hear members call, but there is no more direct evidence that opposites attract. The Labor caucus reacquainted itself with Central Queensland and its people during the visit. This is a big state and I hope that this parliament never forgets it. This Labor visit to Rockhampton is the first of many across the state that our members will be undertaking with great enthusiasm.

Beaudesert Electorate, Carbon Tax

 **Mr KRAUSE** (Beaudesert—LNP) (2.46 pm): It is the last sitting week of this financial year for this place. It is also the last sitting week before the carbon tax commences on 1 July. Whilst I am sure that accountants of all persuasions in all places like to have 30 June parties each year to celebrate the end of their year, in my electorate of Beaudesert I do not think there will be too many accountants celebrating this year—in particular, not the accountants for two businesses to which I will refer later. There are many businesses in my electorate that are deeply concerned about the impact of the carbon tax on jobs. It is a tax on jobs and a tax on prosperity and the competitiveness of industry in this country. It will cost jobs. In an international economy where all of our industries are competing with overseas markets and overseas competitors, it is a tax on the very livelihoods of those people.

In my electorate of Beaudesert there is a state development area to be known as the Bromelton Industrial Area, which has private investors ready to invest as soon as the state finishes the planning scheme for it. The industries that will be placed in that area include many industries where there are a lot of international competitors—storage space, industrial plants and other industries which are exposed. Putting a carbon tax on those industries will take away from the economic benefit which the Bromelton industrial estate would otherwise bring to the town of Beaudesert and the electorate of Beaudesert as a whole. This carbon tax which the Labor Party in Canberra has brought in is a tax on jobs. It cannot credibly claim to be trying to create more jobs in Australia when it brings in taxes like this which reduce the competitiveness of all Australian businesses.

I table an article from the *Beaudesert Times* yesterday—Wednesday, 20 June.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Beaudesert Times*, dated 20 June 2012, titled 'Region braces for tax' [\[384\]](#).

The *Beaudesert Times* is a great local paper with a dedicated editorial team and journalists. The article I table is titled 'Region braces for tax' and tells the story of two animal-rendering plants—one that creates gelatine and one that produces fertiliser. According to the general manager of Gelita, which produces gelatine, their business is going to suffer significantly because they have invested in emission-reducing technology, therefore, taking them out of the realms of the assistance package created by the federal government. The federal government is penalising people who have reduced their emissions.

Mr Crandon: That is a shameful act.

Mr KRAUSE: It is shameful that people who have reduced their emissions are being penalised by this tax.

I also refer to AJ Bush and Sons, who are in the top 500 polluters and might have been able to access compensation, except the federal government has not yet got the data together to actually put compensation in place. Not only have they introduced this tax, they have not managed to put it together correctly.

(Time expired)

Marriage Act

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (2.50 pm): Marriage is an important institution in Queensland society. I have made it no secret that, in my view, the definition of 'marriage' as found in the Commonwealth Marriage Act should not be changed. I commend the federal Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, and other federal colleagues in Canberra such as Kevin Andrews, Barnaby Joyce, Stuart Robert, Ron Boswell, Andrew Laming, Bert Van Manen and many others for their principled stance in holding the line on marriage. One problem with expanding the definition of 'marriage' is where to stop. The gay lobby want it to include gay and lesbian relationships but some polyamorous groups want the change to allow more than two individuals to enter a marriage. If the definition is thrown wide open, where does it land?

Another problem is that most social science researchers and most Queenslanders believe that it is in the best interests of a child's full development to grow up with a loving mum and a loving dad. Health minister Lawrence Springborg summed it up in the 2009 debate on Labor's surrogacy laws that included same-sex parenting, making the point that, while circumstances may create situations in life, the states should not legislate to allow it to be acceptable in Queensland. He went on to quote a Galaxy poll from November 2009 which found that 86 per cent of Australians believe that, ideally, wherever possible children should be raised by the biological mother and biological father. I agree with the minister and I believe that not much has changed in that regard in Queensland over the last three years.

On the same bill Archbishop Bathurst wrote—

The Catholic Church finds it difficult to support legislation which places a child in a situation where there is no mother and father as would normally be expected. It is difficult to know in advance the impact such legislation may have on children, or the damage it may do to the institution of the family which is the foundation of our society.

Pope Benedict XVI has said—

The best chance children have of developing properly is found in a family because of the uniquely complementary roles played by husband and wife ... they need to dwell, grow and live with both parents, because the maternal and paternal figures complement one another in the education of children and the formation of their personality and identity.

Queenslanders are naturally socially conservative and are wary of any moves in Canberra to push a same-sex marriage and same-sex parenting agenda on them. Just because radical Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young and other Canberra lefties huff and puff that it is inevitable and politicians must accept the demands of the Greens, that does not make it so. Archbishop Mark Coleridge cautions MPs that the experience in some places suggests that there is even a slippery slope in various jurisdictions from registration of civil partnerships to same-sex marriage. In closing and in summary, I agree with Archbishop Coleridge, who said—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Cunningham): Order! Stop the clock please. Member, can you give an assurance that you are not straying into areas of debate in this chamber?

Dr ROBINSON: Yes, I am about to finish the speech and I make no reference to Queensland's bill that is before the House.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Start the clock. I call the member for Cleveland.

Dr ROBINSON: I am talking about the federal Marriage Act. In closing and in summary, I agree with Archbishop Coleridge, who said that we should be disturbed by anything that reduces traditional marriage.

Tin Can Bay, Volunteer Coast Guard

 **Mr GIBSON** (Gympie—LNP) (2.53 pm): I rise to bring to the attention of the House the great work of the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Tin Can Bay flotilla QF17. I start off by acknowledging that I have the great honour of being this coastguard's patron. I accepted that position last year. I have become more involved as I have seen the work that they do. I want to recognise the great leadership that is displayed by the executive.

The commander, Harley Moss, and the deputy commander, Colleen Johnson, run—and pardon the pun—a very tight ship. They are supported by their training officer, Ian Sutton; the administration officer, Julie Hartwig; and the purser, Mary Guyatt. We also have to recognise the great work done by the former commander, Jim George. Jim is well recognised for his efforts within the Tin Can Bay Coast Guard.

The area that the coastguard covers from their base in Snapper Creek is the Tin Can Bay Inlet and the adjacent creeks, the Great Sandy Strait offshore waters north to Indian Head and south to Double Island Point and 50 nautical miles seaward. This area includes the notorious Wide Bay bar, which has a reputation of being one of the worst bars of the eastern seaboard. It has caused great grief for many a boatie in the area.

Over the past quarter the coastguard has been involved in three major assists and 24 other assists. To give the House a bit of a flavour as to the type of work they have done, one major assist was as a result of a trailer-sailor operator who decided to brave Hook Point with two other people on board. They only had non-reflective life jackets with them. After capsizing they were lucky to be washed ashore at Hook Point Beach where they spent the night. In the morning they walked down to the Fraser Island barge. That night QF17's rescue boat searched for two hours in dangerous seas looking for the vessel.

There was also an incident where the operator of a 35-foot fly bridge cruiser radioed QF17 in trouble at Double Island Point when one of its twin engines failed and they were drifting towards Wolf Rock. The third major assist was of a centre console plate vessel that had broken down at night with three persons on board out at sea some 10 nautical miles north of the Wide Bay bar. QF17 received their call first thing in the morning and they responded immediately.

One of the challenges that our coastguard has is funding. The Tin Can Bay coastguard draws from a small local community at Tin Can Bay to support them. Often, and quite disturbingly, boaties make no contribution to the cost of the assistance or the amount that they do contribute does not cover the full cost. State funding is limited and we understand the budgetary constraints, but we must as a community look at better ways to support our coastguard so that we can continue to have the great volunteers—those great men and women—who provide support often in a time of need and in dangerous circumstances. I commend the House to look at other ways to find funding support for them.

Rockhampton, Shadow Cabinet

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.56 pm): Last week I had the pleasure to convene a meeting of the shadow cabinet in Rockhampton. Less than three months after the state election, Labor took its entire shadow cabinet beyond the south-east to the great Central Queensland city of Rockhampton. This visit reflected the commitment that I made soon after I was honoured to be elected leader of the parliamentary Labor Party that we are determined to return to our core values, reconnect with communities and rebuild our party.

While the Newman government seems prepared to turn its back on its election promises, particularly in relation to jobs, Labor is getting back to basics. I also find it interesting that the Newman government, with its massive majority and all its resources, still has not met outside the south-east. It seems that the Premier, the former Lord Mayor, is more interested in being Premier of Brisbane rather than Premier of Queensland.

The visit to Rockhampton started at the Roma Street Railway Station, where the South-East Queensland members of the shadow cabinet met to board the tilt train. It was a great trip. As the member for Rockhampton mentioned in his speech, we were met in Rockhampton by the member for Rockhampton and the deputy leader, Tim Mulherin. I would like to thank the Queensland Rail staff, who do an excellent job. They are very passionate about their job and they made the trip a very comfortable one.

We spent the next few days meeting with locals, visiting workplaces in Rockhampton and Yeppoon, and learning more about local issues. Nursing delegates told us of their concerns about the LNP's plans to cut front-line nursing positions in Emerald. TAFE representatives told us of their concerns about job security in light of the government's proposed shake-up of TAFE colleges across this state. Teachers expressed their grave concerns about the government's pay offer and the Independent Public Schools program, and the impact that these policies will have on job security for teachers, class sizes and workloads.

I would particularly like to thank those teachers who spent the time to sit down with me for more than an hour after school to outline some of the issues confronting them as a result of the Newman government's plans to wind back their working conditions. The LNP's policies look likely to result in increased class sizes in state schools in direct contravention of advice from education officials that smaller class sizes are better for our students.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Rockhampton Mayor, Councillor Margaret Strelow; Central Queensland University Vice-Chancellor, Professor Scott Bowman; and the many community and business leaders from the region who met with us during the visit.

We are determined; we are serious about reconnecting with the wider community. We are working hard to offer the people of Queensland an alternative to the disappointment that this Newman government has shown us in the past few months. We will be working towards becoming the hardest working opposition in Australia and we pledge to hold the Newman government accountable for its mounting broken election commitments.

Morayfield Electorate, Justices of the Peace

 **Mr GRIMWADE** (Morayfield—LNP) (2.59 pm): I rise to update the House on a recent Justice of the Peace morning tea that I held in my Morayfield electorate. I recently invited the local JPs to my office to partake in a morning tea in an effort to thank them for the great work they undertake in our community on a daily basis. More importantly, this was an opportunity to listen to the local JPs and understand what resources they needed to support them in their duties and what could be provided from the state government to ensure that these professionals continue to perform their crucial roles in our community.

The morning tea was very informative with many points of view in relation to the JPs' roles, the image of JPs in Queensland, support—including professional development required to keep them up to date with ever-increasing changes—and other issues that are important to JPs as they perform their roles to the best of their abilities. JPs perform a role in our communities that are at times undervalued. Their roles are at times misunderstood by a perception that they are only a signing service. Those performing Justice of the Peace work in our community do so in a voluntary capacity. Contrary to the

perception in the community about the role of a JP, these individuals offer services outside of just witnessing documents as a signing service. JPs are required to assist with various ministerial and judicial roles, including witnessing documents, certifying copies, witnessing signatures, hearing summary offences, hearing bail applications and requests for remands and adjournments and issuing search warrants. My hat goes off to the services that these volunteers offer in our community.

Throughout the morning tea it was made very clear to me that the main area of concern in the group was the inability to have local regional seminars and professional development training for their updates. I have investigated this and can confirm to the House that I am working with the Attorney-General and his office and I am in the process of organising a local seminar that all local JPs will be able to attend. It is anticipated that we will discuss many areas in this meeting. This is the first step in listening and working with the local JPs to ensure that they have the support that they need to operate in our community to their full capacity. In finishing today I want to place on record that I value the work performed by our volunteer JPs in our local area and they will always have my full support as they go about their duties in providing a valuable service to our community.

Obesity

 **Dr DOUGLAS** (Gaven—LNP) (3.01 pm): We have an epidemic in Australia and not one state appears to have the courage to both declare it and mount a significant and serious offence against it. It is obesity. This epidemic will lead to a situation where for the first time children will be outlived by their own parents. The health costs of this will consume any growth of the Health budgets of all states and it is far more than we can afford. In 2007-08, 61 per cent of Australians were overweight or obese—in men the figure is 68 per cent and in women it is 55 per cent. Women are increasing their weight as a percentage of that growth at 50 per cent above that of males. More worrying is that the trend continues. The latest figures suggest another four per cent and six per cent increase in the last three years. The highest rate is in people 75 years or over, proportionately, but the percentage of men between 24 and 74 who are overweight is now over 50 per cent. The highest rate of obesity amongst this group is in the 55 to 65 year old group and in women it is the 65 years-plus group. Forty per cent of Australian children are now obese—not overweight; obese.

Beyond just talking about the problem we need real action. In New York Michael Bloomberg is restricting the capacity of restaurants to supersize the soft drink component in meals. Federal governments must consider media restrictions on food advertising to re-establish the links between eating for sustenance as opposed to an experience. As a state we need to consider incentives to anyone who loses weight and maintains it. Agriculture is one of the key pillars of the new LNP government. It is too often forgotten that agriculture is much more than broadacre farming, cattle feedlots and wide open spaces. In reality it is very much about food bowls, market gardens and extremely competitive, highly leveraged—read speculative—highly technical endeavours where we try to deliver what the public wants and what is good for them at an affordable price. Arguably, our produce is world best standard and largely blissfully free of chemicals, additives and disease. The continuing tragedy is that this food bowl success story is not well known enough in our local market. Far too many Australians—read Queenslanders—are choosing to eat and drink food that is making them not just obese but very sick and in certain cases leading to their death. We know obesity starts in childhood. We know that eating food that makes one fat is more costly, less nutritious and is making our health system fail. We in Queensland have a great opportunity to turn this around. The answer is all around us but no-one can generate enough traction to turn this obesity epidemic around. If we want a better life we will all have to eat more local produce, fewer takeaways and soft drinks, exercise and involve family and friends in it.

122 RCU Cadets; Pioneer Valley Show

 **Mr MALONE** (Mirani—LNP) (3.04 pm): That is a pretty hard act to follow, I have to say. I would like to talk about the great night I had on Saturday night at the 122 RCU cadets dining-in function in Mackay. Major John Zimmerman runs a very tight ship with the cadets. The function was at the Australian Defence Force barracks in Mackay. It was a wonderful occasion for the parents and the cadets to come together on a very formal occasion. We were led into the dining room by a piper. There was candlelight, beautiful crystal and stainless steel and chrome dining settings. It was a terrific occasion where full formal dining took place with all the traditions that go along with it.

I would like to congratulate the 122 RCU cadet group in Mackay. We have another cadet group based at the high school at Sarina. The quality of the young people who come out of those cadet units is something to be admired. The foresight and the work that their parents do to prepare those young people to go to camps and be part of the cadet unit has to be recognised. I again congratulate the cadets themselves, those involved in training those young people, the staff who work with the cadets and, of course, the people who are in charge of the cadet unit.

On Sunday I had the occasion to visit the Pioneer Valley Show, held to the west of Mackay and up the great Pioneer Valley at the Finch Hatton Village just below the Eungella Range. It is probably one of the best single-day agricultural shows in Australia. Something like 22,000 people turn up to that show at the top end of the valley. It was good to see my new companion to the north, the member for Whitsunday, strutting his stuff. It was good to catch up with Angus Lane, the great announcer, and his wife, Vicky. Angus is almost a tradition in rural Queensland with his ability to remember names and bloodstock and to present that in such an articulate and comforting way. Angus is a great friend. He is a great friend to rural Queensland as well. He embodies the qualities of mateship, the history of Australia and the ability to communicate the good things that happen in the bush.

(Time expired)

Queensland Children's Hospital



Dr DAVIS (Stafford—LNP) (3.07 pm): I rise to address an article in today's *Courier-Mail*, which states—

Health minister Lawrence Springborg has condemned the spending of \$150,000 of public money to produce a glossy propaganda video to counter criticism of the new Queensland Children's Hospital.

Honourable members and taxpayers should be asking why something that is costing at least \$1.5 billion needs propaganda. Surely the logic underpinning such a massive outlay only requires the best and cheapest form of advertising, which is word of mouth. Sadly, word of mouth from those in the know is that this project is yet another example of deceitful and fatally flawed decision making by the Beattie-Bligh governments. It is so fatally flawed that, of the Queensland Health capital works currently underway, the recent Costello Queensland Commission of Audit chose to highlight the Queensland Children's Hospital for its flaws. The Commission of Audit states—

The initial cost of the hospital was estimated at \$690 million. Since then costs have more than doubled, to a revised figure of \$1.5 billion

...

This raises questions as to the adequacy of the preliminary evaluation, initial cost estimates, cost control and project management (including scope provisions), and therefore overall value for money in the delivery of the project.

While we must worry about the financial incompetence that the Costello report has uncovered, we must be even more worried about the associated overall planning incompetence because it is that that carries grave risks for the future of our children's health. Wikipedia states—

Propaganda often presents facts selectively (thus possibly lying by omission) to encourage a particular synthesis, or uses loaded messages to produce an emotional rather than rational response to the information presented.

It is precisely because Queensland Health is needing to use propaganda to sell the Queensland Children's Hospital that bald claims that the Queensland Children's Hospital will deliver world-class children's health services must ring alarm bells.

Just as we have not run or hidden from the financial position Labor has left Queensland in, so too we must find the courage to properly examine all the assumptions and conduct that have given birth to the illegitimate Queensland Children's Hospital and its offspring. When it comes to rising to the challenge of ensuring the future of health services for the children of Queensland, I cannot do better than commend to this House the words of Dr Martin Luther King, who stated—

The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

Cooroy State School, Car Park



Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (3.10 pm): Earlier this year there was an accident at Cooroy State School involving a vehicle and a student. As a result of that accident, representatives from the school, the local council and the state government met to investigate options to improve car-parking safety at the school. Unfortunately, at the end of that meeting the school parent body felt that some bureaucrats in attendance did not appreciate the urgency and need to formalise the continued use of part of the school grounds for car-parking purposes, as the alternative car-parking options put forward by the bureaucrats were simply not practical.

The school has approximately 550 students attending each day, and we are very relieved that the education department has continued to allow between 30 and 40 vehicles to enter the northern end of the school grounds to collect children each afternoon. I am very pleased that, as a result of the minister's intervention and interest in this case, the state government has agreed to transfer approximately 3,000 square metres of school land at the northern end of the school oval to road reserve for car-parking purposes. This afternoon, the minister's office advised me that in the immediate future Sunshine Coast Regional Council surveyors will be visiting the school to survey the land to formalise the change of use of the site from educational purposes to car parking.

The school parent body has asked that I stress to the state government and our local council that the continued use of this parcel of land for car parking is essential. The school has already implemented adult supervision of the site during vehicle movement times and has rostered more staff to supervise the designated pick-up and set-down area. The school parent body is aware that recently neighbouring state schools such as North Arm and Yandina had significant school car park upgrades and the school community believes that the Cooroy State School car park now needs priority consideration by the Sunshine Coast Regional Council in this year's budget.

It is acknowledged that the state government provides significant money to all local councils to improve the safety of car parking at its schools. I now table a petition from over 190 parents supporting the school's call for the current unofficial car park at the school to become a designated car park, instead of the alternative options put forward by bureaucrats at the recent school safety meeting.

Tabled paper: Non-conforming petition regarding a temporary upgrade of the northern end of the Cooroy State School oval as an interim car park [385].

Gold Coast, Infrastructure

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (3.13 pm): Today I rise to talk about birthday presents. Members seated in this part of the chamber know that Tuesday was my birthday. On Tuesday morning I was quite surprised when the Manager of Opposition Business, the member for Mulgrave, gave notice that later that afternoon the opposition would move a motion to discuss the performance of the failed Labor Party government over the previous 14 years. I thought, 'Wow, somebody has told him about my birthday. What a wonderful present! I will get the opportunity to stand up and talk about what the Labor Party has done over the past 14 years.' I then started making some notes. I had a word with the whip, but unfortunately I was a bit slow; my esteemed colleagues on the front bench had jumped in and taken all the speaking spaces. With the indulgence of the House, I will chat about that right now.

What did the Manager of Opposition Business propose? He said that the Labor Party had invested in the necessary infrastructure for the state over the past 14 years. I started to think about the sort of infrastructure in my area of the Gold Coast. Obviously, the biggest thing down there at the moment is the desal plant. In 2005, the Gold Coast City Council decided that it needed a desal plant for emergency purposes. It allocated \$165 million to the facility. When the water in this state started to dry up because of Labor policies, the then Labor government stuck its head up and decided that it would pinch that facility from the Gold Coast City Council.

What did the Labor government end up spending on the facility? It doubled the size of it, so one would think it might double the amount of money spent on it. But no! It spent \$1.2 billion.

Mr Minnikin: How much?

Mr HART: \$1.2 billion, which is seven times the Gold Coast City Council's projected cost for that facility. What exactly are we getting for that? On the Gold Coast we are getting a big building that is making a lot of noise and a lot of vibration but is not pumping much water. What else did the Labor Party do?

Mr Crandon: You have 20 seconds.

Mr HART: This is going to be a little short, then. What did I learn on that day? I learned that it is very important that you talk to the party whip on the day of your birthday, because you never know when somebody will hand you a present.

Vietnam Way, 50th Anniversary

 **Mrs SMITH** (Mount Ommaney—LNP) (3.16 pm): This year marks the 50th anniversary of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. In 1962, the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam arrived in that country to help train South Vietnamese troops. On 25 April 1975, the last RAAF Hercules flew out the last of the embassy staff, orphans and refugees. During that period, some 60,000 Australians, including armed forces personnel and aid workers, served in Vietnam to help defend South Vietnam, with 521 Australians giving up their lives.

This weekend the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Association of Queensland will commemorate the 50th anniversary, to give their heartfelt thanks to the people of Australia for their participation in the conflict. Mr Tim Fischer, former Deputy Prime Minister and Vietnam veteran, will be the guest speaker. Over 350 people will attend the function, including members from the Centenary RSL. All proceeds generated on the night will go to Legacy. This event recognises a time when one community came to the aid of another community in the most trying of times.

I have had the honour of meeting some of the South Vietnamese veterans and their families. They pride themselves on being members of their local community and they pride themselves on being Queenslanders. I wish to tell the House about one individual in particular, whom I will refer to as 'the General'. After the official end of the Vietnam War, 'the General' was taken to a prisoner-of-war camp, where he spent seven years. Despite being deprived of basic human necessities and his family, 'the General' never gave up. During that time, atrocities where things that he learned to live with daily. Strength and conviction are things often lost in situations such as that, but that man lost neither. 'The General' is 72 years old now. Ever since arriving in Australia in the late seventies, he has used the strength and conviction that he displayed during those terrible years to forge community alliances and strong family values.

Saturday night's event has been organised and coordinated by the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Association of Queensland. It is another example of the quality of character displayed by the communities within the south-west suburbs of Brisbane. I look forward to attending the event on Saturday night, listening to the former Deputy Prime Minister, Tim Fischer, speak and meeting with members of our Centenary RSL.

School Chaplaincy

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (3.19 pm): I rise to speak in support of school chaplains—or 'chappies' as they are known in Queensland schools. Yesterday, the High Court ruled that the current federal funding model for school chaplaincy is invalid. Whilst on the surface this seems to be a disappointing outcome for the tens of thousands of chaplaincy supporters and the over 500 chaplains we have in our schools, in reality it is a mere hiccup for a service that has well and truly proven its worth in Queensland schools.

A small group of zealots based in Toowoomba, people who pursue their antireligion agenda with more evangelistic fervour than any evangelical church I know, are today crowing about a great victory. But what victory have they had? Their motivation behind this High Court challenge was to rid state schools of chaplains on the grounds that this program contravened the principle of the separation of church and state. The High Court yesterday unanimously ruled—that is, seven to nil—that the chaplaincy program does not violate the Constitution's protection of freedom of religion.

This aspect of the challenge was always weak and has now been put to bed for ever. The chaplains are not in schools to proselytise; they show their faith by their actions. They are the 'Salvos' of the schoolyard and are loved and appreciated by thousands of students, parents, teachers and principals.

I see in this morning's newspaper that the plaintiff Mr Williams bragged about the fact that he received letters of support from 600 to 700 people, most I suspect from outside of Queensland. This number is laughably pathetic when compared to the 70,000 statements of support Scripture Union Queensland received in their campaign last year to defend the High Court challenge. This vocal minority must accept the reality that school chaplaincy has the support of the majority of Queenslanders and is here to stay.

I will read an email I received today from a parent. It stated—

My children's father died 17 months ago and both my girls leaned on their school chaplain for support. I truly believe our school chaplain was better and of more use than a counsellor could have been. She went to the funeral, she listened to the girls, she shared sadness and tragedies from her own life, she recommended professional counselling when the girls were ready, she was a friend to them when their other friends couldn't understand what my girls were going through.

She NEVER EVER mentioned religion or anything related. In fact my girls did not believe me when I told them that the Chaplaincy program was in trouble because it was a church based organisation. I myself am not religious, I have personal experience of professional counselling and my political beliefs are more Left than the current Labor party. But I have experienced the School Chaplaincy program first hand and I for one am glad it will be continuing.

I am heartened to hear that the federal government has committed to finding an alternative funding model. I am very pleased that our Premier, Campbell Newman, has said that he will work with the federal government to make sure this program continues.

Cairns CBD, Bus Station

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (3.22 pm): People who know me very well are very aware that I always try to play the ball and not the man. But the member for Cairns, through his words and actions, makes this commitment very difficult to keep. He has taken the opportunity to take a swipe at me on several occasions this week and it is only fair that I return the favour.

Since the Minister for Transport put out a press release earlier this month highlighting so-called unfunded Labor projects, which included the \$38 million Cairns CBD upgrade, the member for Cairns has been parroting the line over and over that the project would be scrapped because there was no money. He spent years deriding politicians on all manner of things—particularly those he said meekly toe the party line and do not stand up for their local area. He has now become his own worst nightmare—all that he used to despise.

Even LNP stalwart Warren Entsch said the Newman government has no excuse for scrapping the Lake Street upgrade. He stated—

The money may well have been (committed) by a previous government, but it's the government that made the commitment, not a political party.

And what did the member for Cairns say on radio station 4CA on 13 June? He said—

This \$38 million was just a figment of Anna Bligh's imagination ... The reason no dollars were spent by the previous Labor Government was because there was no money.

For the benefit of the House, I table an article from the *Cairns Post* on 15 June 2011 titled 'Far north's budget 2011: Construction, tourism big winners' which states—

The budget also contained the first \$12 million of a \$38 million package to overhaul Lake St Bus services and City Place ...

Tabled paper: Extract, dated 15 June 2011, from Cairns.com.au, titled 'Far North's Budget 2011: Construction, tourism big winners' [386].

And who was the author of this informative article? None other than Gavin King! It seems the member for Cairns either has a short memory or thinks nobody except the regular callers on John MacKenzie's show are listening so he can just say whatever he feels like. But the facts are these. His contribution to the Cairns electorate to date has conservatively been minus \$95.3 million. This is based on lost state funding of \$38 million for the CBD project and \$57.3 million for the Cairns entertainment precinct. It gets worse when we throw in the \$40 million worth of port land and the \$40 million from the federal government for the CEP.

When one looks at the \$186.5 million in savings found by the LNP from this financial year, one could be confused for thinking that Cairns is shouldering more than its share of cuts at a time when it can least afford to. If Brisbane's man in Cairns does indeed turn this around and bring on some projects to replace the shovel-ready ones that he has lost, I will congratulate him. But that is the point. These projects were well advanced in their planning or are shovel-ready.

At a time when Cairns and the Far North needs support from the state government, the member for Cairns and the LNP are walking away from projects that will provide vital jobs and economic stimulus to the region. What is that word he uses again? 'Underwhelming'. We have all seen the words of the member for Cairns come back to haunt him in the past. In fact, he may have got away with writing fish and chips wrapping before entering politics, but, quite simply, he is now accountable to more than his editor. He is accountable to the people of Cairns and Far North Queensland for everything he says, for everything he does and, more importantly, for everything he does not do.

Jacobs Well, Volunteer Marine Rescue

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (3.25 pm): It seems like it is a day to recognise marine rescue organisations. My good friend and colleague the member for Gympie has talked about the Tin Can Bay coastguard. I would like to take the opportunity to talk about Volunteer Marine Rescue at Jacobs Well. What a fantastic organisation that is. I am proud to say that my son is a volunteer there along with many of his friends.

There was a recent rescue written up in the paper, and it managed to get on the television as well. I am proud to say that my son was involved in that particular rescue.

Mr Powell interjected.

Mr CRANDON: You may say that there is a conflict of interest, but I am a very proud father and a very proud member of parliament who has the Volunteer Marine Rescue at Jacobs Well in his electorate, which does a terrific job.

The bottom line is that two fishermen decided to go fishing. They did not log on with Volunteer Marine Rescue as they left. They decided that they were going to cross Jumpinpin Bar. They decided not to notify Volunteer Marine Rescue that they were going to cross the bar. Seven hours later, having spilled out of their boat and having swum back, one of them was finally seen by a fisherman. It was very fortunate for them that someone else was there. Within 30 minutes the VMR Jacobs Well had arrived and had picked up that patient, who had a temperature of 32 degrees and was treated for hypothermia. Within 15 minutes they located the other fellow, who was also treated for hypothermia as well as for hypoglycemia because he is a type 1 diabetic. They were two very lucky men. Fortunately, the VMR also had on board off-duty paramedical Nick Coombes, who was able to use all of his skills in helping keep these fellows alive.

There are three key messages that come out of this. The first is about community safety. It is all about people making sure that they do the right thing when they go out and that is that they notify the local Volunteer Marine Rescue or coastguard that they are going out and when they expect to be back. No-one knew these men had gone out. No-one knew that they were missing until they were accidentally found.

The second thing is that we need more recruits at VMR Jacobs Well and right around the state. We need people to come along and be volunteers on these vessels and be properly trained. The third thing is that we need boaties to become associate members of Volunteer Marine Rescue, just like people are with the RACQ, and be part of it. The big message though is to log on with VMR before you go, notify VMR before you cross the bar and notify VMR after you get back.

(Time expired)

Telegraph Road, Overpass

 **Ms MILLARD** (Sandgate—LNP) (3.28 pm): I stand here before members in parliament today with the greatest of pleasure to confirm that the long awaited and very long overdue Telegraph Road rail overpass project has been given the green light.

Mr Rickuss: I heard you campaigned on that matter.

Ms MILLARD: I campaigned long and hard. I thank the member very much. I shall take the interjection. This is great news for my community, as planning is soon to commence thanks to the joint initiative between the state LNP Newman-led government and the local LNP Quirk-led government.

During the state campaign the most requested and talked about issue in my electorate was Telegraph Road and the oh-so badly needed rail overpass, with an average wait time to cross this track, on my estimate, of roughly 20 minutes. I have crossed it more times than I can count, so I have had plenty of time to count. The *Courier-Mail*, however, reported this week that the average wait time is 18 minutes—two minutes less than my estimate but nonetheless still a long time. It is not as long, though, as the time people have had to wait to have this overpass built. These figures vary, but again the *Courier-Mail* this week reported that it has been six years. So let us work on that figure. Six years of uncertainty, six years of playing with people's lives like a game of Russian roulette, six years of hoping that no-one will be seriously injured or killed—it is just not good enough. Is it any wonder that people were concerned about the future of this rail crossing as we live in a community that is ever expanding—with proposed housing developments within cooe of this track and with the likelihood of substantially increased train traffic on those lines over the next five to 10 years.

The rail crossing is also listed as one of Brisbane's and the state's most dangerous crossings, and delivering on this project will continue to be a top priority for me as this safe solution for the rail overpass goes through its planning and construction phases. I am proud that the new state government and the Brisbane City Council listened to residents and made good with their promise and I, on behalf of the residents of the Sandgate electorate, thank them for that.

Upon completion, we will be able to take Telegraph Road off Queensland's list of most dangerous crossings. This is a terrific win for the community and I thank all of those who spoke to me, phoned me, wrote to me and emailed me and ultimately voted for me and the LNP, thereby putting their trust in this government to listen to them and to deliver the Telegraph Road rail overpass and to get the Sandgate electorate and Queensland, shall I say, back on track. I thank the House.

Blue Ribbon Rice

 **Mrs MENKENS** (Burdekin—LNP) (3.31 pm): I rise to inform the House of the diversification and agricultural developments that are occurring in the Burdekin electorate with the recent opening of the Blue Ribbon rice and pulse mill. I recently had the honour of being part of the opening of the Brandon mill, which is a testament to the confidence that the international company Blue Ribbon Group has in the district.

A company subsidiary, Blue Ribbon Rice, has just completed stage 1 of a four-stage construction and investment program worth tens of millions of dollars. Stage 1 included the site and construction of a dual-purpose processing plant at Brandon, comprising two lines of processing—a rice mill and a combined grain and pulse processing line. The plant processes crops such as rice, mung beans, soybeans, chickpeas and other pulses that can be grown on a rotational basis with sugar cane, cotton and grain crops. The company also sells seed for these crops including green manure crops such as lablab and cowpeas.

Rice is grown on permanently raised beds to enable farmers to use the crop in a rotational system with other crops, encouraging more minimum tillage practices. The company does not discourage growing in a traditional paddy system if a farmer wants to utilise that system. However, it has found that direct drilling and aerobic rice is the preferred system to minimise bird impact on the crop. Currently in the early stages, Blue Ribbon Rice has the ability to handle 15,000 tonnes a year of rice on a normal shift. However, as the rice industry grows, the company has plans in place for milling 100,000 tonnes a year.

It is always exciting to see a new agricultural facility come to fruition and all that is associated with this opening. The local manager, Steve Rogers, and his family and staff are really to be commended and congratulated on their ingenuity and determination to get this project off the ground. Working in conjunction with a dedicated group of growers and agricultural scientists, Blue Ribbon Rice has reintroduced rice production to North Queensland. It has established links for its products in both the domestic and international markets and will also be supplying North Queensland rice to domestic supermarket chains in 2012.

With the Burdekin's water security and increasing consumer demand, the Brandon facility is perfectly positioned to take full advantage of the surrounding production areas. With the ability to draw from an area ranging from Emerald to Lakeland Downs, the company expects its container exports to grow through Townsville's port facilities. In fact, during the opening two weeks I am told that 384,000 tonne of mung beans alone were exported via the Townsville port. This company has a vision. It has a vision to supply infrastructure for crops that will complement the Burdekin and the rest of North Queensland's existing sugar cane industry.

(Time expired)

Samoa, Golden Jubilee Celebration



Mr GULLEY (Murrumba—LNP) (3.34 pm): Talofa!

Mrs Scott: Talofa!

Mr GULLEY: I take the interjection. That means greetings and welcome in the Samoan language. I rise in the House to share that I had the privilege of attending the golden jubilee celebrations of Samoa's independence, held at Maota Fono at Deception Bay on Monday, 11 June. I had the privilege, as the local member, of representing Robert Cavallucci, the Assistant Minister for Multicultural Affairs, and I would like to say to the member for Brisbane Central that he missed out on a great morning.

Samoa was one of the first Commonwealth nations to seek and achieve independence, and it is a credit to their character as a nation and community—

Mr Rickuss: They love rugby.

Mr GULLEY: Yes, they love rugby—that this independence from New Zealand administration was achieved through largely peaceful measures. The independence celebration included a celebration of heritage, culture, art, language, food and dance, and the day was about strengthening relationships and community spirit.

I would like to congratulate and thank the Aiga Samoa Association North Brisbane and the combined Christian Samoa Council of Churches in Queensland and the Samoan community leaders from Logan, Ipswich and the Morton Bay Regional Council. I would also like to extend a warm thanks to Taulapapa Lemalu Roy Slade, the President of the Aiga Samoa Association North Brisbane Inc.

The morning included an address from the pastor in Samoan. I picked up one word in that address and that word was 'Pentecost'. I believe he was talking about 50 years of Samoan celebration but Pentecost is a special word to the Samoans, a deeply religious nation and community. They also recognise Pentecost as being the coming of the Holy Spirit to their nation through organisations such as the London Missionary Society.

The weather was awful and cold, but the marching parade was bright and loud, the speeches were enthusiastic, the entertainment was brilliant and the dancing was entertaining. I note that the Samoans know how to have a good time. The Seventh-day Adventist Church brass band also added some oomph to the celebration. There were easily a couple of thousand people in attendance. I congratulate the Samoan community for putting on a great celebration.

Logan Electorate



Mr PUCCI (Logan—LNP) (3.37 pm): I rise in this House today to pay tribute to a few wonderful events that I was honoured to attend as the member for Logan. For Australia's Biggest Morning Tea, a cancer charity event was hosted by Jenny Atkinson at the Bean to Cafe in Regents Park on 26 May this year. I would like to publicly thank the organiser of the day, Danielle Simpson, who has been personally touched by cancer, losing her daughter's father three years ago. He was only 28. The member for Algester, Anthony Shorten, and his wife, Kelly, joined me and my wife, Anna, and a large number of guests. The day was a great success.

I also had the privilege of participating in the Principal for a Day program with two schools in my electorate—Park Ridge State School and Browns Plains State School. I was fortunate enough to attend Park Ridge State School on the day of their awards ceremony and was able to hand out the awards and

congratulate a number of students and teachers for their efforts. I thank principal Peter James for allowing me to experience a day in his shoes, and I was very impressed with the behaviour of the students and the dedication of the school's staff.

I also attended Browns Plains State School. I thank principal Michael Shyne for sharing his day. The staff there are doing a fantastic job and it is evident that they are happy to be there as they continuously emulated the spirit of 'it's a better place to be'. I am sure that the great staff of these schools are the main reason Logan is leading the way in improving school attendance records above the national average.

Logan is a vibrant place where there is always something happening. In the past month I have had the pleasure of attending Logan's Kaleidoscope Multicultural Street Festival, which is organised by the Ethnic Communities Council of Logan. I had the pleasure of meeting with the President of the Ethnic Communities Council, Paul Khieu OAM, and many of the special guests including Uncle Noel Summers. My fellow member of parliament Mike Latter, the member for Waterford, also attended. The Madi Drummers from the Madi Association welcomed us with great enthusiasm, and we were entertained by many groups of dancers from the Heilani Polynesian School of Arts, as well as performers in their traditional dress from around the world. The festival keeps getting better and better since its inception in 2006.

I have also enjoyed being locked up for a fundraiser for the PCYC Time for Kids charity. The Time for Kids charity raises awareness for the PCYC's work with young offenders and people at risk. Queensland raised over \$250,000 on that day, nearly \$30,000 of it raised in Logan alone. This will go a long way in the PCYC's programs for youth to participate in the developmental and crime prevention programs in their area. These programs make a huge difference in their lives and help to make positive life decisions. I give a big thankyou to Crestmead PCYC's branch manager, Sergeant Mel Cowie, for the invitation.

The Logan Eco Action Festival was also held last month at the Griffith University's Logan campus. The festival promotes eco-living tips in a free, fun family environment. It is an interactive educational event designed to stimulate awareness about environmental issues—

(Time expired)

Royal Children's Hospital School

 **Mr CAVALLUCCI** (Brisbane Central—LNP) (3.40 pm): Recently I was delighted to accept an invitation from the Royal Children's Hospital School principal, Michelle Bond, to tour its facilities and meet with students, parents and staff. The Royal Children's Hospital School every day looks after and teaches as many as 85 students who are at the hospital either for treatment themselves or with a parent or relative undergoing treatment. Their facilities are impressive. The dedication and compassion shown by the staff is truly remarkable and, above all, the tenacity and resolve of the students is breathtaking.

On my visit to the school last week I had the pleasure to sit down with the staff and students and learn about their day-to-day operations as well as develop an appreciation of how far away from home some of the students were. It was very clear that this is a very special place to learn. While students have so much going on in their own lives, the Royal Children's Hospital School aims to give back to the students that element of normality that is so sadly lacking in their current reality. For sometimes very long periods of time, and of course through no fault of their own, some of these students are away from their home, school, teachers, communities and friends. The Royal Children's Hospital School provides students with this and more while they are staying in Brisbane.

Whilst the students' lives are challenging, the school takes away the burden of their treatment for a period of time throughout the day and they can just be normal kids—learning, laughing, engaging and meeting new people. The Royal Children's Hospital School successfully tries to be as normal a school as possible, which is exactly what the students, aged five through to their teens, are crying out for. This is a positive outcome, and I am proud to have this exceptional facility in my electorate. I pledge to work closely in the years ahead, and especially with the upcoming move, to make sure that the school can get back to normal as soon as possible because it provides a very important service to Brisbane and the wider Queensland community.

I had the pleasure of talking with a four-year-old girl receiving radium treatment who, as a result of her brain tumour, had also lost her sight. She had an exceptional outlook on life. There is no stopping some of these students. Treatment and sickness or not, they are survivors and they are having fun at the school whilst they are there in between hospital wards and medicine. I am looking forward to working closely with the Royal Children's Hospital School and all of the schools in the Brisbane Central electorate in the future.

Toowoomba, Second Range Crossing

 **Mr RICKUSS** (Lockyer—LNP) (3.43 pm): I rise to make a few comments about the Toowoomba range crossing. Unfortunately, the Toowoomba range crossing—and I am sure my colleagues from Toowoomba North and Toowoomba South will support me in this—has created an enormous amount of chaos, particularly over the last few years as the volume of traffic up and down the range increases. It is an important thoroughfare to get to not only the gas fields and the mining enterprises but also the agricultural enterprises in the Darling Downs, one of the great agricultural areas of Queensland. They are going to have a bumper crop this year, with grains and cotton growing extremely well, and most of it will have to come down the Toowoomba range.

It is important that we work with all levels of government. I have been speaking to the federal member for Wright, Scott Buchholz, who also represents the area of Lockyer that I represent, to encourage him to talk to his counterparts in the federal government to get the process right for the Toowoomba second range crossing.

The cost-benefit analysis is starting to come down. We are starting to improve the cost-benefit analysis with negotiations through the department. I was fortunate to have the Department of Transport and Main Roads brief me during the last parliamentary sittings on the cost-benefit analysis and how this project can be progressed further with federal government assistance. It is a major project. I call on the federal government to be responsible and fund some of its major projects. That is what we really need. We do not need any cash splashes or pink batts programs; we need funding for major projects such as the Warrego Highway, the Bruce Highway and the Cunningham Highway. These are integral connectors for business and for the state, and we need them to work and to work well. That is what has been missing from the previous federal government's criteria. It is all about spin and how to win votes. That is what the Beattie-Bligh Labor government did and look where it ended up, with seven members in parliament.

We need the appropriate infrastructure put in place. I realise that the appropriate infrastructure is about compromise, but the federal government has to come up with some of the money needed to be spent on this infrastructure. These are big projects. I think we are talking about \$1.5 billion or maybe a bit more for the Toowoomba second range crossing, more than half of which is in my area. This is the sort of money that needs to be stumped up by the federal government so that progress can continue, so that business can continue, so that the people of Queensland and Australia benefit from these large projects and stop having their lives interfered with by the poor maintenance of these areas.

Zingifuaboro, Mr D

 **Mrs SCOTT** (Woodridge—ALP) (3.46 pm): In 2001 a refugee arrived in Australia from southern Sudan. He had trained for the priesthood in his home country but had never taken up his vocation. Instead he worked with International Food Aid, distributing food and assisting his people, but he ran foul of the authorities and was forced to flee into Kenya. It was here that he was given the opportunity to travel to Australia on our Refugee and Humanitarian Program. So it was that Daniel Zingifuaboro arrived in Logan City.

He first of all chose to study and complete a diploma in international business and was invited to join Access Services, our nationally and internationally recognised settlement agency, as their community development officer. Daniel is an entirely unique, big-hearted, wise and very understanding individual who has brought so much to his position. He then embarked on a masters in social science while taking on more responsibility at Access in his position of executive director prior to being appointed deputy CEO to Gail Ker, the heart of the organisation she founded.

Daniel is currently two subjects away from completing a law degree. Daniel's story would be remarkable if it remained at this point, but there is so much more to tell. Daniel has been president of the Sudanese Association of Queensland. He helped form the Queensland African Communities Council, and I well remember the night the new country of the Republic of South Sudan was born. The celebration at Yeronga State High School was electric. The hall was packed to the rafters. Hundreds of dancers rehearsed in their cultural groups outside the hall, and as each group took to the stage I wondered if the floor of the stage would hold up, such was their joy and exuberance. It was an unforgettable night.

Daniel, while being a superb leader, is also a devoted husband and father of two young children. However, Daniel is leaving us to a higher calling. The government of the Republic of South Sudan has now invited him to return to his homeland to take up a position in cabinet as the Minister for Local Government and Law Enforcement. What a tremendous honour for this wonderful humanitarian warrior who has worked tirelessly for his people, first on African soil and then in Australia. Last Friday the community in Logan held a joyous but sad farewell to Daniel. The hall was packed, and attendees included senior representatives from the department of immigration, Senator Mark Furner, the member

for Logan and me, our deputy mayor and so many who have worked with Daniel as well as clients of the service. We wish Daniel and his family a safe and rewarding sojourn, but we want him to return to us. God go with you, Daniel, and a heartfelt thank you from a very grateful community.

School Chaplaincy

 **Mr DOWLING** (Redlands—LNP) (3.49 pm): Today I rise to speak about school chaplains and the role they play in our community. Chaplains are primarily young people, and some work within my school communities. I have quite a lot of interaction with them and I find them to be full of enthusiasm and passion, and they do not peddle a hard religious line. They are a support network in a society where we increasingly see dysfunctional families and families with poor education and poor living standards. The chaplains work with those people and they help them. They give young people a lot of hope at times.

Quite often we find that both parents work, so we miss that time that used to be invested in our children. We miss the 'good old days' as we remember them, certainly back when I was growing up, when there was a parent at home. That opportunity is missing in so many lives, so it is important that our children can work with their young chaplain, who is an adult yet still an adolescent in many cases. Our children can have someone to look up to and someone to give them some guiding principles. The chaplains are a bit of a compass in life. We see so many single-parent families which are, again, not able to offer that balance and that dual role that is so important.

School chaplains are role models. They are not dissimilar to the adopt-a-cops that we have in our schools. They play a key role. They play a partnering and mentoring role and they are a guiding hand. They are a neutral, safe place for many young people to go when they do not have a place of their own.

Young people today are under pressures that we cannot begin to imagine—the pressures of life. In those adolescent and teenage years, they are exposed to their own personal development, drugs, sex and, in some cases, broken homes and broken families—all those kinds of issues—and they just need that one bit of help at times, and that is why chaplaincy is so important. I do not know how many times I have heard stories of people who have been practically at the end of the line and they have been brought back. They have not done crazy things like hurt themselves or suicide—we know that this happens every day—and chaplaincy has been instrumental in saving so many young lives. It is so important.

I put on the record that chaplaincy was formally recognised when it got federal funding from then Prime Minister John Howard. That is where this started. While there has been this glitch—and we will call it a 'glitch'—I think both sides of politics at both the state and federal level want to see the important role of chaplaincy continue. We will find a way to ensure those services are continued and delivered to the young people in our community. I leave the House with this one very, very important reminder: chaplaincy does save lives.

Chatsworth Electorate, Schools

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (3.52 pm): I rise with pride this afternoon to acknowledge a school in the very heart of the Chatsworth electorate, Carina State School. I was recently invited by this impressive Chatsworth school to be their principal for a day. It was an opportunity I relished for a couple of reasons, the first being that education is an incredibly important value to me and my wife and it is something that I hope in my role as a parliamentarian I can improve for the better, and the second being that I attended Carina State School as a student myself. Suffice it to say, when this opportunity presented itself I did not hesitate for a moment to accept the warm invitation.

While the memories of Mr Herd's class and playing red rover might be left with those of us who graduated in 1977, the walls of Carina State School still emanate that same tremendous spirit and pride I felt many years ago. Principal Alan Rowell and all four school captains welcomed me and took me on a tour of the school. This felt like stepping back to 1971, with many of the same classrooms still functional today. Following the tour I joined with staff for morning tea and a briefing, and I then joined with the students from prep right through to year 7 to participate in their various classroom activities. From alphabet bingo with the preppies—which I am pleased to inform the House I finally mastered—to a Q&A session with the older students on leadership and the role of the state government, there was not a minute that I did not enjoy as I stepped into the shoes of the principal of Carina State School. I even assisted with car park duty. This was a great opportunity to engage with parents and their children. I presented the school with a book of significant historical importance for our nation, and I am so pleased that this was accepted enthusiastically by the school's student leaders and is now part of the school library.

What struck me most throughout the day was the fantastic behaviour and wonderful manners exhibited by each and every student I met. I was so impressed with how friendly every student was, each having a positive attitude. This is a great reflection on the education offered at Carina State School and of course the wonderful families who have chosen to educate their children at this remarkable primary school.

The day overall was a humbling experience and one I hope to emulate at each and every school in the Chatsworth electorate. I was especially moved when principal Alan Rowell and two of the school captains, Indiah and Joanna, joined my family and friends in the gallery of this House to watch me deliver my maiden speech just a few weeks ago. To be able to reconnect with my old primary school has been a marvellous experience, and I urge all of my colleagues to partake in the same experience. Carina State School is a truly outstanding primary school and I feel honoured to have attended my old school as principal for a day. It is indeed a privilege to be able to represent it and the school's community as the member for Chatsworth.

Earnshaw State College, Global Enterprise Challenge

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): I call the member for Nudgee.

 **Mr WOODFORTH** (Nudgee—LNP) (3.54 pm): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I also congratulate you on your first time in the chair. I rise today to speak about one of the many schools in my area, Earnshaw State College. Earnshaw State College is a school in the Nudgee district. It was originally Banyo State High School, which was formed in 1954—

A government member interjected.

Mr WOODFORTH: A great school—and Nudgee State School, which was formed way back in 1876. In 2003 the two schools combined and became Earnshaw State College. Earnshaw is a P-12 school and has approximately 650 students attending. The school is small on some scales but it has been a big achiever over the years. One of those big achievements includes the school's participation in the worldwide Global Enterprise Challenge, which took place just last weekend. They have participated in the Global Enterprise Challenge, the GEC, since 2007.

The GEC was launched by the International Space Station in 2002 and today around 5,000 young people from 200 schools and colleges around the world participate every year. The GEC is a 24-hour challenge whereby teams have to produce a two-page business report, a four-slide PowerPoint presentation and a three-minute video pitch to potential investors. Teams are given the challenge at 12 pm and in the next hectic 24 hours they have to come up with a concept and create each judging piece as well as logos, banners, websites and any other interesting concepts to add to the wow factor.

This year nine countries—including Australia, South Africa, Japan, Canada, the USA, South Korea, Germany, the United Kingdom and Norway—registered to compete, and I am pleased to announce that, from all those countries and all those thousands of students who competed, Earnshaw college, which won this year's Australian title for the third year running, can also lay claim to being the international winners for 2012, also for the third year running. So a big congratulations goes to the team at Earnshaw State College, and I also send a thank you to year 10 student Emma Clinton, who helped write this report on Earnshaw's success.

Palm Beach Olympic Pool; Currumbin, Law and Order

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): I call the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games.

 **Hon. JA STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games) (3.57 pm): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and how refreshing it is to see you in the chair on your first day in this role.

As a local resident of 25 years, I wish to place on record my full support of Michael and Narelle Wenden in their considerable yet measured efforts to continue operating the Palm Beach pool. On behalf of Currumbin citizens and as the elected state member for the area, I have written to all sitting Gold Coast city councillors in support of the Wendens being able to continue their role, and I have also put in a call to the mayor.

On Friday, a full Gold Coast City Council is expected to vote and ultimately decide the fate of the Wenden family. The Wenden family have operated the local pool for the last 35 years and have in that time provided a dedicated service to our community, and they deserve to have this service properly acknowledged. The council is currently considering a tender from a Victorian company that residents fear will see the Wendens lose control of this much loved and utilised pool. The council's key priority should be to provide an affordable community service for ratepayers and not simply be swayed by the cheapest option. The Local Government Act 2009 does not suggest that this is the only criteria to follow, and nor should it.

As part of the Newman government, which is committed to lowering the cost of living for Queenslanders, I am fully aware of ensuring that the best value for money is achieved. In that regard I understand that the Gold Coast City Council does have a responsibility to the ratepayers to get the best bang for their buck, and that is exactly what they have got from the Wendens over the past 35 years, along with a friendly and caring service, a clean facility and quality teachers. The Wendens deliver an

affordable and reliable service to our community, with their learn-to-swim programs being arguably the best on the Gold Coast with some 36,000 participants, and they manage to deliver the lowest prices for learn-to-swim and junior swim coaching.

I understand that there are some members in this House who have experienced the Wendens' superior coaching, as have members of my own family. This dedicated couple want to see as many youngsters as possible learn to swim safely and keep fit. Residents have real fears that, under new management from an interstate company, fees will go up and the cost of entry will be prohibitive to many local users. We are a tight-knit community in Currumbin and we value our connectedness through activities such as those on offer from the Wendens. I have a track record of fighting for my community, and 35 years of solid service to the Currumbin community is definitely something worth fighting for.

Very quickly on another matter, I want to congratulate the Minister for Police and Community Safety, the honourable member for Bundaberg, for delivering on the Newman government's election promises to get serious about law and order. The Gold Coast recently welcomed nine new police officers, with Coolangatta recruiting two new officers and a recruitment search to begin on 1 July. We also saw a commitment to extend funding for the Gold Coast helicopter—great news for our community.

(Time expired)

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (COMMONWEALTH POWERS) BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 927, on motion of Mr Langbroek—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr RUTHENBERG** (Kallangur—LNP) (4.00 pm): I rise to speak briefly in favour of the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012. Today is the shortest day of the year and I wonder if the House will reflect this in sitting time today. Maybe not! At the heart of this bill is the focus on efficiency and effectiveness and getting rid of red tape—a key election promise. There is a desperate need to address the issue of red tape in this state. The reduction of red tape in Queensland also needs to extend to the plethora of red tape that exists across Australia and really does cause significant impediments and restrictions and increased costs of doing business for Australian companies and organisations. A great example of red tape that the LNP government has this week dealt with as planned and promised was the removal of the sustainability declaration that needed to be lodged prior to selling a house that simply never got used and served no real useful purpose. I also note the creation of, with the passing of the cost of living bill this week, the Office of Best Practice Regulation. Again, what a welcome innovation aimed at the same effect of efficiency and effectiveness and the reduction of red tape.

I note from the minister's introduction to this bill in this House that the bill will refer legislative power to regulate registered training organisations, or RTOs, and vocational education and training to the Commonwealth. I understand a driver of this legislation comes from a 2009 Council of Australian Governments agreement to reform how regulation of vocational education is achieved nationally, including the registration and regulation of registered training organisations and accreditation of vocational education and training courses. This seems to me to be a reasonable and sensible goal in an effort to reduce the amount of red tape that exists across states of the Commonwealth. I also note the establishment by the Commonwealth of the Australian Skills Quality Authority. The expectation of the outcomes of this new authority is in line with the LNP's own focus on efficiency and effectiveness and the reduction of red tape. This authority should help improve employer and consumer confidence in the quality and consistency of assessment of vocational education training qualifications. This would come from a consistent application of standards for registered training organisations across Australia and a consistent follow-up of any sanctions against RTOs, or registered training organisations, which do not meet the expected high standards of the vocational education sector. This will help avoid further damage to our valuable adult training and education reputation that is experienced when shonky providers close up overnight, leaving many international students without paid-up moneys and without qualifications. If this bill helps to protect the reputation of the vital education market for overseas students, then it will be a good result.

The unfortunate part about this, however, is that the federal government once again seems to be creating things when it does not need to be creating things. The increase in cost of student visas annually to over \$600 a year really is a significant impediment to attracting international visitors to Australia to get qualifications. They bring with them not only full-paying fees but the money they put into our communities, and they become a valuable part of the community. I would ask the federal government to review this process so that we might again start to attract those international students who wish to gain adult qualifications in this country. The advantage of Australia providing VET and HEP paid education in our communities to Asian families specifically extends well beyond the immediate

benefit of export dollars in our local economies. The friendships that international students develop here with Australians often develop into professional associations that result in much business being guided in Australia's direction. The consequential benefit of a strong, highly reputable adult education marketplace in Australia is well worth protecting for the long-term betterment of Queensland and Australia.

I will relay a personal experience. Some years ago the company I was working for was opening an office in Beijing after many years in Shanghai. If one understands the cultural significances, being in Shanghai and not Beijing can have some impediments on doing business in China. We were opening an office in Beijing and the consequence of that was that we ended up hosting some officials at a very exclusive restaurant. It was during that conversation that I understood and started to speak with and got to hear some of the stories of some of those senior officials. The company I worked for was based in the States and at the time I was living in the States, but the mere fact that I was an Australian in China with those several officials who had done masters qualifications here in Australia made a heck of a difference. It opened doors that I simply could not open prior to that.

The fond memories that those men held of Australia and their time in Australia and the friendliness of the Australian people and the welcome that the communities they lived in gave them truly opened doors. We spent many hours reminiscing about different things and deals were struck. This is the exact type of thing that I am talking about—that is, if our reputation or our capacity to deliver adult education through the vocational education sector to international students is harmed, we may be in trouble here. I again ask that the federal government look at how much it is charging for students visas in terms of attracting those international students back to Australia in order to continue to enhance our reputation. To that end, I also expect a benefit from the new national authority, the Australian Skills Quality Authority. Hopefully, there will be a coordinating national approach to identifying and then responding to emerging issues in the VET sector.

Typically I would offer my caution to the minister to be very careful about referring any powers residing in the state to the Commonwealth government, especially to the current federal government. The current federal government, in my humble opinion, is simply quite inept. It is very disorganised and ineffectual and many people in my electorate cannot wait for the next federal election. However, in this instance it would appear that reasonable checks and balances are in place and I congratulate the minister for protecting our interests. I support the minister's efforts. As an example of the checks and balances, I note that this bill requires the tabling of any amendments of the national VET legislation in this House. I understand that this bill will also abolish the current Queensland VET regulator, the Training and Employment Recognition Council, and the bill will transfer the remaining functions that are associated with apprenticeships and traineeships to Skills Queensland. Again, this is an example of efficiency driving effectiveness.

I support the move to drive less regulation but get greater efficiency and better outcomes. If we can effect less interference by the various governments across Australia while still achieving effective regulatory outcomes, then that must be a good thing for Queensland and, ultimately, Australia. If the outcomes of this effort are implemented well, we can ensure that Queensland continues to deliver and maintain the highest quality standards and further supports this government's commitment to reduce regulatory burdens on business. I support the bill.

 **Mrs MILLER** (Bundamba—ALP) (4.09 pm): It gives me great pleasure to rise today in support of the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012. I would just like to place on the record of the parliament today my wholehearted support for the Bremer Institute of TAFE. The Bremer offers vocational education and training in advanced diploma courses, diploma courses and certificate levels 1 to 4, which assists its students from entry level qualifications through to supervisory roles. There is an array of courses from community services and health, hospitality, events management, information technology, retail business and also the trades including automotive, building and construction, horticulture and bricklaying. I could go on and on in relation to the courses that the Bremer TAFE offers.

We also have big TAFE campuses at Bundamba and also one in my electorate of Springfield, which is growing very strongly. I would like to thank the Minister for Education for being out there the other day. He had a look around the Bremer TAFE and also USQ and the different schools. In fact, I invited the minister to come back and have a look at our wonderful state schools as well, and he assured me that he will so we will organise that. We also have the Goodna campus, which is a tiny, wee little house. I have to tell honourable members that it is very good because it teaches our multicultural people who have come into Australia—like our Sudanese and our other cultural groups—English language, and that is very, very important.

I want to place on record my support for Bremer TAFE. I also want to place on record my support for TAFE teachers, for all the administrative staff and the thousands and thousands of students who, over a long period, have graduated from Bremer TAFE. I want to table a *Courier-Mail* article dated 21 June 2012 in relation to the future of Bremer TAFE. This article states that the Bremer TAFE has been talking to the Gold Coast TAFE college, the Toowoomba TAFE college and the Moreton South TAFE

college and we would like to know why. Why have they been talking? The reasons are all set out in this *Courier-Mail* article. It states that Bremer TAFE could become a subset of the Moreton South TAFE on the Gold Coast. It also could become a subset of the Toowoomba TAFE. It could become a subset of Moreton South Institute of TAFE. Therefore, we could lose the name 'Bremer TAFE' and we could be lost in the LNP's mad system of crazy budget cuts.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Courier-Mail*, dated 7 June 2012, titled 'Ipswich's Bremer Institute of TAFE may merge with MSIT as Campbell Newman faces question from Jo-Ann Miller' [387].

I brought this to the attention of the House when I asked the Premier a question. The minister was away at the time which is why it was directed to the Premier. The important thing is that the people of Ipswich want to maintain our Bremer TAFE as it is. Where were the member for Ipswich and the member for Ipswich West, also known as the 'member for Manhattan'? They have stayed silent. They have gaffer tape around their mouths which was put there by the Premier and the ministers. They have not said a word about the future of Bremer TAFE. They have been zipped up, silent—absolutely silent. They have not come out publicly to fight for Bremer TAFE because they do not give a rat's. That is the truth. They do not care. They do not care about keeping the name 'Bremer TAFE'; which is iconic in our city of Ipswich. They do not care.

I want the Bremer TAFE expanded. When the minister came out to Springfield the other day he was left in no uncertain terms that our community wants Bremer TAFE expanded into the Springfield community. Why? We told the minister why, because you can go to school in my local area. You can then do a certificate or a diploma at the Bremer institute at Springfield and then you can go next door to the University of Southern Queensland and do a degree course. What a great facility that would be in our area—absolutely fantastic. The students, the residents and the parents are very concerned about the future of Bremer TAFE. What we have here is an e-petition—

Mr STEVENS: I rise to a point of order. The member for Bundamba has clearly strayed into other areas and away from the bill that is before us today. I ask you to keep her relevant to the bill at hand.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order! I ask that the member remain relevant to the bill at hand.

Mrs MILLER: I was waiting for this one—relevance!

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask that the member remain relevant. Please continue.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you very much for your protection. I am going to continue in relation to clauses 385 and 386 of the bill. As I was saying about training in my local area, what we have here is an e-petition in relation to Bremer TAFE because it is so good and so wonderful. The e-petition is a test for the MPs for Ipswich, Ipswich West, Lockyer and Mount Ommaney. Will you sign the petition and stand up for Ipswich and the people in the western corridor? Every day I will be checking it to see if your names are on it. Let me say also to the member for Ipswich West: you should hang your head in shame because, according to the parliamentary website you have been employed for 22 years in relation to vocational education and training. He of all people should be fighting hard for the Bremer TAFE, yet he is as quiet as a church mouse.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Bundamba, I ask you to direct all your comments through the chair, please.

Mrs MILLER: I shall do. My apologies. In relation to training, we have to be assured that our Bremer Institute of TAFE will stay local in Ipswich. The Ipswich people want to know where these one-term wonders are going to be on this.

Mr LANGBROEK: I rise to a point of order. Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask for your ruling about relevance to whatever clause it was that the honourable member referred to because it has nothing to do with TAFE mergers. If the member wants to make a submission to the Skills and Training Taskforce she should do so, but her contribution here has nothing to do with the bill.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I order that the member for Bundamba remain relevant to the legislation and the bill at hand.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you for your protection, Madam Deputy Speaker. The minister said that to me last week. He can wait for my submission; it will be on its way. I am asking that the members for Ipswich and Ipswich West fight for what is right, because they do not have it in them. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr GULLEY** (Murrumba—LNP) (4.17 pm): I rise today to speak in support of the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012. I remind the House that the bill was introduced by Minister John-Paul Langbroek on 29 May 2012 and that this bill was reviewed by the Education and Innovation Committee chaired by the very capable Rosemary Menkens MP who reported on the bill on 8 June 2012. As the minister mentioned in his introductory speech, the bill was previously introduced to the House during December 2011. The then parliamentary industry, education, training and industrial relations committee issued a report on 23 December, and I note the committee's commitment to keep the ball rolling. Due to parliamentary process, that bill lapsed when the writs were issued for the March election.

Why are we here? Why has the bill arisen? When did this educational journey start? To answer those questions we would need to go back to December 2009 when the Council of Australian Governments, or COAG, agreed to establish the national, and therefore consistent, regulation of the vocational education and training—VET—sector across all state and Commonwealth governments in order to strengthen quality assurance within the VET sector. Under this agreement, the Commonwealth will lead the national regulation. The Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill establishes the Australian Skills Quality Authority, or ASQA, to be the single national vocational education and training regulator. The existing Queensland regulatory body, the Training and Employment Recognition Council, or TERC, will transfer its functions to the Commonwealth body effective 30 June this year.

As a proud Queenslander I find inside myself some reluctance to see regulatory power handed to Canberra, but that reluctance is overtaken by my desire to see waste and red tape cut and Queensland based VET organisations allowed to operate nationally without further regulatory hurdles. As part of my research for this speech I researched the fields of study that are covered by vocational education and training—areas such as, but not exhaustive of, aged and child care, agriculture and horticulture, business, construction, creative arts, entertainment, engineering, furnishing, hospitality, information technology, laboratory operations, manufacturing, sport, recreation and tourism. I note that many of those were part of the four pillars of our economy. Providers of VET are varied and include public, industry and private providers. Providers of VET include public organisations such as schools, TAFE colleges, universities and other organisations. I note that my last employer, which was an independent school, offered VET education as part of the program that we offered to years 11 and 12 students. Vocational education and training is also offered through private and public networks through the eight state and territory jurisdictions and the Commonwealth jurisdiction providing a nationally consistent training platform across Australia. The VET sector is crucial to the Australian economy for the development of the national workforce.

In my own electorate I have several quality not-for-profit organisations that provide vocational education and training. Since being elected I have had the pleasure of attending several of those VET graduation ceremonies. I congratulate the Murriajabree Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Association, which provides VET through its Mindle Goolghun Wunbee program, which is a Bundjalung word from Northern New South Wales that means 'clever tracks to learning'. I also congratulate the Deception Bay Neighbourhood Centre, which provides VET programs to the Deception Bay community. These local Murrumba vocational education programs not only provide workplace skills for participants but also, importantly, give the participants the personal social confidence that is required to tackle the workforce. I take this opportunity to congratulate those local Murrumba organisations on that success.

I note that we are already past the middle of June and that this bill needs to take effect on 30 June this year. I support this legislation. During the campaign the party that I am here representing campaigned that it would cut red tape. This decision to unify the registration and supervision of vocational education and training under a national scheme cuts red tape for training organisations that operate across state jurisdictions. Clearly, the good people of Queensland and Murrumba are better off with the can-do government of Campbell Newman. I note this bill has bipartisan support, which I must admit took away much of the opportunity to compare and contrast our record as an LNP government with the ALP government that had a lust for waste and red tape. I support the minister, the Hon. John Paul Langbroek, in his efforts to get Queensland back on track. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mrs RICE** (Mount Coot-tha—LNP) (4.23 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012. This bill will transition Queensland to a system for national regulation of vocational education and training, known as VET. Effective regulation of VET has never been more important than it is today. More and more Queenslanders are realising the benefits of a VET qualification and undertaking further training. We are also seeing increasing numbers of interstate providers operating in Queensland. To ensure the integrity and quality of training provided we need high standards and a regulator that has the power to enforce those standards. Individuals and businesses are entitled to expect that registered training organisations, known as RTOs, meet the standards of their registration and provide quality training. This government is committed to ensuring that training providers are held accountable to high standards and, as a major purchaser of training, this government is committed to ensuring that we get value for money from our investment in training.

For many years Queensland has led the way in Australia with its high standard of regulation and the quality of training provided. However, the current model has limitations in that Queensland cannot effectively sanction interstate providers that operate here. A system of national regulation will overcome this problem as there will be a single regulator responsible for all training providers operating across the state. The benefits of a national VET regulator include greater consistency of regulation across Australia; the ability to respond more quickly to emerging national issues or risks to the VET sector; increased employer and consumer confidence in the quality of VET qualifications; and a potential reduction of the regulatory burden on providers, some of which currently answer to multiple regulatory agencies when they operate in multiple jurisdictions and/or deliver training to overseas students. This last benefit is particularly relevant. The referral of power to a single national VET regulator will reduce

the number of regulators, contributing to this government's policy to reduce red tape for local businesses. For RTOs in Queensland, a single regulator will allow them to deliver training all over Australia without any additional regulatory administrative burden.

If Queensland does not refer these regulatory powers to the Commonwealth, RTOs with a Queensland registration will need to take out national registration if they want to deliver training outside of Queensland. Both the minister and I have already heard from a number of RTOs that are currently forced to have two sets of staff in order to administer compliance with both the state and the federal regulatory frameworks. As I have already mentioned, it is a firm commitment of this government to reduce red tape for local businesses. This is an obvious example of where red tape can be reduced enabling RTOs to be clear on the regulatory framework governing their operations and for those that have had to operate under both the state and federal frameworks to reduce costs by consolidating to one single national regulator.

The referral of power will also result in significant savings for the Department of Education, Training and Employment—in the order of approximately \$3 million per year. If Queensland does not refer power at all, it will remain responsible for regulating approximately 63 per cent, or 970, of Queensland's RTOs. No referral of power would cause significant problems and confusion for the department, for industry and consumers of training. The department would need to increase its regulatory capacity, meaning that no further savings could be realised.

This reform of the VET sector required the establishment of a national regulator by the Commonwealth parliament. The purpose of establishing the Australian Skills Quality Authority—ASQA—was to have a national VET regulator enforcing standards across the country rather than having each jurisdiction applying standards to RTOs and VET courses. The only way for a national regulator for VET to operate is for jurisdictions to refer their legislative power to the Commonwealth. An alternative way to achieve national reform would be for each jurisdiction to adopt uniform laws. However, this would require jurisdictions to continue regulating VET as adopting uniform laws does not enable the Commonwealth to establish a national regulator that will provide the greatest amount of consistency. Having said that, this referral of power will only allow the Commonwealth parliament to make laws with respect to RTOs and VET courses. The referral of power is expressly limited within the bill and does not allow the Commonwealth to make laws in relation to primary and secondary education; higher education; apprenticeships and traineeships; requirements to carry on a business, occupation or other work; the funding of VET or the establishment of public providers such as TAFE institutes.

VET is closely linked to other forms of education and training and these limitations will ensure that the Commonwealth cannot regulate these other areas as a result of this referral. However, the referral of Queensland's VET regulatory powers is consistent with the signing by the Premier at the April 2012 Council of Australian Governments meeting of a National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform. Quality training is one of the key elements that underpins the strong Queensland economy and is vital to ensuring continued growth in areas such as the thriving resources sector. Without well trained Queenslanders able to take up these opportunities, jobs will be lost interstate and overseas. Without quality training Queensland industry and Queenslanders will suffer. Well trained Queenslanders will be essential to achieving the two fours: growing a four-pillar economy and achieving a four per cent unemployment target over the next six years. This bill will usher in a new system of regulation for training providers. Strong national regulation of this sector is in the best interests of students, training providers and industry. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (4.29 pm): I rise to speak to the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill. I put on the record my respect for and value of the Gladstone TAFE for the work that it has done, which over the past few years has been under fairly trying circumstances, because some of its facilities have been closed down. The TAFE had a thriving hospitality training centre, both front of house and back of house, which was wound down. We lost the tutor and the centre is not used to its fullest extent. I look forward to seeing that facility revitalised. The staff have the enthusiasm and the dedication, but, in some measure, they have not been able to use all of the opportunities that are available to them. Having said that, they work very closely with industry to try to offer courses that reflect industry need. That has been done over a number of years. At the moment, the Gladstone Energy Training Centre looks at things like electric turbine training, construction and repairs. That is certainly welcomed, given the change in industry mix in the electorate. While I think Gladstone TAFE has a lot of potential, certainly it is a contributor to our community.

This bill will refer legislative power to regulate registered training organisations, known as RTOs, and vocational education and training, known as VET, courses to the Commonwealth parliament. I wish to raise a couple of matters, one of which the minister might take a point of order on, but we will see how we go. I want to clarify whether there is any risk that the costs of getting training under the VET scheme will increase when the registrations are taken over by the Commonwealth. Cost in terms of access to courses is a big factor for students. Full cost recovery often precludes a lot of students from going to TAFE. Over recent years, full cost recovery has been the mantra, and certainly I understand the reasons

behind that. In the past, VET has provided an opportunity for people who sometimes face challenging financial circumstances to get qualifications and to be meaningful contributors to the working community.

Is there any risk that there will be changes to the recognition of prior learning? I know that it is the accreditation of the RTOs that is being handed over to the Commonwealth. My experience is that often with the macrocosm of change there is a microcosm of influence. Often, we in this chamber do not get to understand how it will affect the application of the legislation on the ground and how it will affect people. I am keen to know if any of that has been part of the discussions in relation to the changes that are proposed in the legislation. Recognition of prior learning is a big issue in training. Some RTOs do it better than others. Indeed, in my electorate there is one instance of a gentleman who has been working welding polypipe for 20 years. He ran his own business. He has been told that now he has to do a course to get his certification back. I am sure that many of us here would understand that that is quite galling.

I recognise that there are some exclusions in the transfer of this power to the Commonwealth. Also I value that the power to terminate the amendment reference or adoption is available to the minister through the Governor in Council. I acknowledge that it is stated that it would not be used lightly. I would not expect that any responsible government would terminate an agreement unless there were parlous reasons for doing so. I appreciate that that power is actually included in this piece of legislation.

Where I wanted to run a bit of risk with the minister is in relation to the discussion on the potential merging of the Central Queensland University and our TAFE. That has caused a lot of angst in the community. There was some poor communication at the start. The person appointed to look after the interests of the Gladstone TAFE staff was put on only a temporary contract. Because he felt insecure, when he was offered alternative employment he accepted it. The trouble was that the alternative employment was at the university. It seemed for many people at TAFE who had been told that they could have confidence in this gentleman—and they possibly could have—that he went to the ‘dark side’. A lot of confidence was lost and it needs to be rebuilt. I recognise that the minister said that submissions on the merger are going to another body.

The fact is that the merger between the Central Queensland University and the TAFE is seen by the Central Queensland University as a very valuable step forward. Also it has been promoted as streamlining the opportunity for training so that people can move seamlessly between vocational education and training certifications et cetera into tertiary education. That may well be the case. However, we do not want to see TAFE not merged but instead taken over and subsumed by CQU, because many training opportunities potentially could be lost.

My question is this: is there anything in this legislation that would undermine the ability of TAFE to remain an integral and vibrant part of the training landscape in Gladstone, with or without the merger? If the merger goes ahead, will this legislation in any way add to or diminish the opportunity for TAFE to retain its identity in that merged structure, to ensure that the broadest range of training opportunities remain available to people in the Gladstone electorate? I look forward to the minister's answers and I thank him for his forbearance. I support the bill.

 **Dr DOUGLAS** (Gaven—LNP) (4.36 pm): This bill involves an area that is much misunderstood, has been often overlooked and has been a political football over many years. That has meant that too many young Queenslanders either have been pawns in a much larger game or are at the mercy of a variety of bodies, from Education Queensland down to the RTOs themselves. The effects on them have occurred in many ways, but I mention those two in particular as they have proportionately the greatest impact on young and middle-aged people's lives, because they can either control the funding or the overall provision of services and, by default, the certification of process by accreditation. In the case of the RTOs, the impact is primarily financial through the fees element and, occasionally and tragically, the impact of the financial collapse of organisations leading to the cancellation of training courses themselves. In between, there are hundreds of potential trainees who often enter the schemes with great aspirations but have little understanding of what may lie behind the training.

We need trainees from VET programs or our nation stops. That affects not just our building industry but also all of our industries, including our massive service industries. Largely, they are what the nation is surviving on. Arguably, the impact of not training the tradespeople, who are a big part of both the currency and the product of the VET industry, is much greater. The product of the VET industry—that is, tradespeople—is the core of what has made this country great and allowed it to grow.

Strangely, this bill has a history that is not dissimilar to the nature of vocational education and training itself. The member for Burdekin described very elegantly the course that the Commonwealth referral powers bill has traversed. The wonderful song *I've been everywhere* comes to mind. Probably it is a good descriptor of the journey of the bill: it is not really anyone's fault that the site names are easier to sing than those mentioned in the song. The streamlining and consistency that could be achieved by mirroring other states in Australia with regard to these matters are to be endorsed. These were also elegantly described by the member for Mount Coot-tha in the very good presentation that she gave earlier this afternoon.

These critical matters are the abolition of TERC, the VET regulator here in Queensland, and in doing so embracing the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 and National Vocational Education and Training Regulator (Transitional Provisions) Act 2011 and the six-part amendment referral. The minister has tabled the document and explained the prescribed matters. These are essentially all those things that we would expect to be delivered within the framework of a training package. In doing so, it carefully ensures that the state and the public interest is protected within our laws.

RTOs are doing it tough out there. It is even more so the case on the Gold Coast. Realistically, their fate is often in the hands of government since a big part of their funding comes from the federal and state governments. Equally, all RTOs would state that the visa changes by the Commonwealth, which have been mentioned by various speakers in the debate, are their biggest impediment to doing business. Secondly, removing multiple boards and moving to a single board will allow them to trade uniformly across Australia and will free them up considerably. It also makes them far more competitive.

It might also be stated that what the RTOs are seeking beyond a lower Australian dollar is consistency and a determination to resist constantly shifting the goalposts. I am fairly confident that these decisions and the later changes made by the minister will make Skills Queensland more efficient. In return, Skills Queensland is asking all RTOs to commit to the national standards and meet them.

I accept the minister's explanation about the cost recovery argument leading to a possible upward movement in fees in the future or even the impact on fees if delegation to ASQA is subsequently lifted on school RTOs. ASQA has great parallels across all our professional bodies across the nation and is, in fact, to be endorsed for what it does primarily with accreditation and standards.

I am a strong supporter of all RTOs and TAFE. I just want to briefly digress. I have a strong commitment to GCIT. I congratulate Aaron Devine on what he has done down there, particularly surviving in a very tough market post the GFC and building capacity in the system. At the recent opening of the Richard Flanagan electrical facility, which was performed by the minister who is here today, Richard Flanagan made an eloquent speech about what training really does for the nation. I was in attendance with all other members representing the Gold Coast. This modern facility is a credit to GCIT and it commits to apprentices, particularly in the electrical area in the Gold Coast region.

The VET training occurs from high schools in my electorate as well. It is very important. Every day I see schoolchildren moving from school to service providers almost as a continuum. The success of the program is unquestioned. I think Skills Queensland is a good home for the former TERC.

Referring powers to the Commonwealth is one of those hoary old chestnut types of legislation that almost became the norm in the 53rd Parliament. For many it had such a familiar ring to it that it became known as template legislation. The former government appeared to be motivated all too often by the offer of cheap money from the Commonwealth as a one-off action. It even got so common, so rapid and so lacking in regulations that went with it that a Labor member from the Western Australian parliament at the scrutiny of legislation conference, of which I was a participant, stated that it had to stop. I do not think that is entirely what should happen, nonetheless she felt that it had gone on for too long. She named the then Queensland parliament, through its actions, as one of the worst offenders. I was a former member of the now abolished Scrutiny of Legislation Committee and regulation and subordinate legislation were a big part of the currency of that committee. Realistically, they are the things that make the world go round with regard to legislation. Sometimes the legislation gets ahead of it and, sadly enough, the regulations do not go with it. The actions that occur subsequently come out of the regulations.

With all that in mind, every time a bill is referred to the Commonwealth it must address a simple test. Is the referral going to reduce red tape—and that addresses the issue of better access? Is it going to save money? Is it going to make the process easier for the public—and that is the issue of better service? I have stated this time and time again with regard to similar bills even when COAG gave a direction rather than an explanation as to why it wanted to do things. It is a credit to the department and the minister that we have been able to be true to our philosophy, stuck to the task and used our stated principles consistently and always, particularly in the formulation of this bill today.

In any bill where there is a referral of powers to the Commonwealth, it is important to look beyond just the terms 'consistency, mirroring other states and recognising that we are, here in Queensland, part of the greater Commonwealth of states'. We must never assume anything. Patience in progressing to a resolution of those issues is probably what is more than required as an aspirational goal; it has to be practised. I think it is here in this bill, and that is what I was referring to. It did take quite a while to get to this point. The test must be always: is there a greater ease of access, is it cheaper or more cost effective and is there greater service by virtue of the referral? If the answer to these questions is largely not positive then there is doubtful benefit in the referral of powers. It may be that the referral is for referral sake and the public may suffer unintended consequences. It looks like in this case that the referral tests positive. What the minister has stated in here today appears to have addressed this issue. He has included in the bill critical changes suggested by the committee as part of its recommendations. This strongly means that there was a value added from that committee process and a chance for stakeholders' consultation. That is to be applauded.

This area of VET is critical to the success of this state and the aspirations of the public. Education is the key to life and connecting with the world at large for every individual. Interestingly, according to the original ships' manifests post 1788, it was masons, carpenters, seamstresses and cooks who built this country. We must never forget their individual contributions to our society.

Mr STEVENS (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (4.45 pm): Madam Deputy Speaker Barton, might I say at the outset of my brief contribution to the debate on the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012 what a pleasure it is to have you presiding from that chair and from those lofty heights. It may be the precursor to one day seeing another Madam Speaker rule in the House at some point in time.

I will now move to address the bill. Again, we have another state power being transferred to the Commonwealth through a COAG agreement and a COAG decision. The previous Labor government placed this bill before the House before the unfortunate events befell them in March. That is why it is necessary for us to revisit this VET bill. Again, we have to try to rationalise why we would be giving a state power to the Commonwealth. I am always very nervous when any of the state's powers are given to the Commonwealth. I am even more nervous when we give them to a Labor government in power in the Commonwealth. Invariably, there are more costs associated with Labor governments and they have the unfortunate habit of putting higher costs on things that we send across to the Commonwealth.

Vocational education and training is an incredibly important area for our society. There are many young people in particular who utilise these services to further their employment chances. The good minister has pointed out to me the powers that he will maintain should it be the case that the Commonwealth does not treat this very important power with the respect it deserves when it comes to the financial responsibility and does, in fact, make it untenable for people in Queensland to operate under this Commonwealth power. He will retain the right to revisit the matter in the interests of Queensland. I am not sure where in the bill that provision is contained, but that power is quite clearly maintained in Queensland's interest.

VET is important for our youth in this day and age when industries are nation focused. I particularly refer to the mining industry. For instance, people live on the Gold Coast, are trained in that area and yet work in the mining industry in Western Australia, the Northern Territory or other parts of Australia and fly in and fly out.

VET is very important. As a matter of fact, a friend of mine has a son who has been taught under these particular education powers. It has been a very successful transition for that lad from the otherwise difficult education process that he was having through the normal school process. So he was able to avail himself of the training and employment provisions that gave him the capacity to get a skill, and that skill I am sure has been a major influence in settling him down, preparing him for the workforce and getting him to focus on a great job and a great career for the future.

We greatly support all of these training groups. Again, the minister also assures me that the transfer of our interests and powers to the Commonwealth will be a step forward in cutting red tape, which is very much the mantra of the Newman LNP government, so that Queensland can be more efficient and work in a much better capacity for industry to go forward and get the Queensland economy back on track.

Again, I reiterate my concern about the costs associated with the transfer of this state power to the Commonwealth and what will happen some time in the future. Perhaps the saving grace might be that not too far down the track we might have a Liberal conservative government in Canberra, bearing in mind the fact that then this new Commonwealth powers bill will be well looked after from the Commonwealth perspective.

It is very important that these national rules will be monitored by the Australian Skills Quality Authority. The establishment of ASQA is expected to deliver improved employer and consumer confidence in quality and consistency. I think that is very important, because quite a few of the shonky operators, and we generally use that terminology, have been noted in some areas—and I am not going to say on the Gold Coast in particular—

Mr Langbroek: No, not so much in Queensland.

Mr STEVENS: It has not been allowed to happen in Queensland. But we have to make sure that those operators are not utilised. This national accreditation will limit that and will set a higher standard that will be easier to enforce right across Australia. The establishment of ASQA is also expected to deliver the consistent application of standards for RTOs across jurisdictions and consistent application of sanctions against RTOs which do not meet the high standards expected in the VET sector, and a coordinated national response to emerging issues in the VET sector.

One other particular area that I noted was affected by the vocational education and training bill was in relation to pool safety accreditation. Again, this is a matter that has arisen because of the imposition of the pool laws by the previous government. In terms of pool safety training, a lot of people have done the training courses because the councils have to enforce these matters and, again, the council will have to impose more fees on our communities throughout. The costs of these inspections—

whilst this does not relate to training, but the reason they are undertaking the training is to obtain a licence to become a pool safety inspector—is another example of the previous government increasing red tape and imposing further costs on people who own swimming pools, and that has been ongoing with Labor since 1992 and Tom Burns.

I thank the House for the opportunity to talk on this bill. It is very important that we do make sure that the transfer of these powers to the Commonwealth is in the interests of Queensland. I am sure that the good Minister for Education and Training will keep a very close eye on things, monitoring VET groups and RTOs, to see how this affects our communities in the future to make certain that the training regime in Queensland is affordable and is consistent with the appropriate training that we now conduct and does not lose any of that imprimatur when it goes across to the Commonwealth training regime.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order! I call the member for Woodridge.



Mrs SCOTT (Woodridge—ALP) (4.54 pm): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr Malone: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Mirani, I have called the member for Woodridge.

Mrs SCOTT: Thank you. It is a privilege to speak in this House on the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012—issues of vital importance in my electorate of Woodridge. This bill will set in train the adoption of the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 (Commonwealth) and the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator (Transitional Provisions) Act 2011 (Commonwealth), bringing all registered training organisations under the federal umbrella to comply with national reforms as agreed by COAG, the Council of Australian Governments, in 2009.

The national regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority, will ensure quality and consistency in services and apply sanctions should RTOs not reach acceptable standards of education and training. Sadly, I recall in the past that there have been occasions which have damaged the international reputation of Australia as a top quality provider of vocational education and training. This will ensure quality services across the nation.

I believe that in Logan City we have many top quality providers, and I am often invited to graduations celebrating so many of my constituents who have been given the skills required to enter paid employment positions, making them 'job ready'. I note that special provision is being made to ensure that our school sector is not adversely affected by the difficulty in meeting additional costs of RTO fees.

I wish to now direct my comments to the sector which will not be included under this federal scheme—that is, apprenticeships and traineeships, which are so important for many of our young people. These will come under the umbrella of Skills Queensland, which will ensure that the quality of our system continues. Our school based apprenticeship scheme has been quite successful, and I am very hopeful it will grow so much more. Next month two trades training centres will be opened in two of my high schools—namely, Kingston State College and Mabel Park State High School. This is a partnership between these two schools and will provide both engineering and carpentry for students in this catchment area. Built with Commonwealth funding, these facilities will bring so many increased opportunities for these students.

Mr Rickuss: How many kids at Kingston now, Desley?

Mrs SCOTT: Probably about 700 or so—nowhere near when Kev Lingard was there. It was the biggest in Queensland then. These facilities will bring so many increased opportunities for these students. SkillsTech, constructed by our state government on the old BHP steelworks site, is one of the finest facilities, with apprentices in a huge number of industries. It was a very visionary project for which we must thank a former member for Waterford and minister, Tom Barton.

Mr Mulherin: Elvis Presley.

Mrs SCOTT: Elvis Presley, yes. Well done, Tom. Our Logan campus of the Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE is serving our community in a very positive way. They offer courses in English language for our newly arrived former refugees and guide them in the early months when they have so many bewildering things to learn about their new country. Eager to learn, they are given great opportunities. Our TAFE college has fashioned its courses to best serve the needs of our community. Enrolled nursing attracts many, and their practice facility, with several wards set up to mimic real hospital conditions, is first class. Hospitality is also highly regarded and a visit to their hairdressing and beauty salon shows how these students are given very real-life experience and very fair prices are offered to members of our community who visit. Computing, business and other courses also give very real practical training.

Other areas which will be retained within the state jurisdiction will be pool safety inspections and the responsible service of gambling. These courses have been specifically designed and are working well in this state. Our vocational and education sector, as well as our apprenticeships and traineeships, are vital to giving more and more of my constituents the skills they need to enter the workforce and

enjoy the financial independence that brings, to be able to support themselves and their families and to gain the satisfaction of getting up each day, working hard and knowing that we are all contributing to both the economy and the wellbeing of our state and country. I commend the bill to the House.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): I call the member for Mirani.

 **Mr MALONE** (Mirani—LNP) (4.59 pm): Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. This time I will get a go. It is good to see a new Deputy Speaker in the chair.

I have some fairly strong views about VET in Queensland. The Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill is a step forward in terms of VET in Queensland and the governance of RTOs. There is no doubt that over a period of time there have been RTOs in Queensland that have not met the high standards that are required to train our young people—and older people, for that matter—into jobs.

As most members would be aware, VET plays a very important role as we move forward in developing and growing Queensland. The Campbell Newman government will grow agricultural production and food production by 40 per cent, and we will also reduce our unemployment rate to four per cent. These are worthy goals that can only be achieved by quality training in Queensland and by making sure that all of the youth who come through our primary and high schools have access to quality training and the incentive to even look at VET. I have strong opinions about that also. There are a lot of students who come through school with no connection whatsoever to VET trades. Because of their circumstances, they may not have a mentor in their family or extended family who has any practical application in working on a car, pulling a motor down or even putting a nail in a piece of wood. A lot of those young people come through the education system not knowing that there is an avenue out there for them to work with their hands.

When I was going through school—not that long ago—we actually attended a rural training school one day a fortnight where we did leather work, woodwork, tin work and plumbing type work et cetera, and that gave everyone at school an opportunity to get some exposure to hands-on work. We seem to have dropped out of that a bit in more recent times, and I think there is a huge opportunity there. Some of the schools are doing it, right from primary school through to high school, and I have two schools in my area exploring that avenue. One of them is Mirani State High School. Earlier I talked about the Pioneer Valley, and up in the Pioneer Valley is a high school called Mirani. It is a great little place.

Mirani high school has access to a number of cluster schools, where the year 6 and 7 students come into the high school and they pull motors down but it is actually a literacy and numeracy program. Unbelievably, they do their numeracy and literacy programs by measuring bores, downloading manuals, charging out parts, reading and comprehending, and adding figures together. Most educators would tell you that knowledge increases by a factor of 0.4 as students go through a class, so every year you would expect the average increase in knowledge to be 0.4 of a unit. Some of those students at Mirani State High School are achieving 2.5 on a yearly basis. It might be only one or two years, but we are increasing that knowledge base by that amount with those students doing that program. That program has won showcase awards throughout Queensland and even nationally.

We have another program at Sarina where, with Education Queensland and the federal government, we have been able to build what we call a rural skills centre that encompasses rural skills as well as engineering skills. More recently, Skills Queensland has been coming and doing the courses that Skills Queensland does, including obviously block laying, plumbing work, framing work for houses et cetera. So students can join in that program and go through the cattle industry, the grazing industry, fish farming, aquaculture, horticulture or grazing chooks and goats—all of those sorts of things. That program has also won the showcase award in Queensland two years in a row and it has also won federal education awards.

I think there is a huge opportunity associated with VET courses. The program we are moving forward with now through ASQA, the Australian Skills Quality Authority, will actually reinforce high standards in RTOs. I believe strongly that it will expand out to having schools getting involved in RTOs. The two schools that I deal with are actually RTO providers. I know there is an issue in terms of the cost of that and, as a number of speakers in the House today have been, I am also concerned about passing any sort of authority back to the federal government. We saw the mess it made when it tried to put fluffy things in ceilings but killed people in the meantime and when it put buildings into schools that a lot of the schools did not particularly want and that were never properly finished. I could go on and on. I am hopeful that this program will work. We have the opportunity to get out of it if it all turns to the proverbial. With those few words, I support the legislation.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Before I call the member for Ipswich West, I will remind the House that whomever the Speaker calls is the member the Speaker has called. I call the member for Ipswich West.

 **Mr CHOAT** (Ipswich West—LNP) (5.06 pm): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I also congratulate you on your appointment to that position. I probably will not speak as lavishly as the Manager of Government Business but I would suggest that you might be the youngest female ever to take that chair, if I am not mistaken.

I rise to speak to the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012. This bill represents significant changes to how the vocational education and training, VET, sector is regulated here in Queensland. As many in this place would know, I have had a long working career in the VET sector dating back to 1988. It is this area in which our state's future prospects lie, as it provides for the qualifications of a majority of those who will rebuild Queensland.

I am fortunate to have worked in the training quality and regulation unit of the former department of employment and training, now the Department of Education, Training and Employment. May I take this opportunity to congratulate the member for Surfers Paradise, Mr John-Paul Langbroek MP, for his appointment as honourable minister, and Ms Saxon Rice MP, the most excellent new member for Mount Coot-tha, for her position as the Assistant Minister for Technical and Further Education. I am sure these two very competent members will assist the people within the department to continue their great and important work in skilling Queenslanders.

My knowledge of VET and in particular its regulation is substantial. I would like to take this opportunity to recognise some of the great people I had the pleasure to work with during my time in training quality and regulation. Mr Tony Feagan, Ms Suellen Retschlag and Ms Nadine Oosen were three of my greatest colleagues in those days. Ms Trudy Steele, Ms Kim Copeland, Mr Michael Bopf, Ms Kerry Albert and Mr Terry Sattler were also great colleagues of mine in the unit. I also mention managers like Ms Deborah Walker, Ms Carol Hunter and of course Ms Dianne Orr, who I am very pleased is at the very forefront of VET regulation in her new role.

These people and others who followed them have greatly assisted the VET sector and the performance of Queensland registered training organisations, which are in my experience the best in Australia. Queensland certainly does lead the way in VET and, with Australia's national VET regulation under the Australian Quality Training Framework, the Australian Qualifications Framework and the national training packages, Queensland has outdone other states with performance in this area. Over the years Queensland has certainly held its own in terms of managing VET providers. I have met and worked with many RTO managers and trainers who understand and value the role of VET as part of the wider education sector.

The Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012 will refer power from the Queensland government to the Commonwealth to regulate the VET sector, facilitating a national regulatory framework proposed to improve the quality of VET services and increase consumer and employer confidence in the sector right across the nation. Excluded from the referral are the school and tertiary sectors, apprenticeships and traineeships, non-VET qualifications, state funding of VET and the management of our public RTOs—namely, our TAFE institutes. I am well known for my unwavering support of TAFE. I have spent over eight years working in TAFE institutes, including the Bremer Institute of TAFE, and the member for Bundamba might be interested to know that I visit there quite regularly.

Mrs Miller: Oh, really?

Mr CHOAT: So there is something we agree on.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order! I would ask that the member for Ipswich West direct his comments through the chair.

Mr CHOAT: Sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker. I believe the new LNP government through Minister John-Paul Langbroek and Assistant Minister Saxon Rice will take the system forward and will deliver even more qualifications and skills to our young people, those taking up further study, people looking for career changes and, most importantly in my view, those underrepresented in our skilled workforce. Queensland will indeed retain a strong voice in the national VET agenda and I have no doubt that regulators based here under the new arrangements will set the pace for the nation, as will the continuing quality of our registered training organisations. The bill will abolish Queensland's Training and Employment Recognition Council, with the referral exclusions moving to Skills Queensland. I want to express my sincere gratitude to the past and present members of the Training and Employment Recognition Council as they have indeed made a great contribution in their service to VET and to Queensland.

The Department of Education, Training and Employment has advised that registration fees for RTOs will most likely increase regardless of whether Queensland refers power to the Australian government or not. Registration and course accreditation fees for RTOs in Queensland are subsidised by the state. Under this bill, the Australian Skills Quality Authority will become the single national VET regulator and charge fees reflecting a cost recovery model. To protect small RTOs that are a vital part of the Queensland and national VET sectors—which I particularly value—and to ensure that this aspect of the system is managed appropriately, the committee has recommended that the department takes proactive steps to monitor and measure the impacts of these vital training providers. The implementation of these changes builds on existing national quality and consistency frameworks in the VET sector. It extends and has the potential to improve the strategies of providing a well regulated VET system in Queensland that is consistent for all RTOs that train and assess here.

Under a uniform VET quality framework and accreditation strategy, Queensland industries can rely on the consistent quality of the training and assessment of their workforces and the great people who deliver those services. Industry can also look forward to a continuation of a consistency in the quality, skills and knowledge of VET graduates as they apply themselves to their chosen fields of work. There is also potential of benefit through a consistency around imposed sanctions for those operating in the VET sector who sadly do not meet the quality expected. I am very pleased that many of the services provided under the new arrangement will be based right here in Queensland, so not only will Queensland's excellent standards prevail but our RTOs will be dealing with local regulators who understand our dynamic culture and industry base—and the jobs required stay in Queensland as well.

I am confident that our Queensland government will keep an eye on the impacts of the new arrangements and our industry and our state registered training organisations. It is no secret that in recent times Commonwealth initiatives have not exactly all been well administered. I could go on for quite a while about some of the breathtaking failures of policy since 2007 on the part of the Australian Labor government, but that might outstrip the time I have to discuss this bill. I have confidence though in the people who will administer the new arrangements and trust that they will undertake some of the fundamental aspects of contemporary training and assessment and adult learning philosophies. They will need to hold currency in training and assessment qualifications if indeed they are to regulate those who deliver services using those same qualifications.

I am sure the fundamentals of the rules of evidence and the principles of assessment and competency based training which underpin the platforms of modern VET will prevail and I hope, through the same principles of continuous improvement central to the national training framework, the new regulatory arrangements will be of benefit to our great state and its economy. The Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012 will refer power from the Queensland government to the Commonwealth and has the potential to deliver better outcomes for VET participants and providers. The bill will also, of course, honour the Newman LNP government's commitment to reducing overregulation and red tape and I look forward to seeing improvements this change will bring about. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (5.14 pm): I rise to speak to the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012. This bill has a number of policy objectives. One of its objectives is to refer legislative power to the Commonwealth parliament to regulate registered training organisations and vocational education and training courses by adopting the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 (Cwlth) and the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator (Transitional Provisions) Act 2011 (Cwlth) and making an amendment reference. Another of its objectives is to repeal chapter 2 of the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000 that provides for regulation of registered training organisations and the accreditation of vocational education and training courses.

On 7 December 2009 the Council of Australian Governments—COAG—agreed to national reforms to the regulation of vocational education and training, including the establishment of a national VET regulator responsible for the registration and regulation of registered training organisations and the accreditation of VET courses. COAG also approved that a national skills standard council be established to provide advice to the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment about the development of national standards for the registration, quality assurance, performance monitoring, reporting, risk, audit, review and renewal of providers and accreditation of VET qualifications.

One of the policy objectives of this bill was the referral of power. The bill will achieve the referral of power by adopting the national VET legislation to the extent that the matters in the national VET legislation are within the legislative powers of the Queensland parliament and referring to the Commonwealth parliament the continuing VET matters listed in clause 4. As Queensland is referring power after the national VET legislation has been enacted, Queensland adopts that legislation. Queensland refers its legislative power to the Commonwealth on the matters included in the national VET legislation—that is, the regulation of RTOs and accreditation of VET courses.

To ensure that the referral of powers does not have any unintended consequences, the bill clarifies that certain matters are not included in continuing VET matters, and they include primary and secondary education; higher education; apprenticeships and traineeships; the qualifications to undertake or carry on a business, occupation or other work; state funding of VET; and establishment of training providers such as TAFE institutes. These exclusions are necessary because RTOs and VET are closely related to other education and training activities which will remain the responsibility of Queensland. The referral of power and establishment of a single national VET regulator will reduce the number of regulators in Australia and establish a consistent national approach to regulation. This reform therefore contributes to a reduction of the regulatory burden on business.

We need a national approach to deliver a more mobile workforce with qualifications recognised throughout Australia. This would mean employers would be assured of the standard a prospective employee has obtained, whichever state that qualification was obtained in. A very good example of this at the moment—and excuse me for seeming to be one dimensional—is the training of school chaplains.

This is a national program under the National School Chaplaincy Program and recently the Commonwealth government brought in regulations which meant that minimum education qualifications were necessary for chaplains. That is a very good idea, because it is very important that those people who are interacting with our children on a day-to-day basis in terms of looking after their needs are appropriately trained and appropriately qualified. The Scripture Union of Queensland offers as a registered training organisation a course called the Youth Ministry Internship Scheme and trains about 200 to 250 youth workers a year, many of whom end up as school chaplains. So it is incredibly important that we have consistency across the country so that, for example, somebody being trained in school chaplaincy in New South Wales can work in a Queensland school and the Queensland authorities can be confident that they have been appropriately trained. This is a good idea. It cuts out a lot of red tape. It will also save money. When this is implemented, we will benefit greatly from it. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr RICKUSS (Lockyer—LNP) (5.19 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the debate on the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012. I am sure the minister will do a grand job implementing some of these improved requirements in relation to the vocational education and training of young people in Queensland. There really have been some difficulties with the vocational training system in Queensland. It is always a moveable feast. As this is a House of debate I was quite interested to listen to the member for Bundamba—the little banshee from Bundamba—who was carrying on about the TAFE in Bremer simply because it is possibly moving. She was the one who was so critical of Springfield. I heard the member being very complimentary this time—

Mrs Miller: Weren't you out there last week with your minister?

Mr RICKUSS: Yes, but is it not the soulless place? If you go back to the *Hansard* of two years ago you will find those comments being made.

Mrs Miller interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order! The member for Bundamba! I ask and remind all members that comments please be directed through the chair.

Mr RICKUSS: As the little banshee stated—

Mrs MILLER: I rise to a point of order.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Lockyer, that is unparliamentary language and I ask you to withdraw.

Mr RICKUSS: I do withdraw, but the meaning of 'banshee' is—

Mrs MILLER: I rise to a point of order.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Lockyer! What is your point of order?

Mrs MILLER: I rise to a point of order. I find the words of the member for Lockyer personally offensive—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: They have been withdrawn.

Mrs MILLER:—and I ask them to be withdrawn and that he be reminded that they are unparliamentary.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: They have been withdrawn.

An opposition member: No, they haven't.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: He withdrew—

Mr RICKUSS: I withdraw.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: He withdrew. I asked him to withdraw because they were unparliamentary. He withdrew.

Mr RICKUSS: I will withdraw. For the information of the House, a woman of the fairy mounds is what 'banshee' means. I think that suits.

Mr WELLINGTON: I rise to a point of order. My understanding is that it needs to be an unconditional withdrawal.

Mr RICKUSS: That is an unconditional withdrawal. The member for Bundamba was critical of me and the members for Ipswich and Ipswich West, but it is she who needs to realise that education is a moveable feast. It continually needs revision, updating and upgrading. I have a classic example of that. I was talking to a young diesel mechanic only a couple of years ago. He was doing diesel fitting training at one of the colleges and they were still using old mechanical governors on diesel motors. Diesel motors have not had mechanical governors for probably 15 years; it is all computerised. As the young fellow said, it was great for his father's 1964 tractor; he would then be able to work on it. But if he were to work on any modern trucks, that would not assist him at all. It is a moveable feast, and that is what vocational education is about: making sure that it moves forward and continues to progress. Skills training needs to keep going.

I have an interesting letter from which I will read a little bit. I wish to table it for the minister.

Tabled paper: Email, dated 21 June 2012, from Mr Garth Graham from the netting company to the Lockyer electorate office in relation to BSA licence issue [388].

The letter was received today and it is through sheer good fortune that this bill happens to be before the House at this moment. It states—

Ian,

... we are a very small industrial textile manufacturing business in Yamanto—

and I have actually been to this gentleman's business. He manufactures netting, mesh and all that sort of thing. He is one of the premier net makers and mesh shade cloth makers in Queensland and he has done work all over Australia. He goes on—

... we now have to obtain a 'builder's licence for special structures'—

to operate in Queensland. He goes on—

We have no problem with that issue however to obtain that licence we must have a qualification that is recognised by the BSA.

We are an original Qld based family business and we learnt our textile fabrication skills from our father in the late 60's and early 70's and no formal training was ever entered into as it was unavailable ... The Recognition of Prior Learning system will normally be able to provide testing for the required Australian standard certificate III, textile fabrication ... that must be obtained prior to applying for a licence. However Qld does not have an RTO offering such testing, or even offer the training, from either the TAFE system or the RTO providers.

This means we have to travel to another state to receive testing, from an approved textile RPL provider, and then return and apply to the Qld BSA for the special licence.

This is the sort of thing that this bill will assist. I am sure that when the minister realises that this situation needs to be looked at he will endeavour to ensure it is improved.

It really is important that we continue to train and upgrade people's experience with VET training. It is extremely important. The Gatton Vocational Education Centre at the Gatton campus of the University of Queensland offers some VET training in animal care, agriculture, horticulture and land management training.

Mr Trout: Great college!

Mr RICKUSS: It is a great college. There is also the Australian Agricultural College Corporation, and I must endeavour to make a submission to the Skills and Training Taskforce that the minister set up simply because these two vocational educational centres are both based on the Gatton campus and they are both struggling with the same types of issues. I do not know whether there is quite enough focus on one or the other or whether they should be amalgamated. It really is a difficult situation.

As the campus at Gatton continues to evolve, the high schools are sending more students out to these types of vocational education centres. We want this recognition carried right around the country, because the work tasks that Australians engage in are national. We are a very mobile population. People want to have their qualifications recognised in the Northern Territory, South Australia, Western Australia or wherever they go. It is important that this type of upgrading and improving of skills continues.

The Gatton campus is one of those great campuses. It is actually the oldest tertiary institution in Queensland. It started over 100 years ago. It continues to provide vocational education, particularly in animal and agricultural vocations. However, there are other vocations that would fit in well, too. The Gatton Vocational Education Training Centre is fitting in extremely well with the high schools in my area. The high schools are upgrading their facilities—they are building trade training centres—and, showing great cooperation, all the schools have got together on this issue. I think Lockyer has a mechanical school and the Faith college is offering more of the building and carpentry type skills. So they are all starting to work together and fit in.

In times gone by young people left school at 15 and went and worked for a tradie while they did their apprenticeship. Now, tradesmen require people to have more skills than that. They want people coming out who actually know what a Phillips head screwdriver or a chisel is. That is just a fact of life. My brother was a major employer in the electrical industry. He would not employ anyone unless they were 17 and had a licence so that they could get to jobs and get to work.

A government member interjected.

Mr RICKUSS: They do. That is how it has evolved over time. The vocational education system continues to evolve. It is great to see that members on our side of the House can see that we are evolving. As I said before, it is a bit of a shame that members such as the member for Bundamba are still stuck in the past and cannot move forward. They are worried about the name of the Bundamba TAFE college. The member's biggest concern is the name of the Bundamba TAFE College. She is not worried about whether it is delivering appropriate courses or whether it is getting—

Mrs MILLER: I rise to a point of order. The member does not even know. He made a reflection on me about the name of the TAFE college. He called it 'Bundamba'. It is actually called 'Bremer'. He does not even know what it is called.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Mr RICKUSS: I thank the member for Bundamba for pointing out my error. I mean the Bremer TAFE college. There you go, as I just said, she is still worried about its name. She is not worried about what courses it delivers or the appropriateness of the courses being offered at the Bremer TAFE; she is worried about its name. She is worried about it talking to the Toowoomba TAFE and the Gold Coast TAFE. Why? Because it might change its name. Holly heaven! Considering we have members on this side with skills such as those of the member for Ipswich West who, as was highlighted previously by other members, spent 20 years involved in the TAFE system, of course we will look after TAFE. That is why we are here: to look after TAFE. We are here to look after things such as the Bremer TAFE, which was let down for years by the incompetency of members of other governments. We are here to help out TAFE. We are not here to gut TAFE. We are here to make it better and improve it. That is what it is all about. Let us see TAFE continue to improve and evolve. We are not living in the past. We are not living in a time when we used to get 15,000 votes and we only get 10,000 now. We are living today.

Mr JUDGE (Yeerongpilly—LNP) (5.29 pm): That is a pretty hard act to follow, but I am pleased to support the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012. The Council of Australian Governments, COAG, initially agreed to national reforms to the regulation of vocational education and training, including the establishment of a national VET regulator responsible for the registration and regulation of registered training organisations, RTOs, and the accreditation of VET courses. The Australian Skills Quality Authority, ASQA, was established by the Commonwealth government and commenced operations on 1 July 2011. ASQA assumed responsibility for regulating training providers in various jurisdictions. The Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill effectively aligns Queensland with other jurisdictions under the national regulator.

A government member: A good idea.

Mr JUDGE: It is a good idea. Referring powers to the Commonwealth to regulate Queensland RTOs will ensure that Queensland maintains its reputation as a high-quality provider of training and will deliver substantial benefits to the training industry, including many tangible benefits associated with the reduction of the regulatory burden on business.

I believe that it is important to highlight that the establishment of ASQA is expected to deliver the following things: improved employer and consumer confidence in the quality and consistency of assessment of VET qualifications; consistent application of standards for RTOs across jurisdictions and consistent application of sanctions against RTOs that do not meet high standards expected in the VET sector; and a coordinated national response to emerging issues in the VET sector. It is important that under the new framework the Commonwealth effectively monitors the achievement of these deliverables, and that is something the Newman government will be very interested in observing. Provided this occurs, the benefits should allow for greater flexibility and employment options across the country. The new approach will also afford businesses a degree of assurance with particular regard to a consistent standard of training and/or qualification of potential employees.

The LNP government recognises that vocational education and training plays a vitally important role for business as well as the future of our youth and creates continuing opportunities for an ever-diversifying workforce. It is expected that creating confidence that training providers are meeting uniform standards under the national registration and regulation of ASQA will effectively enhance workforce mobility, something that is becoming increasingly important for our state and for the nation as a whole.

Mr Costigan: Particularly around Mackay and the Whitsundays.

Mr JUDGE: I take that interjection. For such reasons, and the very significant fact that it will provide tangible benefits with a reduction of the regulatory burden, as originally stated, in line with the LNP government's objectives I am pleased to support the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill and I commend it to the House.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): I call the member for Nicklin.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (5.33 pm): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and congratulations on your appointment to that position.

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise to participate in the debate on the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012. I note that in the minister's second reading speech he said that the bill will refer to the Commonwealth parliament legislative power to regulate registered training organisations and assess vocational education and training courses; will abolish the current Queensland VET regulator, the Training and Employment Recognition Council; and will transfer the remaining functions, mostly associated with apprenticeships and traineeships, to Skills Queensland. The minister went on to say that this is about referring powers to the Commonwealth.

On page 6 under the heading 'Estimated costs for government implementation', the explanatory notes state that once Queensland refers power the government will make some savings on the cost of regulating registered training organisations and accrediting VET courses as it will no longer perform those functions. I have no doubt that there will be cost savings to the Queensland government, but I am

not convinced that there will be savings to the Australian taxpayer. I have no confidence in the capacity of the federal government to provide efficient services and I have no confidence in the federal government to actually carry out the policing role. If we are going to hand over the powers and responsibilities effectively, we are saying, from my understanding of the bill, that we assume the federal government will take on the enforcement role because the state will no longer be performing that task. Quite frankly, from my experience, the federal government is not up to the task.

Just yesterday we debated a bill in relation to Queensland Health decentralising because building a central system, in the way the previous state government built Queensland Health, simply was not efficient and did not deliver results. I have a concern that we will have a massive bureaucracy in Canberra that is to police all of Australia. The member for Mermaid Beach made comments about concerns in relation to shonky operators. I think they are very real concerns. I certainly have concerns about shonky operators. I have raised those in the past with the previous ministers. Quite frankly, the response was woeful. I am not convinced that the federal government will be able to do a better job in policing the shonky registered training organisations. All through this debate we have heard that it will lift standards and performance. But what about the shonky operators out there? We do not have the capacity and we are not getting on top of them because it is so expensive and difficult to be the policeman.

Yes, there will be savings to the state government, but I am not convinced that there will be savings to the Australian taxpayer. I want to make sure, if we go down the road of having all these registered training organisations out there, which are simply in the business of making money, that the training the RTOs are supposed to be providing is credible and reputable and that they are delivering in their training courses what they say they will. I believe that the track record shows there are a number of providers who are not providing the courses they are accredited to provide. I say no more on that.

Talking about handing over powers reminded me of when I was first elected to the House as the member for Nicklin. That was just after the Borbidge-Sheldon government was defeated. Within the first couple of months of taking over the office in Nambour I recall receiving a phone call from staff at the Nambour TAFE. They said, 'Peter, we can't tell you our name, but you need to be aware there is something happening with Nambour TAFE.' Guess what was happening? The previous Borbidge-Sheldon government was going to transfer responsibility for Nambour TAFE down to the coast. Instead of the state government being involved in the building and the expansion of Nambour TAFE, the previous Borbidge-Sheldon government was going to engage with private enterprise, let them build a building at the coast and simply rent it back. Fortunately, Paul Braddy and Peter Beattie put a stop to that and we saw the start of the expansion and the regrowth of the Nambour TAFE. I am passionate about Nambour TAFE and I hope that this government will continue to be passionate about Nambour TAFE. What we have seen are real concerns about the future of very important training programs operated from TAFE. The government has been going down the road of saying it has to be cost neutral.

On the issue of the new federal agency taking over the registered training organisations, I have another concern about the cost of compliance. I reflect on a meeting I had with the former minister and representatives from a small registered training organisation who were saying that the cost of compliance almost sent them to the wall. I refer to consultation. Page 8 of the explanatory notes, under the heading 'Consultation', states—

The Commonwealth Government conducted public consultation on the impact of the fees to be charged by ASQA when it released a Cost Recovery Impact Statement.

Yes, those important cost-recovery impact statements released in May 2001. It goes on to say—

The Commonwealth government received over 140 submissions in response to the CRIS and adjusted the fee schedules to take into account stakeholder feedback. The Queensland Government did not conduct any additional community consultation on the referral of power bill.

If that was the sum total of just over 140 submissions to the federal government, I really wonder how informed that decision was. My experience has been that some of the fees simply are not realistic or relevant to some of the small registered training organisations. What of the outcome of that meeting I had with the former minister and the senior departmental staff? We sat in a room just down the hallway. We spoke about the costs and how it was going to be so difficult for this very small registered training organisation to continue to provide the service it had been providing because of the new state and federal government agreed position on compliance. The minister gave us all the assurances. The senior department staff at the meeting said, 'Yes, we'll look into it. We'll do this for you.' Effectively, nothing happened. If I can be blunt, nothing happened. The minister was able to move on to other matters. I continued taking up the matter with the department. Then all the palava happened. Finally, someone from that small registered training organisation said to me, 'Peter, don't worry about taking it any further.' They just gave up.

My concern is that if we have problems with the Queensland department being the policeman, by crickey, how the heck are we going to manage with the federal department? The member for Mirani gave an example of how the federal department could not be the policeman of its own organisation, so how the heck will it police it throughout Australia?

I look forward to the minister's answers. I know there is goodwill intended, but I have genuine concerns about the ability of the Labor federal government to manage this very important organisation. The reality is that not every business operator wants to do the right thing. Some of them want to take shortcuts. The students of those training organisations will not jump up and down and say, 'I wasn't given the right training.' For them, the sooner they can get their qualification and get a job, the better. However, the concern is whether they have the proper skills that the registered training organisation has represented they will have. I believe that quite a few of the graduates from those private registered training organisations really do not have the certification that the certificate says they have.

 **Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory—LNP) (5.41 pm): Madam Deputy Speaker, may I congratulate you on your elevation to this important and responsible role. It is with pleasure that I speak to the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012. Whilst the legislation might be about transferring a power, the thrust of the legislation is abolishing the vocational education and training regulator, the Training and Employment Recognition Council, and transferring its remaining functions, mostly associated with apprenticeships and traineeships, to Skills Queensland. In his second reading speech, the minister identified that by referring the powers to the Commonwealth we will ensure that Queensland continues to deliver and maintain the highest quality standards and further support this government's commitment to reducing regulatory burdens on business.

Every day of the week in my own electorate—and I think everybody in this House would have similar situations in their electorates—I see businesses that offer traineeships and apprenticeships with this problem. The state needs to fix that. I believe that that is what this state government is about, that is looking after business. On 24 March, we took to the people of Queensland a policy to make certain that we had partnerships with business and with Queensland. That is one of the most important functions of government.

I am pleased that the member for Surfers Paradise, John-Paul Langbroek, is the minister for education and for training. As I said in the House a couple of days ago, Health and Education are two of the most important portfolios in the state. I know numerous people leave school in grade 10 or grade 11. This is no reflection on the schools, but the problem is that a lot of those kids who take up apprenticeships and traineeships are flat out reading and writing. Therefore, the first and foremost thing to do is to put in place education skills.

I want to reflect on the area of registered training organisations, the Queensland Studies Authority and the delegation from the Training and Employment Recognition Council. ASQA will review the delegation during the 12-month period, to determine whether it will continue. Many young people in grade 10 or grade 9 are picking up experience in workshops or other types of skills training while they are still at school. A lot of those kids do not have the intellectual capacity to finish tertiary education, although certainly they are qualified to enter the workforce through such programs.

I refer to what the member for Nicklin just said. I always say to people in the parliament, if something is not working—and none of us are faultless—we can bring the legislation back to the House and correct the anomaly, whatever it may be, through amendment. Certainly this minister has the intellectual capacity, knowledge, expertise and advice to manage that part of it.

For too long in this state—and over the years I have witnessed it with the former government, especially—everybody had to have a university education and there was an emphasis on grade 12 education. I support that. I am lucky to have an education. However, a lot of young people do not want to go down a professional career path. For too long this state has faced a shortage of people with skills in carpentry, mechanics, plumbing, hair dressing and so on. Those people keep the state going. They keep the nation moving. The mining industry is facing a shortfall now. That industry is doing great work to fill that void and create employment opportunities for many people. In my own area I know of the wonderful work that Xstrata is doing in relation to apprenticeships. We have to try to re-educate our young people so that they understand that hands-on trades are just as important as jobs in the professional environment where people need an intellectual capacity.

The bill clarifies the scope of the amendment reference in clause 4(2). According to the explanatory notes, this clause provides that the Commonwealth cannot make a law that excludes or limits the operation of a state law to the extent that the state law makes provisions in relation to—

- (a) primary or secondary education (including the education of children subject to compulsory school education);
- (b) tertiary education that is recognised as higher education and not vocational education and training;
- (c) the rights and obligations of persons providing or undertaking apprenticeships or traineeships...

An important function of the legislation is that the rights of those people who are undertaking traineeships are protected. A lot of people get halfway into a traineeship and they decide not to carry on, but to pull the pin. That leaves someone else high and dry. Also, it leaves out in the cold somebody who could have taken advantage of that opportunity. This legislation talks about training and education. Certainly it targets young people and mature-age students who want to undertake an apprenticeship or traineeship. We see that every day. In Longreach there is a chap in his 50s who has taken on an

apprenticeship in butchery. People can take advantage of the opportunities that are available through those sorts of traineeships. Therefore, all I can say is that we have to give this a go; we can make it work.

 **Mr DOWLING** (Redlands—LNP) (5.49 pm): Madam Deputy Speaker Barton, can I add my congratulations to that of other members on your appointment as a Deputy Speaker. This is your first time in the chair so well done.

I rise today to speak to the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012. It is fairly straightforward and fairly clear. While it is a complex piece of legislation, it amends a number of pieces of legislation to enable the referral of power to the Commonwealth parliament to regulate registered training organisations.

I have a fairly large training organisation in my electorate that has been waiting for this legislation for so long. This need became very real to me in the recent past. This company was trying to win jobs around the country but because it is based in Queensland and we are not part of this regulatory framework it was having difficulties being competitive in tendering for work, as I understand it, and getting those accreditations. This is something that that organisation brought to my attention. I am very pleased to see this provision. It will certainly help it in its pursuits and the quality assurance that we look for within training organisations.

Australians—and I am sure people from other countries are the same—are very transient people. We move around an awful lot. I think that is why this type of legislation is important. It supports that transient population. We travel distances for work in many cases. We travel around the country and do jobs along the way. It is important when people acquire skills on their CVs that they are valid, they are valued and they are accepted in other jurisdictions. I see that that harmonisation will come to bear through the adoption of this legislation. It is a shame that it has taken a little while to get to this point.

I take on board some of the comments of the member for Nicklin. I, too, do not share a great deal of confidence in the current federal Labor government.

Mr Costigan interjected.

Mr DOWLING: I suspect it is in its DNA. I take the interjection from the member for Whitsunday. I think it is in the DNA of the Labor Party to struggle to find efficient and effective ways to deliver legislation. I echo what the member for Gregory said when he said that we can come back and revisit this issue. We can ensure that Queensland is not disadvantaged, as I fear we are at the moment without this legislation being in place.

Mr Choat interjected.

Mr DOWLING: I take the interjection from the member for Ipswich West that they will not be there for long. I sincerely hope that that is the case and we see blue reign supreme in the federal election.

It is important that this legislation passes. It is the result of an agreement right across the country. The process was started by the Council of Australian Governments. It is obviously a strategic move—something that is important and something that will benefit not only employers but also employees. When someone turns up with some form of accreditation—with a certificate or a diploma—people will know that it is valid, it is quality assured and it is consistent and it is a quality piece of documentation. I think that is important in this day and age.

I remember my own history within the TAFE system. I did an apprenticeship as a tradesman, although my son refers to it as a hobby. I was a painter many years ago. I went to the Yeronga TAFE college some 30-odd years ago. That was an enjoyable time for me. I understand the importance of those institutions. It was raised by the member for Gregory how important some of those life skills and qualifications are and how important it is that those places exist.

As my career changed from a tradie to a businessperson, I did a number of courses through the Alexandra Hills TAFE to help with business management, mathematics and so on. I understand the importance of those qualifications. I understand how important they are to people's futures. With that brief contribution, I acknowledge the work of the minister. I look forward to supporting the bill.

 **Mrs SMITH** (Mount Ommaney—LNP) (5.54 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012. This is an important bill that will deliver several key benefits for Queensland generally and for registered training organisations in particular. Before I go any further, though, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the members of this House who sit on the Education and Innovation Committee. Their detailed analysis of this bill has provided this House with valuable information about the bill's impact and has raised some very important issues. The committee worked very hard to provide its report so quickly. I think we are privileged to have such hardworking committee members in the parliament.

The bill will refer the Queensland parliament's power to regulate vocational education and training courses and RTOs to the Commonwealth parliament. The Commonwealth has established a national regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority—ASQA—which will regulate nearly all RTOs across

Australia. The benefits of establishing a strong national regulator are, one, more consistent regulation of RTOs across Australia; two, an ability to respond quickly to emerging issues and risks for the vocational education and training sector; three, increased confidence in the quality of VET qualifications; and, four, reduced red tape for Queensland's RTOs.

Consistent regulation of RTOs is in the best interests of all stakeholders in the vocational education and training sector. One of the reasons the national regulator was established was to ensure that regulatory standards were applied consistently. Before ASQA was established each state regulator applied a slightly different approach to the national standards. RTOs in Queensland that were anxious to maintain high standards were disappointed when RTOs in other states breached the standards but were not adequately sanctioned. The poor actions of a handful of RTOs, like anything else, can tarnish the reputation of all RTOs. It is important we have a strong national regulator, applying a single set of standards consistently across the country, to maintain the reputation of RTOs. A strong national provider can take prompt action against the few RTOs that fail to comply with registration standards.

Consistency in the application of standards is also important to consumers of training. Students rely upon RTOs to provide relevant qualifications that will lead to employment in particular industries. It is essential that students have confidence in the quality of training provided by RTOs. We are all aware of the benefits of further training and it is important to encourage Queenslanders to take advantage of these training opportunities. The fact that all RTOs operating in Queensland will be regulated consistently by a strong national regulator will give students confidence in the quality of training delivered by the RTOs.

This government also purchases approximately \$1.4 billion worth of training which is then delivered by RTOs under funding arrangements. It is essential that the government receives value for money for its training dollar. Publicly funded training serves a very important purpose. It gives Queenslanders an opportunity to gain a qualification that will enable them to work in a particular trade or industry. A strong national regulator will ensure that all RTOs operating in Queensland are regulated to the same standard, allowing government funding for training with the confidence that the RTOs are operating at that high standard.

Another reason it is essential to have a national regulator is the need to respond very quickly to emerging issues and risks in the vocational education and training sector. The vocational education and training sector is a dynamic industry. It is subject to the influence of many external factors. Some of those factors that affect the VET sector today are the skills shortage in critical trades and the international student market. In today's economy, it is essential that the VET sector is able to function to the best of its ability.

It would be unacceptable for Queensland to miss out on economic opportunities because the regulation of the VET sector was not able to adapt quickly enough. This was the situation we had in Australia before ASQA was established. Each state had its own regulator and legislation and making changes across the country could take years. When we are talking about a multibillion dollar industry, these kinds of delays are unacceptable.

When particular issues arise, it is vital that the sector responds quickly. Vocational education and training is a significant part of Queensland's and Australia's economy and it is incumbent upon governments to take all possible steps to ensure that the industry has an appropriate regulatory framework. A single national regulator, like the Australian Skills Quality Authority, can take quick action to prevent localised issues from becoming national issues that negatively impact on the whole sector.

It is also essential that the students and employers have confidence in the quality of the vocational education and training qualifications. For students of vocational education and training, it is essential that their investment of time and money is protected. If they complete a particular certificate, they should be able to rely on that certificate and not have it questioned by employers. We can only achieve this by ensuring that all RTOs have to meet the same high standards. This will increase confidence in the quality of vocational education and training qualifications. Increased confidence in these qualifications will lead to better employment outcomes for the students.

Finally, and most importantly, this referral of power bill will deliver on the Newman government's commitment to reducing red tape in businesses. If this parliament did not refer its power, Queensland would be faced with a system of dual regulation. That would mean that there would be two regulators applying two different sets of standards in Queensland. RTOs may find themselves having to move between the regulators as their business changes. That would mean paying extra fees and undergoing additional audits and assessments. That is why this government is taking steps to progress this referral of powers bill and to avoid the pitfalls of a system of dual regulation in Queensland.

Rather than duplicating effort and imposing red tape on businesses, we need a single regulator operating in Queensland. A strong national regulator will increase confidence in vocational education and training outcomes. It will also make it easier for RTOs to operate. A national regulator will maintain the high standards we already achieve in Queensland and build on these.

The vocational education and training sector plays a vital role in Queensland's economy and it is essential to get the regulatory settings right. A national regulator is the way to go and I am honoured to support this bill and this important initiative to reduce red tape and raise the standards in the vocational education and training sector.

 **Mr SHORTEN** (Algeria—LNP) (6.02 pm): Before I begin, Madam Deputy Speaker Barton, can I add my voice to others in this chamber and congratulate you on your appointment to the Deputy Speakership. I note with pleasure your even-handedness in the chamber this afternoon.

I am pleased to rise in support of the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012. This is an important national reform and one that will ensure the regulation of vocational education and training providers across the country is applied at the highest standard that has been upheld in Queensland for many years.

The Australian Skills Quality Authority, or ASQA, has a risk based approach to regulation that is fundamentally similar to the approach taken by the current vocational education and training regulator in training, the Training and Employment Recognition Council, commonly known as TERC. Traditional models of regulation make an assumption that all organisations are the same and focus on rigid models of enforcement with legislation. This approach ignores the fact that every business is different, with a different focus, different clients with different needs, and operates in a different environment. With the geographic, demographic and size diversity of the vocational education and training sector in Queensland, such a model is a poor fit. TERC recognised this many years ago and implemented its risk based approach to regulation. This model has been refined over the years in response to changes in the economy, amendments to standards and legislation and, most importantly, in response to feedback gathered from registered training organisations themselves.

When ASQA was being formed, particularly in the early days when fundamental decisions were being made about how it would approach its work, it was clear that the regulatory model being applied in Queensland was very much at the forefront of modern regulatory thinking. Therefore, it is no surprise that the regulatory approach ASQA has adopted is fundamentally the same as that which has been applied in Queensland for many years. It is also no surprise that a significant number of the staff that comprise the task force charged with establishing ASQA were sourced from the Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment—staff who had been responsible for implementing TERC's risk based approach. Nor is it a surprise that all three of ASQA's commissioners have very strong ties to Queensland and that two of these commissioners are based here in Brisbane.

We hear a lot about risk based approaches to various things and the question of 'what does this really mean?' is a good one. In the context of a national vocational and education training sector, the essence of this is that regulatory attention is focused on where it is most needed. In other words, if you are an RTO which has demonstrated a history of compliance with regulations, which gets positive feedback from students and from employers and which the regulator does not receive complaints about, you can be considered to pose a low level of risk to the sector. Low-risk providers are free to go about the business of providing quality training to Queenslanders and, indeed, to all Australians with limited oversight and interference from the regulator.

However, if you are unable to demonstrate a commitment to complying with requirements or if the feedback from students and employers is not as positive, these are indications that the regulator needs to pay more attention to you. What this means in practice is that lower risk providers are able to have applications for new courses approved more quickly, increasing the ability to respond to emerging training needs or market opportunities. Providers that have not earned this low-risk status must demonstrate to the regulator that they have the resources and the capacity to provide quality training before adding new courses to their offerings.

Of course given that the vocational education and training sector plays such an important part in Queensland's economy, it would be unwise for the regulator to operate in isolation. Currently, a number of industry regulators and other relevant stakeholders assist TERC in monitoring the effectiveness of training offered by RTOs delivering qualifications that enable a person to obtain a licence within their industry. ASQA will operate in the same way. I commend this bill to the House and I commend the minister for bringing it forward.

 **Hon. JH LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Minister for Education, Training and Employment) (6.07 pm), in reply: I thank all members who have contributed to the debate on this bill. As we have heard from many government members and opposition members as well, we are all committed to a strong vocational education and training sector. I am certainly not a lone voice in supporting the VET sector, as we have heard from many government members, especially, that we want to ensure that Queensland maintains its long tradition of quality training that prepares trainees for the workforce.

As the members who contributed will know, training is crucial if we are to achieve the two fours—the four per cent unemployment target and the building of a four-pillar economy, something on which the Newman government made significant promises in the lead-up to the March election and then of course was rewarded by the electorate of Queensland at that election. This government is committed to

ensuring that once a young Queenslander makes a decision to pursue vocational education and training they have a multitude of pathways available for them to enter the workforce to undertake further training or refocus their career. To that end, we will be working with the VET sector so that we can understand the impediments to achieving this aim. I have used the early weeks of my time as minister meeting key stakeholders in the sector, and one of the results of that consultation was strong support for the referral of powers. One gentleman who met with the assistant minister and me told of how he currently has two people doing the same job because of the dual regulatory system.

Reducing red tape is a commitment of this government in a very broad sense, and this referral of powers is squarely in line with that commitment. This bill will reduce red tape for Queensland RTOs by ensuring that there is only one regulator operating in Queensland—the national regulator, ASQA. RTOs will be able to use this single registration to operate in any jurisdiction in Australia.

There are two broader points that I would like to make in relation to the cutting of red tape through referring legislative power to the Commonwealth. Federal-state relations have been a significant topic of discussion over recent weeks. From Queensland's perspective, the Premier and my fellow ministers are committed to ensuring that Queensland's interests are represented in any national partnership, COAG agreement or referral of power. In this case, the referral of power is consistent with our broader aims of reducing the cost of government and reducing red tape for the private sector.

Simply because the Commonwealth government is willing to throw money at an issue does not mean the Queensland government will accept it without asking any questions. The Premier, the Treasurer and I, along with other ministers, have put our Commonwealth counterparts on notice that if their programs are ill-conceived we will not accept them. If the agreement is not in line with the Queensland government's objectives, we will not be a part of it.

There was a period between the election of the Rudd government in November 2007 and the election of the Barnett government in Western Australia in September 2008 when there were wall-to-wall Labor governments. It was not until the election of the Newman government 3½ years later that there was balance at the COAG table. During that time, Labor state governments were so complicit with the wishes of their federal Labor colleagues that there was an environment of no resistance. Rather than support their state's interests, they would support the interests of the Labor Party and agree to whatever offer came across their table. This is unacceptable. Premiers Barnett, Baillieu, O'Farrell and Newman are showing that it was unacceptable. Queenslanders can be assured that this government is committed to ensuring that this state gets the best deal from the Commonwealth. Regardless of who is in power, we will fight for Queensland—for the funding we deserve and for the funding to be spent in the right way.

This bill is also in line with our commitment to red-tape reduction in the sector. This commitment has been underscored by the announcement of the Skills and Training Task Force earlier this week. One of the key terms of reference for the task force is that it will—

Consider the impact of current regulatory frameworks and 'red tape' in terms of the barriers created for employers wishing to hire new apprentices and trainees.

So we have a commitment to apprentices and to delivering job outcomes for young Queenslanders. The task force, through this term of reference, will be aimed at ensuring the impediments currently in place—the things that are stopping businesses from taking on apprentices—are addressed and there is no unnecessary government imposed impediment to the hiring of apprentices. We want to move to a system where employers are trying to put on more apprentices, not finding reasons they cannot. Reducing red tape is the enabler for this process.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Education and Innovation Committee for their considered report, which was provided in a very short time frame. The chair of the committee, the member for Burdekin, delivered a very considered address as well, and I thank her for accepting our response to the recommendations of the report. As I mentioned before, the committee was supportive of the bill and recommended that it be passed. The government has carefully considered the committee's report and has decided to accept the recommendation to report on the impact of RTO fees on school RTOs. I mentioned that in my second reading speech.

We did not, however, accept the recommendation about reporting on small RTOs. The Department of Education, Training and Employment does not currently gather information about an RTO's financial performance. The department will not have the power to request this information from RTOs following a referral of powers because regulation of RTOs will be the responsibility of the national VET regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority, ASQA. Requiring RTOs to provide this information may be seen as an increase in red tape. In line with my earlier comments, we are not going to impose red tape on business but we seek to unravel the build-up of red tape that has occurred over successive governments.

RTOs in this case will be providing information to their regulator, ASQA, but having also to respond to requests for information from my department. The reliability of the data may be questionable as the department cannot access data about an RTO's financial performance; it can only categorise

RTOs by scope of registration. An RTO's scope of registration is not indicative of turnover or the number of employees. A report targeting small RTOs by scope of registration may not accurately capture the impact on RTOs that are small businesses. Also, in a national scheme of registration, it may be difficult to isolate Queensland RTOs from those that operate across jurisdictions. However, a number of specific matters, including this issue about cost for small RTOs that was raised in the 53rd Parliament by the committee that looked at this matter, and now subsequently concerns expressed by members today, including the honourable member for Nicklin, about the increases on fees for small RTOs, are things that I will come to a little later.

A number of specific matters were raised in the debate and I wish to address those, hopefully to the satisfaction of those members. The member for Gladstone raised the issue of the possible merger between Central Queensland University and the Central Queensland Institute of TAFE. The government has an in-principle agreement to have dual-sector institutions because, once again, in line with our principles about choice, they are another way of providing additional pathways for Queenslanders. But I want to tell the House that we are only going to do dual sectors where they are viable and where they will provide the outcomes that we want for Queenslanders. There are a range of issues with the Central Queensland merger, and there are a number of people in favour and against. This is currently being considered by the parties, including my department. I have received a due diligence report into the proposed merger, and we will update the parliament as this process moves forward. I am happy to chat to the member for Gladstone about those specific issues. I will speak further about TAFE in a moment.

The member also raised the question as to whether RTOs will pass on the increase in registration fees to students. I can say that obviously individual RTOs will need to consider the impact of ASQA's fees on their business costs and determine how best to manage the impact of the increased fees. But, generally speaking, compliance costs form a small proportion of the overall cost of operating an RTO. Some RTOs of course may decide that they need to review their student fees as a result of increased registration fees, but, given the competitive nature of the VET sector, RTOs are likely to keep such fee increases to a minimum or even absorb the cost increase.

The member for Gladstone also raised the question as to whether recognition of prior learning, RPL, will change. I can say that RPL is not impacted on by this referral. This is something which allows students to have their previous experience recognised towards the completion of a qualification. As I said, it is not impacted on by this referral. Standards and requirements that apply to registered training organisations will remain as they currently are following the referral.

The honourable members for Redlands and Nicklin expressed their lack of faith in the federal government and its administration of any matters at all, including obviously financial matters to do with us handing over our authority to the federal government. I want to address some of those concerns. I will never be able to assuage the concerns of the member for Redlands, because of course he is from the LNP and is as convinced as I am that this federal Labor government does not know what it is doing, but I do want to speak to the member for Nicklin about his concerns with the centralised service from Canberra. I can assure the member that ASQA will have offices across Australia. As I understand it, it is going to be based in Melbourne but I have met with the chief commissioner and in fact two of the three commissioners are here in Brisbane. We are going to have the equal largest office with Sydney, with over 40 staff. Many of these staff have transitioned from my department, the Department of Education, Training and Employment. There are currently regulatory officers who are in Townsville and Toowoomba and they will be retained.

When I met with the chief commissioner of ASQA, he assured me of ASQA's robust approach to regulation. In fact, between 1 July 2011 and 31 March 2012 it has refused some 147 applications because the applicants could not demonstrate an ability to comply with national standards. I will also remind the member that, if there are concerns with national regulation down the track, Queensland will retain the capacity to terminate the referral. The member also raised concerns about increases in fees. The impact of increased fees for RTOs will depend on a range of factors—for example, their scope of registration. The fee impact will vary from one RTO to another.

The honourable member for Moggill also raised this issue with me just yesterday with a letter from a number of principals of RTOs who are concerned about the fee increases, and this is of course something that we will monitor. It is something that I have asked the chief commissioner of ASQA to keep an eye on. We will certainly be keeping an eye on it as the government having given up our responsibilities in this area. But it is interesting to note that ASQA has advised—and I mentioned this, I think, this morning or in my second reading speech at the commencement of this debate—that there has actually been a net increase in the number of RTOs since it was established in July 2011. It does seem that RTOs are not concerned by ASQA's fee levels, as ASQA continues to receive new applications from businesses seeking to become RTOs. However, I can tell members that the Premier has always expressed his concerns to me, having campaigned so strongly on the issue of cost of living, that we do not want to see massive increases and that we want to see some understanding by ASQA of this.

Under the previous regime that we are now getting rid of, there were subsidies actually being paid by us, and that is why there were more RTOs registered in Queensland than anywhere else. I can say to the member for Nicklin that that was partly to do with the Labor government that had, once again, very poor financial management and was prepared to subsidise these registration fees. That is something that just cannot continue. One of the reasons we are doing this referral is that we have this saving of at least \$3 million given that a number of staff from my department will go over to ASQA as we look for savings, as we have all heard, this week and in every parliamentary week since we became the government.

So far, as I said, ASQA's fees have not deterred RTOs from entering the sector. If RTOs were concerned about it, they can choose to surrender their registration in favour of partnering with an RTO in order to be able to continue delivery of VET without the overhead of maintaining their own registration. The Commonwealth government conducted public consultation on the proposed ASQA fees in May 2011. ASQA adjusted its fees. It actually changed how the fees are collected in response to feedback from stakeholders, and this included changing the registration fee from a single fee covering the entire five-year registration period to a more manageable fee paid annually over the five-year registration period.

During the debate on this bill members have heard that, if the referral of power in relation to RTOs and vocational education and training courses does not occur by 1 July 2012, Queensland will not become a referring state. The question is: what would this mean for Queensland RTOs? As I have already said and as has been discussed by many members, we would have to operate under a dual system of regulation. ASQA would be responsible for regulating any RTO that delivers training to overseas students or operates in one of the other referring jurisdictions and the Northern Territory or the Australian Capital Territory. About 37 per cent of Queensland RTOs—a total of approximately 570 RTOs—would fall within this category. The remaining 63 per cent—approximately 970 RTOs—would remain the responsibility of Queensland. This would be disastrous for Queensland RTOs, introducing unnecessary red tape, bureaucracy and costs for the industry, impacting on providers, consumers and purchasers of training.

That is what I meant earlier when I talked about meeting providers who said that they found it so tough having to do so much more compliance because they were having to deal with two regulators. So any provider wishing to change the scope of their registration may need to reapply, in the case that we did not refer powers, for registration with an alternative regulator. For example, if a small RTO in Southport delivering only to Queensland students was looking to expand operations into northern New South Wales, the organisation would need to apply to ASQA for registration. Consumers will need to understand the scope of an RTO's business to know which entity is regulating them should they wish to make a complaint or raise issues with the organisation's delivery of VET.

There are additional benefits to referring power to the Commonwealth in relation to registration of RTOs and vocational education and training courses. It will ensure a consistent approach is used to enforce standards in the vocational education and training industry. Previously, states attempted to achieve uniform regulation of registered training organisations by using nationally agreed standards in state legislation. However, variations in legislation and policy positions meant that states did not consistently apply standards. A strong national regulator will have the power to consistently apply standards and sanction low-quality providers. This will improve confidence in the delivery of qualifications in the VET sector.

The Newman government has ensured that this important bill is brought on for debate in the current parliamentary sittings because the benefits for Queensland from referral are greatest if a referral of power takes effect before 30 June 2012. Primarily, it will ensure the smoothest transition for staff from my department who have been offered opportunities with the new national regulator under the most favourable conditions. If we did not refer power or if the referral did not proceed until after 30 June, staff from my department would not be assured positions with ASQA and the conditions would need to be renegotiated. Many staff could choose to remain employees of the Queensland government rather than move to the national regulator. As I have said, a decision to not refer would also cost us, and members understand that this is a very tight fiscal time for the state. We stand to save in the order of \$3 million, primarily achieved through savings from staff reductions. If it is not referred by 30 June 2012, it is likely that fewer regulatory staff will transition to ASQA and that these estimated savings may not be realised. Even if Queensland subsequently referred power, it could have a larger number of surplus staff to manage, thereby reducing the savings to be made from referral.

In light of the time that is still available before dinner, I think I might conclude so I can move our amendments. As I indicated in my second reading speech, I am proposing to move amendments to the bill during consideration in detail to ensure that the ongoing capacity for RTOs to incorporate vocational placement schemes in their training can continue. Vocational placement schemes are an important part of some vocational education and training courses designed to ensure that graduates are fully job ready. Perhaps an example would be useful. I understand that the Australian Nursing and

Midwifery Accreditation Council, ANMAC, mandates that students undertaking a diploma of nursing with a view to becoming an enrolled nurse must complete no less than 400 hours of professional placement in order for the qualification to be accepted by it for nursing accreditation purposes.

In a way, a vocational placement could be seen in a similar light to a traineeship or apprenticeship. While significantly shorter in duration, the placement provides an invaluable opportunity for students to develop their skills and knowledge in a real workplace under real conditions. Not only does this add a great deal of value to the qualification by including exposure to real workplaces, but I am informed that students often gain employment as a result of their placement. The legislative provisions in chapter 4 provide the mechanism for these placements to legally take place, affording appropriate protections for the student and the host. This is particularly important in terms of providing protection to employers in the case of injury or illness suffered by the student while in the workplace.

The Department of Education, Training and Employment has already commenced planning to review how to regulate vocational placement schemes in the future. I am confident this work can be completed in a timely manner. We are pleased to contribute as the Newman government to the national reform of the VET sector. It is a significant part of Queensland's economy. The move to national regulation will only strengthen the VET sector and increase confidence in VET qualifications. It contributes to our strategy to generate savings. We will save about \$3 million per annum through staffing reductions. As I have said, staff will transition to ASQA under the favourable terms detailed in the transitional agreement. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Clause 2—



Mr LANGBROEK (6.28 pm): I move the following amendment—

1 Clause 2 (Commencement)

Page 8, line 7—

omit, insert—

'This Act commences on 29 June 2012.'

I table the explanatory notes to my amendments.

Tabled paper: Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill, explanatory notes to Hon. John-Paul Langbroek's amendments [[389](#)].

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 29, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—



Mr LANGBROEK (6.28 pm): I move the following amendment—

2 After clause 29

Page 20, after line 7—

insert—

'29A Insertion of new ch 4, pt 4

'Chapter 4, after section 132—

insert—

'Part 4 VET legislation displacement provision

'132A VET legislation displacement provision

'(1) This chapter is declared to be a VET legislation displacement provision for the purposes of the *National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011* (Cwlth), section 11, in relation to all the provisions of that Act.

'(2) This part expires 2 years after it commences.'

Amendment agreed to.

Clauses 30 to 42, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

 **Hon. JH LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Minister for Education, Training and Employment) (6.29 pm): I move—

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

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title

 **Hon. JH LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Minister for Education, Training and Employment) (6.29 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.

Sitting suspended from 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm.

CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 20 June (see p. 860).

Second Reading

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (7.30 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (7.31 pm): Tonight I rise to oppose the amendments introduced by the LNP. I fundamentally believe in equality for all Queenslanders, including people in same-sex relationships. I would like to reiterate the values I stated during the introduction of civil unions in November 2011.

In so many ways Queensland has evolved to become a vibrant community, a tolerant and accepting state. We have come a long way from the dark ages of the 1970s and the 1980s when Queensland was seen by the rest of Australia as a place of moral and social hypocrisy. It was seen as a state where the government professed moral superiority on the surface while in reality it allowed corruption to flourish and basic civil rights to be crushed. Considering how far we have come as a state and as a community in a relatively short period, we should always remember the lessons of those days. We should not forget the past.

Many changes have occurred since then. Education, disability services, community support and investment in health have lifted. Civil and industrial rights have been restored and a generation of Queenslanders have grown up in a society that now values diversity, appreciates fairness and decency, and encourages innovation and freedom of expression. But while we have come a long way, some were left behind along the journey. We had in place institutionalised discrimination where one group of people were denied the rights enjoyed by others.

I said last year—and I believe it still—love knows no boundary. It was unacceptable that in 2011 people were still being discriminated against on the basis of their sexuality. It is certainly unacceptable that in 2012 people would seek to remove those hard-fought rights that were unfairly denied to people until just recently. I support people in same-sex relationships who believe that it is well within their rights to have their loving, committed relationship officially recognised by law in addition to their family and their friends.

It is very telling that the LNP is rushing this bill through parliament. It is a symbol of the disrespect that the government has for people in same-sex relationships that it would seek to introduce a bill without proper debate. It is also a sign of its disrespect that it believes that a bill that affects same-sex couples in a very real way does not deserve a committee hearing and does not deserve to receive appropriate attention in this House. I would like to remind the government that, when introducing the civil union legislation in 2011, the issue was referred to the committee where the public input was allowed and public input was received.

The LNP government's approach to this legislation is not just a slap in the face to same-sex couples; it also reaffirms the absolute contempt which the LNP government has for this parliament. We all know that last year we voted—and I say this especially for the new members who were not here then—to set up a committee system. This committee system was set up with bipartisan support. It is an

essential feature of our democracy now here in Queensland. There is absolutely no reason this bill, introduced by the Attorney-General yesterday, could not have gone to the committee system so that members in the public gallery who are here tonight could have participated and put forward their case to the members of the government. I commend the people in the public gallery who have come in—

Mr Bleijie: Still using the political football.

Mr Stevens: Rent-a-crowd.

Ms PALASZCZUK: These are people—people with concerns. These are people with compassion. These are people with hearts. These are people with dignity.

An incident having occurred in the public gallery—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Berry): Order! Just resume your seat for the moment. Members of the gallery, we live in a democracy, and part of that democracy is that the public are here at the behest of that democracy. I implore you to be quiet and allow the Leader of the Opposition to finish her speech. If, in fact, I need to warn again then the gallery may be vacated. I would appreciate it if you would comply with that request.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The person who introduced this bill into the parliament is the Attorney-General of the state. It is one of the most esteemed positions in the Queensland government and here he is tonight rolling back, winding back, people's basic fundamental human rights. It is so disappointing to see this from such a young Attorney-General, who has recently been appointed to one of the highest positions in this state. You have bypassed the committee system—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition—

Ms PALASZCZUK: The Attorney-General has bypassed the committee system—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hold on, you have been in the House long enough to know the rules.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The Attorney-General has bypassed the committee system. Not only that, the Leader of the House has also bypassed the committee system, because it has been agreed by the Committee of the Legislative Assembly that, when any new bill coming into this House is to be debated, it would go through a committee of the Legislative Assembly, and this government has failed to live by the rules that it agreed to. You should hang your heads in shame tonight because you are denying people—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Take a seat for a moment. I would ask the Leader of the Opposition not to use 'you'. You did use it. Address the chair, please.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We know how important this issue is to so many people.

Mrs Ostapovitch: Some!

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, not just to some. This is what the member here has said—some people. No, this is an issue, regardless of whether you are in the Labor Party, the Liberal Party or the National Party, about people who have rights and they have dignity and we owe them respect. There are many same-sex couples who live in your electorates—not just my electorate, not just in the electorate of the member for Mackay or the member for Bundamba or the member for Rockhampton—they live in your electorate, the member for Southern Downs, the Attorney-General and the member for Mermaid Beach.

People have a right to express their views; they have a right to express their love. Tonight will be very interesting. There are many new members in this government. It is a very differently shaped government. It will be very interesting to see how many of these new members will be participating in this debate tonight. Have they carefully considered the issues and what they will be voting on? This is going to be the real test for the government. We know that its members have been divided. We know that there has been unsettlement in their caucus room. We know that there have been divisions. We know that there have been arguments. We understand that Mr Bruce McIver has been involved, that he has not been very happy with the Premier's position. We know that there are many members on the backbench who are concerned about the direction that the Attorney-General has taken. We have also heard that the Attorney-General wanted to wind back the laws even further.

I find it disappointing that, having come to power a little over three months ago, the LNP believes that taking away rights from Queenslanders is one of its highest priorities. The bill that the government has brought before the House is, quite simply, mean and petty. Why is it that the members of this government have such hearts of stone that they cannot find it within themselves to allow same-sex couples to officially celebrate? What is wrong with allowing people to celebrate their love and their commitment in front of their family and their friends? What, Attorney-General, is so wrong about that? What is it that fills the hearts of those opposite with such hatred and pettiness that they think it improves the lives of Queenslanders to deny a group within our community the right to, of all things, officially celebrate their love and commitment to each other? As I said in November last year, providing same-sex couples the opportunity to legally celebrate their relationship in a fair and compassionate society—in an accepting society—is important.

Last year the Labor Party allowed its members a conscience vote on this issue. We participated in a respectful, decent debate that included those who did not hold the same position as I did. The LNP claims to be the party of liberalism. Where are those true great Liberals who had been around in the past? Where have they gone? Those opposite have denied their own MPs a conscience vote. You have denied your own people a conscience vote. It is remarkable. I ask the members for Mount Coot-tha, Brisbane Central, Bulimba and Greenslopes: do you really think you are voting on behalf of your constituents and that this is what the community thinks at the moment? Go out and talk to people in your communities. I recently had this discussion with my grandmother. She has pretty old traditional values. I respect what she said. She said, 'If people want to celebrate their love and commitment, let them do it. Who am I to judge?' This is an 87-year-old woman. But this is not just the view of my grandmother; this is the view of constituents that come into my office day in and day out.

A government member interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes. Yes. There is community acceptance and you need to wake up and realise that your community is made up of a diverse range of people from different walks of life, from different backgrounds and from overseas. You need to accept that in our society there are different views. The community attitudes around this issue have changed and you must move with the times. I say to those MPs: stand in this chamber and exercise a conscience vote. Put your position on the record. Do not hide behind a lack of a conscience vote. Do not hide behind the mean-spirited compromise cooked up by the Premier and the Attorney-General. Could you really stand in front of same-sex couples in your community and say to them, 'I don't care how long you've been in your relationship, I don't care how much you love each other, you do not have the right to officially celebrate'?

Mr Cox: Haven't made a law against it.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Read the legislation. You are saying to people that they will not be able to celebrate their commitment. Queensland has come a long way, and this parliament should not remove rights from decent Queenslanders whose only sin is that they are in a committed, loving, same-sex relationship and want to officially celebrate that relationship. I call on those opposite who do not agree with this legislation to take the principled approach and vote for fairness and equality. This is nothing but a mean-spirited change from a cold-hearted government, and I urge the House to oppose this bill.

 **Hon. LJ SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—LNP) (Minister for Health) (7.46 pm): I rise to support the Civil Partnerships and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. After listening to the Leader of the Opposition speak a moment ago I think we may have been living in a parallel universe, because this is the same person who sat in a political party that governed this state until three months ago that did not have the same profound commitment to democracy and the instruments of this parliament or, indeed, the civil rights and civil liberties of people in the community. I will have a little more to say about that a bit later.

Unlike the Labor Party, no-one in Queensland can be under any misapprehension about what we took to the last state election. The Labor Party did not take to the previous state election its intention to introduce civil partnerships legislation in Queensland and yet it did it at the death of that stagnant, decaying government only late last year. By absolute contrast, the LNP went to the last state election and clearly enunciated to the people of Queensland, regardless of their race, religion, creed, sex or sexuality, what our intentions would be if we came to government in Queensland post 24 March. There should not be one single person in this chamber or outside of this chamber who is under any illusions as to the intent of the LNP, and that has now found its way into an amendment bill in this parliament.

Indeed, it was very, very refreshing because we told the people of Queensland what our intentions were. Not only that, a large number of members of the Labor Party, who have now consigned themselves to opposition through breach of trust and maladministration over a period of time, went out and campaigned on this issue as if there was no other issue for the electorate of Queensland at large. Look at the former member for Brisbane Central, who campaigned so vociferously on this issue, the former member for Mount Coot-tha, who campaigned vociferously on this issue, and the former member for Algester, who did little else but tweet and facebook about this issue in the lead-up to the last state election and where is she today? The people of Queensland had a clear opportunity to understand the contrasting views and the contrasting intents of the LNP and the Labor Party. Indeed, if we can be accused of anything, it is of not going as far as some people wanted us to go. I think we have struck a reasonable balance with regard to the issue that we are debating today.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Berry): Order! Minister for Health, please resume your seat. This is a serious debate. I have already indicated that the level of noise and interjections is to be kept low. Could you please respect the speaker.

Mr SPRINGBORG: First, we made a clear commitment; secondly, it should be noted that we were prepared to discuss that in the electorate; and, thirdly, no-one should be under any illusions about the fact that we took it to the electorate and, therefore, we have the authority of the electorate to come

into this place and amend the law. Indeed, some people expected the law would be repealed altogether. A moment ago I talked about the issue of balance. This is an issue of balance and this legislation strikes an appropriate balance.

During the last state election, the now Premier indicated quite clearly that we would be making changes to the Queensland civil partnerships law as long as we could preserve and protect those people who had entered into a relationship under the existing law and that they did not suffer as a consequence of our changes. That is unlike the Labor Party. From 1998 to 2012 when the Labor Party was in government, it brought into this parliament a whole raft of retrospective legislation. We respect the people who entered into those relationships prior to the proclamation of this bill, whenever that may be if it passes the parliament tonight. They should have those rights preserved. That was not a right that the Labor Party gave the farmers in Queensland. They took away the rights that the farmers actually purchased with regard to vegetation management on their property. The Labor government took away those rights retrospectively and never properly compensated the farmers. They have taken away retrospectively a range of rights. We are preserving the rights that have been established to date.

Notwithstanding that fact, we have recognised that there is an argument for people who wish to register their relationships for medical or financial reasons beyond that which is currently encompassed in the laws of the land with regard to property and intestacy and all of those sorts of things. We should be recognised for that. Last week, a range of people from within the same-sex community or representing that community said that at least we have not gone as far as they expected we would go in this legislation.

Our bill is unlike the Labor bill, which did not have the consent of the electorate at large, which was not debated in the electorate at large and which was hidden from the people of Queensland at the March 2009 state election. Fast forward three years and our bill was taken to the people of Queensland. Labor's bill was cynical. It was divisive. It sought to use the Queensland gay, lesbian, transsexual and intersex community as a political football. That is what Labor did cynically on the eve of an election. The LGBT community was used as a political football. Indeed, the former Premier did not have the courage of her own convictions. She snuck the legislation—the act as it exists today—into this place under the guise of a private member's bill moved by the member for Mount Coot-tha. The Labor Party members did not have the courage of their own convictions to take this forward. They did not want to actively debate the issue in the community as a Labor Party proposition. That takes away from the proposition and contention of the Leader of the Opposition that Labor's legislation was so broadly supported that it would not create any pain within the electorate for the Labor Party.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The level of interjections on both sides is making it too difficult for people in the gallery and members to hear. I ask members on the right and left to wait your turn. I understand that members who are still to speak are interjecting.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Let us analyse the Leader of the Opposition's own argument. If there were as much support in the electorate for Labor's legislation as she said there was, the Labor Party would have brought the current act into parliament as a Labor Party sponsored bill. However, they did not do that. They hid it under the skirts of the former member for Mount Coot-tha. They brought him in here and said, 'You be the stalking horse and we'll line up behind you and we can defuse any anger or fallout in the electorate against the Labor Party as a consequence.' If they were true to their values and their commitment to the LGBT community, they would have brought the legislation in here as a Labor sponsored bill. Indeed, they would have taken it to the people of Queensland at the 2009 election, but they did not.

If we look at the utterances of the previous Queensland Premier, right throughout that term and in the lead-up to the 2009 election, she gave no indication whatsoever that that was a priority for the Labor government. Indeed, she was actively dismissive of it. She held a line similar to the one that Julia Gillard is holding today. The Labor legislation was rushed to create a political circumstance with the community that I have mentioned was the political football in the middle. It was cynical. It was also brought into this place in order to create division at that time and in the most cynical way.

The concern of many people in the community—and a lot of people have talked about respect or otherwise—was that it emulated marriage. To me, that was a major concern. From members on the other side of the chamber I see far less tolerance and respect for opposing views than I see from members on this side of the House. Some three or four weeks ago there was a protest out the front of this place and members opposite went out there and said that there is a whole bunch of Christians in this House and that they hold those views because of their faith. They said that it was terrible that people stand up in this place and enunciate a particular Christian view. That is what they do: they preach tolerance on the one hand, but they are not prepared to practise tolerance on the other hand. The hallmark of the Labor Party is absolute intolerance when it comes to these sorts of issues.

No-one should be surprised about my views. I have always said that I believe that marriage should be between a man and a woman. Many people in this place hold that particular view.

A further incident having occurred in the public gallery—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Berry): Order! Minister for Health, please take your seat. Ladies and gentlemen of the gallery, this is the second warning. If there is a third, the gallery will be emptied. Please respect the speaker. I have asked members from both sides of the House to respect the speaker. The members who have been interjecting will have their time to speak. I ask you to respect both sides of the House. As I said, if there is a third time, I will vacate the gallery.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Today, Gary Johns wrote an opinion piece in the *Australian*. He too is against same-sex marriage. Whilst this bill is not about same-sex marriage, the previous government's act sought to emulate it to the extent that state legislation was capable of doing that. We know that the Marriage Act is constitutionally under the authority of the Commonwealth government. However, it is also wrong to assume that every Queensland person who is gay supports same-sex marriage, same-sex surrogacy, same-sex adoption and civil unions. Many people from those communities do not support it. Indeed, my best friend, who is gay, is one of them as are a range of other people I know. It is also wrong to assume that every person who is heterosexual opposes same-sex civil union, same-sex adoption, same-sex surrogacy or same-sex marriage.

What we actually find in the community is that people hold a diversity of views regardless of their race, culture, sexuality or sex. It is actually honed by their personal views, their personal values and their personal experiences. That is something that honourable members opposite seem completely and absolutely incapable of understanding in this particular debate.

So to polarise it around those people in the LGBT community who are pushing for this because everyone in that community wants it is as equally wrong as it is to say that those people in the heterosexual community oppose it. That is what those in the Labor Party do not tell the people of Queensland or do not want to recognise. It is also wrong to say that everyone who espouses that they are a Christian and belong to a Christian church is necessarily opposed to same-sex marriage or same-sex adoption or civil unions for same-sex people in Queensland. We have heard people associated with churches in Queensland come out and say that there needs to be reform along the lines of that which the previous government introduced in Queensland. Equally, there are people from Christian churches or from other faiths who do not support same-sex marriage, same-sex adoption, civil unions or whatever the case may be.

It is absolutely wrong to say that this issue is based simply around a faith and what Christian churches are advocating. If we look at what the Anglican archdiocese has been saying about this issue in the last week, we find that they have been advocating little or no change to the legislation, yet on the Catholic Church side they are advocating change. There is an oversimplification of this debate. Those on the other side seek to de-intellectualise the debate as they seek to use it as a polarising issue to create a political football in the community.

I recognise that and I understand that. The members opposite do not understand that whatsoever. I do not approach this personally from faith based values. From my enunciations in this parliament no-one knows what my faith is, if indeed I have one. That is a matter for me. But no-one should be condemned because they have a faith or do not have one or because they have a view either in favour or against what we are debating here tonight.

It should be seen in the electorate in the context of honesty and a commitment to the things that you are going to do. As I have said, this is about the preservation of rights and about finding a balance. There are people on both sides of the argument who are unhappy with what has been put forward in this amendment bill which we are putting through the parliament. But we have struck an appropriate balance. Indeed, when those opposite sat in this place in government they sought not only to hide from the people of Queensland their intent but to not recognise the concerns of people in the community who had an issue with regard to the emulation of marriage contained in their legislation.

This legislation will repeal the provisions which seek to emulate marriage. It will repeal the state sanctioned ceremony. But if people choose to have a ceremony of their own then that is a matter for them. They can seek to do that. I understand that a small minority of people who have sought to avail themselves of the current law, whether it be same-sex people or heterosexual people have availed themselves of that state sanctioned ceremony. The honourable Attorney-General will be able to deal with that in his summing-up a little later on.

There has to be a balance. We do recognise that there is an argument that some people wish to recognise their relationship whether they be same-sex or heterosexual couples. That will be preserved when we amend this bill tonight. That will be recognised. People will be able to continue to do that, but there will not be a state sanctioned ceremony which is akin to marriage. People know that. People understand that.

Unlike the member for South Brisbane, we actually went to the election and told the electorate what we were going to do. Unlike the campaign that she ran—which was one of the most vociferous, personal, scurrilous, down-in-the-gutter campaigns against the now Premier of Queensland when she held a position of high office in the Labor Party organisation—we were upfront with the people of Queensland.

The honourable Leader of the Opposition talks about democracy—this belief in democracy; this belief in giving people the chance to have their say. Where was the Leader of the Opposition when we had local governments throughout Queensland being torn asunder in the most undemocratic way? When they held their own polls and plebiscites which showed 90 per cent opposition to what the government was going to do they sat on this side of the House with cotton wool or their fingers in their ears and did not listen to people of Queensland who opposed their proposition. So it is bah humbug that they actually now believe in those things that they opposed and did not implement when they were in government only three to four months ago.

When we are dealing with issues like this they can be most difficult. It would have been a breach of faith of the electorate if we also came into this place and, despite what we had actually said to the people of Queensland, did not repeal or amend this legislation today. We have the opposition leader and her coterie opposite jumping up and down in this parliament every single day about governments keeping their promises and maintaining the faith of the electorate, something which they proved absolutely incapable of doing in the later stages of their government, if indeed at all during their government. We saw that with the asset sales and the fuel subsidy scheme in Queensland.

So the electorate at large knew the proposition we were taking to the electorate. We understand that there was concern within the LGBT with regard to this issue. We did recognise that there was a right to register a relationship in Queensland. That is preserved in the bill which is before the parliament tonight. It is just that there is no state sanctioned ceremony. That was the issue which we discussed during the election campaign and the people of Queensland understood absolutely. When they went to the ballot box they cast their vote knowing full well that that was the intention of the LNP tonight. We are keeping our promise to the electors of Queensland as we enunciated during the campaign and as they consented on 24 March this year.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Berry): Order! Before I call upon the member for Mackay, I remind members on both sides that they will have an opportunity to speak. In terms of the Leader of the Opposition, you have had your opportunity to speak. I ask that the interjections be kept to a minimum.

 **Mr MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (8.07 pm): I rise to make a contribution on the amendment bill proposed by the LNP. The Civil Partnerships Bill was only passed by this parliament on 30 November last year. It did not become operational until this year and some parts only in April this year. We have not really had enough time to see how the act will operate. So I believe this amendment bill is premature.

I cannot quite comprehend what the great fear is that the LNP sees it is necessary to act with such haste in undoing a reform that has barely even made a ripple in the fabric of our society. I cannot say that I have seen any discernible difference as I travel about Queensland because this act is in operation.

This was an act that applied to all Queenslanders who lived in de facto relationships, be they same sex or heterosexual. The act did not create any additional property rights for these couples. It did change the rights of these couples with respect to children. It did not purport to allow couples to marry. It merely allowed couples, who wished to, to register their relationship or to engage in a ceremony that gave recognition to their relationship. People have been living in de facto relationships for thousands of years. People have been living in homosexual relationships for thousands of years. This act did not alter this in any way nor did it make any judgement about those relationships either way.

The act merely allowed couples to take part in a ceremony in front of their family and friends to celebrate their love for one another if they so desired but, regardless, to register their relationship so that they did not have to prove it at a later date. This was just to put people who live in a de facto relationship in the same position as other people. It was about civil rights. It was about equal rights for people. It was about dignity and respect for individuals in our society.

Today is the winter solstice, the darkest day of the year—and this is a very dark day in the history of this parliament. These actions by the LNP government are retrograde, prejudicial and a breach of human rights. I know that members opposite will not be allowed to vote on the bill in accordance with their conscience. When the Civil Partnerships Act was debated last year, the starkest contrast between the two sides of the House was that members on our side voted according to their conscience and those on the other side voted as they were told.

In an act of absolute cowardice, only one member of the opposition was allowed to speak. The member for Kawana spoke on behalf of the opposition. I feel fairly confident that there were many people on the other side of the chamber squirming as they listened to what he had to say. There are true Liberals on that side of the chamber who believe, as I do, that where no-one else is being affected people should be able to go about their personal lives in a private way, without interference from others. The Civil Partnerships Act did not purport to allow same-sex marriage. Marriage is a highly respected and valued relationship which under Australian law can only be between a man and a woman. This act did not change that in any way.

I am lucky enough to be married to a wonderful woman and we have three amazing children, and my family is very special to me. I highly value that relationship. I fully appreciate the views of Christians who hold marriage in the highest regard. It is indeed no coincidence that Jesus chose the marriage feast at Cana to perform his first recorded miracle, the changing of water into wine. I also support the right of churches to determine who they will marry and under what circumstances. But the ceremony permitted by this act is not a marriage. It does not purport to be a marriage. Heterosexual de facto couples who wish to have a ceremony under the act as it stands can do so. They are not taken to be having a wedding.

I think the undue haste with which the bill has been brought into parliament and debated, without referring it to a committee, is scandalous. We were criticised for acting with haste when we debated the bill last year, but we referred it to the relevant committee and allowed public consultation on the matter before the legislation was debated in the House. This has not happened here and it is a disgrace. The reason for the haste is that this issue is due to be discussed at the LNP conference in two weeks. They want to ensure that the bill is completed before that to avoid the embarrassment that would necessarily follow the debate at the conference. The debate would show fully, for all to see, the divisions between the Liberal and National parties and even between different camps within these two camps and show the LNP for the disunited rabble that it really is.

I know that people hold very strong views either way on these matters, and many of those views are based on strongly held religious beliefs. I, too, hold a strong religious belief, but I have been guided by different members of my church in reaching my own views on this legislation. Father Frank Brennan, a well-known son of Queensland, a highly regarded Jesuit priest, a lawyer and the son of a former Chief Justice of Queensland and the grandson of a former minister in this House, has said—

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

The Catholic bishops of England and Wales have said—

The Bishops of England and Wales believe civil partnerships successfully provide a legal protection for those in same-sex relationships ...

'We would want to emphasise that civil partnerships actually provide a structure in which people of the same sex who want a lifelong relationship [and] a lifelong partnership can find their place and protection and legal provision.'

Archbishop Nichols has said—

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

Today is a feast day of St Lazarus, the poor man at the gate of the rich man in Jesus' parable of St Luke's gospel. This parable commands us to look with compassion and love on all God's people. The parable demands that we treat others with respect and dignity and respect the human rights of all. This is an important issue for Queensland. To take away the rights so recently given is an affront to democracy and it is an insult to the people of Queensland who choose to live in de facto relationships.

I oppose the amendments moved by the LNP government in this bill. As a Christian, I believe in the integrity of all persons, in the right of equality of all people and in the inherent dignity of persons who, when their actions do not affect anyone else, have a right to live their lives without interference from others who disagree with their life choices.

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (8.15 pm): I rise to support the Civil Partnerships and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. I think the operative word here is 'amendment'. We are making amendments necessary to satisfy various areas of the community and their beliefs and feelings on matters of this sort.

Earlier we heard the Leader of the Opposition talk about the government making a mockery of the committee system. Seriously, the Leader of the Opposition is talking about making a mockery of a committee system that her then government made a mockery of in the 53rd Parliament. We heard the member for Mackay talk about haste and ask what is the haste of putting this bill through now. Seriously, member for Mackay, what was the haste last year that meant that this bill had to come to the House as a private member's bill and not through the normal process? For the first time in the history of this place, as I understand it, a private member's bill was introduced by a member of the executive.

The then Treasurer did not have the support of his colleagues in the ministry; he had to bring in a private member's bill. He introduced the bill at a time when we had so much happening in the community—so many pressures, so many pieces of legislation that needed to be debated—and it was forced through. The rules of this place were bent and twisted by the then government to ensure that bill passed through this House in a hasty fashion—and the member for Mackay talks about haste in terms of bringing this amendment bill forward!

I say to the member for Mackay: I am a Christian and I have friends in the gay community. I have spoken to people in the gay community about their true beliefs. As was brought to the attention of the House by the Minister for Health, not all people on all sides of this debate believe the same things. Some people are interested in one thing only—and this is the perspective that I want to come from. The perspective I want to come from is people's rights. What are their rights?

A dear friend of mine passed away some 18 months ago. Jim and his partner—a same-sex couple—were passionate about one another. They were lovely, lovely people. Jim passed away quite unexpectedly. Fortunately for Jim's partner, the rest of his family understood their relationship and did not create any problems for him in relation to the estate and the estate passing to him. He was one of the fortunate ones.

My background is 22 years in financial planning and I can assure the House that in that time—and the Leader of the Opposition may think it is funny to be talking about these serious matters; by all means laugh if you like—I saw many cases where not only same-sex couples but people who were living together in a male and female relationship were denied their entitlements on the unexpected death of their partner because the rest of the family vehemently disagreed with their relationship. All sorts of stories would come out—'No, she was his housekeeper,' 'No, they were two bachelors, just good friends.' Whatever else, the story was about money. That is all it was about. It was the money that the family saw themselves losing because of this relationship that was a bona fide, genuine, loving relationship between two people.

The position I am coming from with this is that we are not talking about whether or not we want to mimic marriage here. As a Christian, I am against that concept of mimicking a marriage.

Ms Trad interjected.

Mr CRANDON: But what I am not against, member for South Brisbane, is this: I am not against people having the right to pass their assets from one to the other or to deal with the individual who is in some sort of a serious health situation—in a coma, in a hospital—and be regarded as the individual that is thought of as their partner, as their next of kin. That is the position I am coming from.

I ask all of those people who purport to be Christians out there in the marketplace and who have been making noise about this issue to think about the people who it really affects. The people that this legislation really affects are those same-sex couples and indeed partners—whether they are male and female partners as well—who have the opportunity now to come to a court and to register, if you like, their interest in one another, to formally register, to legally register—

A further incident having occurred in the public gallery—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Berry): Order! Security, please remove that man from the gallery. For those who arrived after the commencement of the debate, I will give the third warning. This is a debate. Members are expressing their views—some of which you may accept, some of which you may not. Please respect the speakers. If in fact there is any outburst again, I will clear the gallery.

Mr CRANDON: As I was saying—and I am drawing my contribution on this debate to a close—I simply want to take the opportunity to ask all Queenslanders and all of our society to understand that there are different views taken by different people in our community but that at the end of the day there are loving, genuine relationships out there, whether they are between a man and a woman or whether they are same-sex relationships, that deserve the financial protection, and those people deserve the opportunity to be regarded as the next of kin in an emergency health situation. Those people are the ones and the only ones at the end of the day who are affected by this legislation—hence the reason this government has done the right thing in retaining this legislation on the books and, if you like, has appreciated the attitudes of some people, me included, who do not agree with the concept of marriage by simply taking that aspect out of the bill and allowing those people to have the opportunity to deal with one another's life needs in a health situation or financial situation. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr BYRNE (Rockhampton—ALP) (8.24 pm): I rise to make a very brief and opposing contribution to the debate on the Civil Partnerships and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. Matthew Donovan is a member of the ALP who ran in the seat of Surfers Paradise in the last election, and he is doing his utmost to help rebuild the Labor Party in Queensland and I thank him for his efforts. He asked the member for Mulgrave to be the sponsoring MP for an e-petition defending civil unions and requesting the House to not consider any measures that seek the removal in any way of the equal rights achieved recently under the provisions of the Civil Partnerships Act 2011. After seeing the amazing rally last month outside Parliament House, how could the member for Mulgrave not support this? The member for Mulgrave intended to deliver this speech this evening but he has been recalled to his electorate for personal reasons.

Like many, Matthew was labouring under the illusion that if the Newman government were to make changes to the act there would be no sense of urgency about it and that any bill would be referred to a relevant committee for consideration and that at the same time this would provide an opportunity for people to voice their concerns and have their say. But as we have seen, this bill has been brought on in a hurry.

When the Attorney-General introduced the bill last night, it was clear that he wanted a political problem to just go away. When the Premier flagged the changes a few weeks ago, he said, 'We wanted to sort this out so it wouldn't be a distraction from important issues.' Essentially, he said that this issue is not important, that it is a distraction and something to move on from. He would allow people to have a ceremony, as long as they did it away from a registry office—which you could read as 'We don't want to see you people carrying on. Do it somewhere else.' The former member for Barron River, Steve Wettenhall, when recalling his wedding day, summed it up along these lines—

I recall my wedding day as one of the happiest days of my life. This was not especially because we looked forward to the legal consequences of marriage; it was because we wanted to publicly declare our love and commitment to each other and celebrate that relationship with our friends and families. In my view, no-one should be denied that opportunity, and it is that opportunity that this bill provides.

I know how hard Matthew Donovan has worked on this e-petition, and the way I see it my job is to give voice to the people of Queensland. To do just that, I will quote from the principal petitioner, Matthew Donovan, to give him the opportunity to get his words on the public record—words that he was denied because this bill has been declared urgent. I quote—

This matter before the House is of serious public interest and importance.

In late 2011 the Bligh Government took a great step forward by passing the long overdue Civil Partnerships Bill entitling gay couples to enter into a civil union officially recognised by the state.

This was a watershed moment for Queensland and represented one of the most important pieces of legislation ever passed by Labor in government.

We now sadly see this Newman Government wasting no time to cruelly strip back what the gay community fought for over so many years.

On the public record the Premier has stated he supports gay marriage. It is a confusing position he is yet to properly explain to those impacted by the wind back he is trying to achieve with this mean and tricky legislation.

He seeks to bypass proper parliamentary committee oversight procedures and ram the changes through as fast as he can, as he has done on every occasion possible with various pieces of legislation.

In his statement announcing the changes he indicated he doesn't see it as a big deal for this government. Thousands of Queenslanders all over our great state who feel like they are being treated like second class citizens not entitled to equal rights see it as a big deal. They see it as a very big deal.

I would like to remind the House that according to recent polls 50 per cent of Australians support equality for all, whether it be gay marriage or civil unions. Thirty-three per cent are against and 17 per cent are undecided.

It can only be assumed therefore that the same applies to Queenslanders and their thoughts on the subject in the 21st century.

I am further distressed by the fact that there are aspects of the legislation the Premier and Attorney-General chose to hide at the initial announcement.

Mainly that civil unions have now been watered down to being called 'registered relationships' under the changes. Why did they choose to deceive people on this issue?

Why are the concerns of some sectional interests being acknowledged and catered to at the expense of others especially when as stated earlier the equal rights movement is gaining support every day?

The many people in the gay community I talk to now feel they have been demoted to the level of a pet, car or boat whereby their rights have now been watered down to a cold and clinical registration process in the eyes of the state.

The Premier says the registration process is primarily for 'medical and financial purposes.'

Mr Newman you just don't get it. You have nailed your colours to the flag. You support inequality and not even the status quo, you are dragging Queensland backwards kicking and screaming.

Do you think a heterosexual couple get married for 'medical and financial purposes?'

What an offensive proposition. They get married to show love and commitment to each other and gay couples are no different. Why should they be treated as such?

They are looking for more than an ability to register on a database. They are looking to be treated as equals. This Newman Government clearly does not see them as such. A point which distresses many people greatly.

This is one big slap in the face and, far from getting us 'Back on Track', it is taking us off track and backwards.

Why does this government use the terminology 'bringing us into line with other states?' Wouldn't it be preferred to lead rather than follow?

Civil unions are not a threat to marriage. That is a fallacy.

In today's secular society policy at the government level should not be driven by religious considerations.

I am proud to have lodged a petition with parliament that calls for no changes whatsoever to be made to the Civil Partnerships Act 2011. It has received strong support with over 5,000 people standing up for equal rights.

This cannot be ignored. We will not be ignored.

I call on this government to respect the rights of all Queenslanders. It must stand up for every Queenslanders irrespective of who they voted for, as Premier Newman said on election night. He also said he would govern with 'humility, dignity and grace.'

I'm yet to see any of those traits in this government. I wait in hope.

Premier Newman must follow proper procedure and allow this legislation to be scrutinised in depth. Simply calling every piece of legislation 'urgent' that you want to ram through doesn't make it necessarily so. In fact as stated earlier it was said that in this government's opinion it wasn't a priority. These two statements don't reconcile with each other.

The mere nature of the victory does not entitle him to ride roughshod over process and assume he has a mandate for every aspect of his agenda.

I have been proudly Labor and actively involved for many years making sure that Gold Coast Labor is strengthened allowing all those who share progressive forward thinking ideas to be represented and heard. This massive majority government will not deter our efforts.

In fact it has ramped them up. Democracy thrives effectively when opposition and the ferment of ideas and debate occur.

This government has shown no willingness in its actions to enter into normal accepted process. Something I think they should think long and hard about.

The issue of equality is so crucial in our modern society. People are screaming for change and for Queensland to turn back at this stage is a worrying sign of what this government is all about.

I stand side by side with the gay community because I know how much it means to them and how much is at stake.

I am still awaiting the Attorney-General's response to my e-mail regarding my concerns on this issue.

I will quote from Sir Robert Menzies, who spoke of the Liberal creed as follows—

As the etymology of our name 'Liberal' indicates, we have stood for freedom. We have realised that men and women are not just ciphers in a calculation, but are individual human beings whose individual welfare and development must be the main concern of government.

We have learned that the right answer is to set the individual free, to aim at equality of opportunity, to protect the individual against oppression, to create a society in which rights and duties are recognised and made effective.

Whatever happened to the Liberals in the Liberal National Party? Obviously Labor is not happy the government has sought to change the act at all but, to be frank, it is far less of a change than I and many others thought it would be. Did the Attorney-General, who would have been delighted to repeal the entire act, get rolled in the party room because there were people who stood up for equality, people who still remember that there are a range of people who make up our communities? Ironically, the Premier and the Attorney-General largely sat on the fence with their original announcement, in the process upsetting stakeholders on both sides.

To sum up, I will give the last word to a former member of this place, the previous member for Mount Coot-tha, Andrew Fraser, who introduced the current act. He said—

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

We will oppose this bill.

 **Hon. JA STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games) (8.36 pm): I rise to support the Civil Partnerships and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 introduced on 20 June by the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, the honourable member for Kawana. This bill implements the Newman government's pre-election commitment to review the Civil Partnerships Act 2011 that was introduced late last year by the former Labor Treasurer as a private member's bill in a grubby, vote-grabbing attempt to save Labor from its impending doom. Amendments in the legislation before us tonight are proposed to, firstly, remove the provisions from the Civil Partnerships Act 2011 which allow a couple to make a declaration before a civil partnership notary of their intention to enter into a civil partnership with each other; secondly, remove the provisions from the act which allow a person to be registered as a civil partnership notary and which require the maintenance of a civil partnership register; and, thirdly, to amend the termination provisions in the act so that a civil partnership is no longer terminated by a District Court order but by lodging an application with the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Amendments to this bill will also change the title of the act from 'Civil Partnerships Act 2011' to 'Relationships Act 2011' and the terminology used from 'civil partnerships', 'civil partners' and 'cooling-off period' to 'registered relationships', 'registered partners' and 'registration period' respectively. I am really pleased to see some humanity prevail in these provisions, especially with regard to the term 'cooling-off period'. This type of reference is appropriate for house purchases and telemarketers, but it is not in reference to people. The purpose of this legislation is far more sensitive and deserves respectful language and terminology. Consequential amendments will be made to the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 2003, Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Regulation 2003, Civil Partnerships Regulation 2012, Corrective Services Act 2006, Duties Act 2001 and Succession Act 1981.

Essentially, the bill aims to partially repeal the act to remove those provisions that may be perceived as mimicking marriage, such as the holding of a regulated ceremony. However, the act will maintain the registration scheme that allows couples of any gender or sexual orientation to register their relationship for legal, medical and financial purposes. Notably, provisions in this bill will bring the Queensland legislation into line with relationship legislation in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania, where ceremonies are not included in the legislative framework.

Importantly—I stress importantly—the bill will continue to observe the legal rights of those couples who have already registered their civil partnership and undertaken to hold a ceremony under the provisions of the act as it currently stands. I understand that, to date, 653 civil partnerships have been registered yet only 23 ceremonies have been held. I would stress the point that this amendment bill does not remove the right of couples to hold private ceremonies amongst family and friends; it merely removes the provisions in the act that relate to state sanctioned and regulated ceremonies.

These amendments will ensure the preservation of the institution of marriage as a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman under the Commonwealth's Marriage Act 1961. The legislation introduced by the former Labor government was designed purely to create a divide, both within the wider community and here within the parliament of Queensland. The timing of the introduction of the Civil Partnerships Bill late last year, when the Bligh Labor government was in its death throes, was manipulative and callous.

The opportunism of the former Treasurer knew no bounds. The introduction of his private member's bill—not the domain of a minister of the Crown—was nothing more than a cheap political stunt in a desperate attempt to win votes rather than being about good policy. It was Machiavellian, a cruel trick to play, using the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual community like a political football, geeing them up for blatant political gain. This kind of sneaky, slippery, devious behaviour was the norm of the previous government. They would have you think they had ownership—a monopoly, if you like—on the issues related to the gay community. They are wrong. Many of us on the government benches have dearly loved family members and close friends who are not heterosexual. As the honourable member for Southern Downs has said, there are diverging views amongst the gay community on this topic as well.

As the Attorney mentioned when speaking to the bill late last year, it was designed as a distraction from the critical issues facing our state due to Labor's incompetent governance over the last two decades. In discussions that the LNP had with the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual community at the time, we found that the major issues facing them, strangely enough, were the same as those facing all Queenslanders and those in my electorate of Currumbin. They were rising cost-of-living pressures, access to good public health facilities, getting our economy back on track, job opportunities and job security. Might I add that not one constituent has contacted my office in Currumbin in relation to this debate, and I have a very, very engaged electorate.

The Newman government was elected with a clear mandate to address these issues, and that is what we are delivering on. For example, through the passage of our cost-of-living bill, one of the first and most defining acts of this government, we are determined to provide real relief to Queensland households and businesses and all Queenslanders who live therein. In saying so, though, we do need to give legal certainty and balance to those who will be affected by this legislation as well as fulfil an expectation that we would review the legislation in line with our pre-election statements.

Honourable members, I believe that the Attorney has found that balance and I congratulate him on this bill and also on his willingness to listen to opposing arguments in order to find some middle ground. I respect the views of those individuals sitting in the parliamentary gallery and I ask them to respect the institution of this parliament as we openly debate this legislation.

 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (8.44 pm): I rise to contribute to the Civil Partnerships and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I listened to the first couple of contributions. In the first, the Leader of the Opposition talked about the unseemliness of the introduction of this bill. There were concerns expressed last night about the speed with which this bill would be carried through this chamber. It does not give dignity to the issue about which we are speaking. It does not give dignity to the people about whom we are talking on both sides of the debate. However, I have to reiterate, as I said in my contribution to debate on the previous bill, that the bill that was introduced by the former Deputy Premier was a political stunt. There was little respect for people in same-sex relationships; it was about votes for the Deputy Premier. There was little respect for the process of this chamber; it was about votes for the Deputy Premier.

I have received a number of emails since this issue was raised in this chamber by the new Premier and I just wish to quote a small amount from a couple of them. Anthony Buckley writes—

I am writing to you as a member of the Ashgrove electorate—

and he is referring to himself—

who is a heartland LNP voter to say I am disgusted by the proposed breach of the LNP's promise to repeal the Civil Partnerships Act 2011. Many people in this electorate were concerned about Labor's cynical ploy to gain Green preferences in a few seats by passing that legislation.

...

I know some rusted on Labor voters in this electorate who crossed over to him because he looked us all in the eye on TV the Sunday before the election and promised he would remove it. The polls in that week reflected that change.

...

The proposed legislation as announced by Mr Newman last week merely removes a State sanctioned ceremony for homosexual couples.

...

This is a clear breach of the Premier's personal promise to repeal the legislation. It is also cynical because it pretends to be doing something while it does not.

The Christian Values Alliance's Carolyn Cormack writes—

CVA agrees that in a democratic society citizens should have the right to choose how they will live, within the law of course. However the aggressive nature of the campaign first for civil unions and ultimately homosexual marriage cannot any longer be ignored by the Christian community. Our tolerance of the homosexual lifestyle has been met with intolerance and vilification and has only served to force Christians to defend their Christian values and tenet of their faith.

...

This decision is not an easy one to come to on any one level, but you are in parliament today because Queenslanders voted a confidence in you to make the best decisions for all Queenslanders, not just a few. The Christian community is not seeking to make either you or the LNP their champion of Christian causes. We just want the same unbiased consideration on matters of concern to us, such as this one, as any other lobby in Queensland.

Wendy Francis writes—

The Australian Christian Lobby position is that it rejects any form of civil partnership which seeks to mimic marriage, in substance as well as in style. We defend marriage without any qualification because marriage is a compound right—'To marry and raise a family' and changing the Australian view of marriage from that of a husband and wife relationship to anything other than this, normalises the concept of a motherless or fatherless family. We will always look to what is in the best interests of the child. Because the Civil Partnerships legislation mimics marriage, our preferred position is full repeal as per a letter from Brig. Jim Wallace to Mr Bleijie on 4th June, and legal advice that we received and passed on was that this could be achieved without any loss of entitlement to same-sex couples.

In this place I have been involved in many sensitive debates. In relation to embryonic stem cell research, I did not support the bill and was accused of not caring for people with disabilities, and that is not true. However, I hold fundamentally that life is of infinite worth from conception. In the debate on the legalisation relating to prostitution I did not support the bill and was accused of having my head in the sand and that I did not care about prostitutes or their health or safety. That is not true.

I hold fundamentally the infinite worth of human life not to be sold and traded like a commodity. Each person should have a life of promise and potential. In the debate on the inclusion of abortion drugs I was told that the bill was not going to increase the opportunity for abortion; it would just include what is now a common medical procedure to procure an abortion and that is oral abortion medication. I did not support it. I think I sat alone on that one. My fundamental belief remains that life begins at conception and it must be protected, nourished and valued. For me that is paramount.

In relation to same-sex relationships, we have seen tonight and in the other debates that those who hold a fundamental view and believe marriage is a relationship between a man and a woman are criticised as uncaring. I say that every single person in this House, whether we are sitting in the chamber of this place of democracy or in the gallery, is of infinite worth. Each one of us is valued and each one of us is precious. If, however, I do not have the freedom in this state to defend the core values on which my life is founded, the core values on which this state and nation are built, I cannot defend my community on other matters.

I am not going to support this legislation, not because I support the bill passed so cynically just prior to the last election; I do not support this bill because it does little to re-establish the very precious relationship which has been fundamental to humanity, the marriage relationship between a man and a woman. There will be criticism; there are people who are already making audible comments in the gallery. Can I reiterate that each of us are of infinite worth but each of us has to defend the values that we believe are fundamental to us individually and to others in our community. If the legislation today was going to reinforce those values prior to the civil partnerships bill I would support the legislation without hesitation. This does not do that. It does not achieve that balance and I will not be supporting it.

 **Mr BERRY** (Ipswich—LNP) (8.52 pm): I rise to speak to the Civil Partnerships and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. I support the amendments proposed by the Attorney-General. It is now time to give this House my reasons for supporting these amendments. These amendments are not about marriage. The amendments are not about marriage between same-sex or opposite-sex couples. Factually, these amendments are inclusive and not exclusive. I respectfully submit that the bill before the House today is both moderate and fair. It ensures the rights given to coupled relationships in Queensland in 2011 are not abrogated to a point of affecting applicants who are already registered under the civil partnerships legislation. I believe that it may be as many as 653 whose relationships are already registered. I understand from the Minister for Tourism—and I believe her—that, in fact, only 23 have gone through a ceremony. This government adopted the inclusive stance by ensuring that those Queenslanders, whether they be in a partnership of the same sex or opposite sex, are not subject to living in limbo.

There have been in some quarters opposition to parts of the Civil Partnerships Act 2011. It is not unusual or unexpected for there to be opposition. However, the Attorney has given air to the proponents who feel there ought to be a measured approach to this emotive issue. This government has consulted the stakeholders. It received and critically determined those parts to which there was considered opposition to the act. This approach by the government again was balanced and has an inclusive effect. Queensland, by virtue of the Australian Constitution, does not have the power to make laws about marriage. If there was an expectation in our great state that it can, then here and now it must be made clear that marriage and possibly anything resembling a marriage may be unconstitutional. Our forefathers envisaged marriage as being a federal responsibility. The federal government is now

exercising that constitutional obligation to consider same-sex marriage as we speak in the House now. I emphasise that it is not the constitutional obligation of this government and, in fact, the Constitution prohibits the state meddling in marriage matters. The previous act gave uncertainty to this legal position. It was not fair for couples to be confronted with the prospect that at a future time the High Court may be required to rule on a challenge to the legislation as it stood prior to these amendments.

In speaking to the House today it is unnecessary to consider the philosophical, moral or personal views of the stakeholders in this debate. The existing legislation has established a framework, albeit flawed, that underpins the registration of relationships. Therefore, my speech on the subject to the House deals with the political changes which will make the legislation work more effectively, more fairly and more inclusive and at the same time possibly save parties, particularly in a failing relationship, substantial sums of money. It was flawed, as this government is faced with an act which was rushed through parliament when the people of Queensland knew that an election was imminent. Many Queenslanders openly expressed their cynicism to the legislation being proclaimed so hurriedly, so quickly and veiled with really little debate. Of course, we now know Treasurer Fraser had a motive to be a champion for a cause. So why did it take so long for the Labor government to introduce this legislation? Same-sex relationships have been subject to many pieces of legislation in Australia for quite some time. Matters concerning same-sex relationships, such as the Property Law Act 1974, were amended in 1999. Part 19 was inserted in 1999. This issue is not new. One of the main causes of part 19 was to facilitate the resolution of financial matters at the end of a de facto relationship. It also gave authority for parties to determine whether they were in a de facto relationship. Even with this patchwork of legislation, couples required a certain level of certainty not only in respect of their legal position but also in respect of the state. This certainty needed balance between the men and women of Queensland who on the one hand hold marriage between two adults of the opposite sex as being sacred and sanctified by God and on the other hand those adults who have strong bonds which ought to be regulated. Some of the people who hold those beliefs and strong bonds are commonly in what we have referred to today as same-sex relationships. These amendments not only achieve the balance but—and I repeat—they are inclusive.

Let me explain why these amendments bring about balance and inclusion. However, before I do so, I call on some history to assist me in explaining balance and inclusion. Each of us have our views on history and how history records the trials and struggles of people for the attainment of rights. One example in history that is giving me momentum to illustrate this balance is women's suffrage. Suffragettes campaigned, protested, cajoled for the right to vote. It was a momentous struggle and one that allowed us to applaud the women and men who believed in the cause.

A further incident having occurred in the public gallery—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Order! Attendants, could you please remove that individual from the gallery. Members, we will hear the member for Ipswich. Members of the public gallery, we will hear the member for Ipswich in silence.

A further incident having occurred in the public gallery—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! If the attendants could try as calmly and peacefully as possible to please clear the gallery. If we could kindly ask those in the gallery if they could leave. If those in the gallery could please leave quietly and peacefully.

Whereupon the public gallery was cleared.

Madam SPEAKER: I call the Attorney-General.

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank all honourable members for their contributions on the debate tonight. Tonight what we have seen in the debate is exactly what the member for South Brisbane set out to achieve. The member for South Brisbane was sitting up in the public gallery orchestrating that. We saw the member for South Brisbane sitting up in the—

Honourable members interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! I will have order in this House. Members will resume their seats. I expect members to conduct themselves with decorum, even if others do not respect this parliament and the rights of parliamentarians to conduct themselves in this place.

Mr WELLINGTON: I rise to a point of order. Madam Speaker, can you please clarify: you have called the Attorney-General and I understand that that has now closed the debate. We were allowing the courtesy of awaiting advice from you so that the next people scheduled to speak could speak.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Nicklin, please resume your seat. We are not closing the debate. I was hearing the Attorney-General. A member was still on his feet before the disruption in the chamber. I will be resuming the debate with the member who was previously on his feet before the disruption in the chamber.

Mr WELLINGTON: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr BERRY: Madam Speaker, I do not want to make light of a moment so serious involving democracy, but I have not had this sort of reception since I was an Australian Rules umpire in 1974, I think at Sandgate. Let us leave that aside.

The bill does not interfere with the rights of couples to partake in a ceremony of their choosing amongst family and friends. It allows the couple to make the ceremony without unnecessary interference from the state.

Allow me to canvass the parts of the amendment bill that are important to state and consider. Registered relationships require a registration with the registrar, preceded by a cooling-off period. There is nothing new there except for clause 9, which refers to section 6 of the act. It is amended only by omitting the element of the necessity of a formal ceremony. This ceremony was required for the relationship to be valid. I respectfully submit that the reason for my belief that it is balanced is that it is a necessary element to a registered relationship. I am sure all couples availing themselves of the amendment will see the economic sense of not being forced to have a ceremony. I say, with some tongue in cheek, that this saving perhaps might go towards the carbon tax that all Queenslanders will end up paying after 1 July.

It is inclusionary because the registration of the relationship will now be much more simplified and less discriminatory. Those couples who do not want or cannot afford a relationship celebrant will not have to pay for one. This amendment bill is all about choice. A registered relationship can now be terminated without the need to apply to a District Court. Under the act, if a party had a dispute with the other party, effectively the District Court was the forum for a judicial decision. These amendments bring balance back into people's lives. The Attorney-General has provided us with that balance. As a solicitor, the Attorney-General knows the cost of legal proceedings. He knows the cost of filing an initiating application in the District Court. As it stands now, it is \$692. If a couple wishes to terminate their relationship, they need to make an application. The application is made to the District Court and they must pay a filing fee, leaving aside any legal costs, of \$692.

But hold on, there is more. The Attorney-General knows that to have the initiating application set for hearing it will attract a setting-down fee of \$1,125. Again, that is besides the legal costs. If the application proceeds to a trial, after the first day the daily hearing fee is \$450 per day. After the fourth day, it is \$810 per day. If the application proceeds beyond nine days, it is \$1,575 per day. I mention those things because those were the filing fees increased by the Labor government in 2011. Those fees are astronomical. I use the term 'astronomical' because the Premier and the Treasurer both commented on the height of Queensland's debt. I remind the House of the image: if \$100 notes were stacked so that their value amounted to \$100 billion, the height of the stack would be into the stratosphere. These two measures alone will save some registered relationship parties who intend to terminate their relationship legal costs, filing fees and outlays in the vicinity of possibly \$10,000 and beyond. Under the amendments proposed by clause 15, under the amendment act the cost will be only a prescribed fee and possibly a stamp.

However, it has been simplified even further. What if a termination application is made by only one party? That party must serve the other party with the terminating application and a statutory declaration. The registrar then makes a decision to terminate the registered relationship. There is no suggestion of any payment of \$10,000 in legal fees, filing fees, service fees and so forth. However, this bill goes further. It even makes service of the application and statutory declaration uncomplicated. It sets out the means by which you can serve the other party.

Put very simply, it is a fair and balanced bill. The transitional provisions unequivocally state that a civil partnership now in existence can be a registered relationship—a simple name change. There is nothing complicated about that. Amendment clause 40 gives further strength to the fairness of the relationship by ensuring that an application in the process of being considered but not decided upon will be registered as a registered relationship.

Amendment clause 41 again complies with the fairness test. If applicants give a notice of intention under former section 10 and there is not any declaration under former section 11, the notice of intention will be deemed to be an application for a registered relationship. If both applicants want their registered relationship to be recrystallised then and there, after the registrar receives the notice and within 90 days either party can lodge a withdrawal notice, but, on the other hand, both parties can apply to abrogate or abridge the 90 days.

Amendment clause 45 gives further efficacy to fairness by ensuring that technicalities do not fetter or hinder a registered relationship, or a civil partnership under the old act, from becoming a registered relationship.

I commend the bill to the House, because it delivers to the people of Queensland a better law, a fairer law and a law balancing the interests of all Queenslanders. These amendments are inclusive because they deliver cost savings with dignity while, at same time, protecting the sanctity of marriage by ensuring that the marriage ceremony, traditional to marriages under the Marriage Act, continues. The amendment act does not prohibit the celebration of successful registration of a registered relationship. I emphasise that it demeans the debate to suggest otherwise. The bill is very clear.

The amendment bill gives registered relationships a simple, quick, cost-saving measure for couples to regularise their relationship. I congratulate the government, and in particular I congratulate the Attorney-General, for quickly providing certainty to all and at the same potentially saving substantial money for Queenslanders. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms TRAD (South Brisbane—ALP) (9.12 pm): I rise to speak in opposition to the Civil Partnerships and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the depth of emotion felt by those who were in the gallery just a moment ago.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! Those to my right will cease interjecting. The member has the call.

Ms TRAD: We are reminded that tonight we are talking about their lives. We are talking about their families. We are talking about their loves. And, for the record, I was up there in the gallery and I had asked them—

Government members interjected.

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

Ms PALASZCZUK: I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The Premier is interjecting and he is not in his seat. This has happened on numerous occasions. The Attorney-General can sit in his seat. That is the normal practice and procedure of the House. I ask that the Premier show respect to the chair.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! If members are going to interject they need to be in their correct seat when they make the interjection. I call the member for South Brisbane.

Ms TRAD: For the record, I was up in the gallery asking them to observe the ruling made by the chair.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Those on my right will cease interjecting. The member has the call.

Ms TRAD: My opposition to the Civil Partnerships and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 is primarily based on the following three key features, and I will list them in clause order. Firstly, at clause 3 and subsequently throughout the amendment bill the relationship title is to change from 'civil partnerships' to 'registered relationship'. Secondly, clause 13 of this amendment bill extinguishes the right of couples—same sex or opposite sex—to hold a civil partnership ceremony or a declaration ceremony. This is a recently legislated right that the LNP government is extinguishing, urgently, unconditionally and completely, here tonight. Thirdly, clause 7 abolishes the civil partnerships notary scheme, which enables civil celebrants to register to preside and officiate over state sanctioned civil partnership declarations, which may include a ceremony.

I will address each of these regressive features of the amendment bill in greater detail, but first I wish to address some broader contextual issues. The Civil Partnerships Bill 2011 was passed by the 53rd Parliament in November last year. It has been in force for only some 16 weeks. This bill was introduced by the former member for Mount Coot-tha, Andrew Fraser. Today I pay tribute to his leadership and honour in bringing the ideas of equality and justice into law for those same-sex couples wanting their relationships, their partnerships, their unions celebrated and recognised by the state. Many members here tonight have paid—

Mr Stevens interjected.

Ms TRAD: I will take that interjection.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mermaid Beach will cease interjecting.

Ms TRAD: I campaigned on civil unions and I won. I am taking the interjection. I campaigned on civil unions and I won.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am on my feet. The member shall resume her seat. Let us do our best to have a reasonably civilised debate. The member has the call.

Ms TRAD: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for your protection. Some members here tonight have suggested that the private member's bill brought in in 2011 was somehow a political stunt and was a bill that was curtailed. I remind the House tonight that every member of this House has a right to bring forward a private member's bill. I remind members of this House that that bill went to a committee, unlike this bill. I remind members of this House that more than 6,000 submissions were received from members of the public in relation to the Civil Partnerships Bill 2011. So don't they dare compare!

To be here tonight debating the rescinding of key elements of the Civil Partnerships Act 2011 that emancipate and celebrate the love and commitment of couples regardless of their sexual orientation is quite frankly deeply saddening and deeply shameful. It is shameful because Queensland moves backwards while the rest of the world continues to progress.

A federal parliamentary committee just this week recommended marriage extend to same-sex couples. Federal parliament is soon to consider bills to this effect. The President of the United States recently expressed his support for same-sex marriage. The conservative Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, David Cameron, said in a landmark speech recently, 'I don't support gay marriage despite being a conservative. I support gay marriage because I am a conservative.'

These are all momentous steps on the road to equality and today Queensland has decided it will take a step backwards. The Civil Partnerships Bill 2011 was introduced for one purpose only: to replace inequality with equality. This amendment bill seeks to reintroduce inequality and discrimination by mitigating the rights of same-sex couples to fulsomely and officially enter into a union respected and sanctioned by the state.

I will now turn to the clauses. The first clause that causes offence is clause 3, which changes the title of the act from the Civil Partnerships Act 2011 to the Relationships Act 2011 and the terms 'civil partnerships', 'civil partners' and 'cooling-off period'—

Mr STEVENS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member should be clearly aware by now that she is not allowed to deal with the clauses in the main body of the speech.

Ms TRAD: I am happy to take that point and I will raise it in debate.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! If the member will resume her seat, please. The member just needs to be aware that the clauses are generally dealt with in consideration in detail. If you have specific clauses that you want to address, that is the best opportunity to do that.

Ms TRAD: Sure. In relation to the change of name from 'civil partnerships' to 'registered relationships', I want to point out that this is not just a simple case of semantics. Words have meaning and the use of the word 'civil' has particular importance in this context. The word 'civil' is used to describe and illustrate a connection and recognition between the state, its citizens and their interrelations with one another. Simply put, a civil partnership is an acknowledgement of acceptance and understanding from the state. By taking away this title, the government is saying that they do not accept these relationships. They do not value these relationships. The Premier and the LNP want the same-sex community to believe that this is a compromise, but in fact it is a backhander.

In his explanatory speech the Attorney-General asserted that this amendment was to 'more accurately reflect the purpose and objectives of the act'. That is not correct. The intent of the original act was not to introduce a civil partnership system in Queensland that was devoid of dignity, respect and celebration as this amendment bill seeks to achieve.

Secondly, the abolition of the state sanctioned ceremony is nothing more than an extinguishment of rights. Even the explanatory notes accompanying the bill point to the fact that this bill breaches a fundamental legislative principle. Through you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I draw the attention of the member to page 3 of the explanatory notes where it states that the amendments will remove the rights of a couple to hold a government sanctioned civil partnership declaration ceremony to express their intention to enter into a civil partnership with one another. This is an extinguishment of rights. This is an abomination. That is the only way you can describe it.

The true intent of this change, this amendment, is the fact that the government, in their mean and tricky manner—which has been displayed to date—will allow same-sex relationships to be registered but not with any official celebration or acknowledgement. You can celebrate as loud as you like to this LNP government, but they won't hear you, they won't see you and they will make sure that no-one official is there to sanction your union.

The issue in relation to the number of ceremonies that have been conducted to date—some 23, I understand—does not reflect the desire for a ceremony. But rather it reflects the very short period of time that the act has been in force—some 16 weeks—and the lack of notaries trained and registered to date. As anyone who has planned a wedding will tell you, it takes a lot longer than 16 weeks to organise such an event—bringing together all the festivities, all your family and friends to make this occasion a stand-out event in one's life.

The issue in relation to the abolition of notorieties—

Mr Seeney: Notaries.

Ms TRAD: Notaries, sorry. The bill abolishes the civil partnerships notary scheme, which enables civil celebrants to register to preside and officiate over state sanctioned civil partnership declarations—which may include a ceremony. The amendments reduce what should be a celebration of love and commitment to nothing more than a process of completing and exchanging bureaucratic forms, much like registering your car. All you simply do is complete the necessary forms, sign a declaration—

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Those on my right will cease interjecting. The member has the call.

Ms TRAD:—pay the application fee and submit it to the relevant government department. If you want to cancel it, it is just as simple: fill in another form and flick it through to the relevant government department, and gone—your registered relationship is gone.

The Attorney-General may claim that this amendment bill brings Queensland into line with other states, but what it really does is downgrade Queensland's civil partnerships legislation to the lowest common denominator. It may be true that in Victoria and New South Wales there are no official ceremonies, but two other jurisdictions do have officially recognised ceremonies—information the Attorney-General used selectively in advancing his arguments. In the ACT a celebrant registers a civil partnership at a state sanctioned ceremony. In Tasmania the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages recognises that a deed of relationship commences when a marriage celebrant and witnesses have signed the deed of relationship certificate. So, rather than bringing Queensland into line with other states, the Attorney-General is simply letting Queensland fall to the back of the pack.

It must also be said that the government has discriminated not only in the context of the bill but also in its development. The Premier did not want to talk to the people most affected by the bill and acknowledged as much in his press conference last week when he proudly stated that he had consulted with only one organisation—the Australian Christian Lobby—but not one single person, gay or lesbian, affected by this regressive move. And, in an extraordinary move late last night, the government sought to deny every Queenslanders an opportunity to have their say on this bill—to have their say on having their rights taken away.

We know that many Queenslanders care deeply about this issue—this was reflected in the fact that more than 6,000 submissions were received when the Civil Partnerships Bill went to the committee last year. But then let us not forget that this is the same party that has always shown itself to be intolerant of criticism, intolerant of protest and dissent. This is the party that gave rise to the Premier's political hero Joh Bjelke-Petersen, a man who less than 30 years ago, as Premier, described gay people as 'insulting, evil animals' and said they should go back to New South Wales and Victoria from where they came. Just three months later, Premier Bjelke-Petersen and his government pushed through, in less than an hour, legislation prohibiting gay men from donating blood.

Well, here we are—almost 30 years later—and the conservative government is pushing through, in less than 24 hours, legislation again targeting the rights of gay and lesbian couples. As I sat in the chamber last night listening to the Attorney-General introduce this amendment, I could not help but think of a young man I met at the civil unions rally held outside this parliament just a few weeks ago. His name is Marshall and, as I was attempting to weave my way back through the crowd, he handed me this necklace. He told me that it had belonged to a friend of his who had recently died. Marshall wanted me to wear it during this debate tonight in honour of his friend who died at too young an age after what must have been a lifetime of struggle with discrimination and bigotry.

Marshall also opened up about his feelings of isolation and loneliness because of the bullying he experienced at school because of his sexuality. Stories like Marshall's remind us that the views of our leaders and the laws that we make have a profound effect on our community and the lives of people in our community. Views like those expressed by Joh Bjelke-Petersen can leave deep scars on the psyche of generations of gay and lesbian Queenslanders. And what those opposite have chosen to do today is reopen old scars.

But while the Liberal National Party may not have progressed on this issue, the Queensland people certainly have—just like the rest of Australia. Most Queenslanders listening today will be shaking their heads—

Mr Newman interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Premier will withdraw that unparliamentary language.

Mr Newman: Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member has the call.

Ms TRAD: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for your protection. Most Queenslanders listening today will be shaking their heads at the absurdity of this relationships register and questioning if their local MP truly represents their values. Poll after poll has public support for same-sex union at more than 60 per cent. That is support for same-sex couples being able to celebrate their union in a manner that is public and sanctioned by the state.

Indeed, looking across this House during the debate, looking into the eyes of some of those opposite, I would ask if this amendment truly represents their values. Does this truly represent their conscience? Who would know? Those on the government benches have not been allowed to use their conscience, their intellect or their hearts in determining their position on this matter. Are these the laws the members for Mount Coot-tha, Brisbane Central, Indooroopilly, Bulimba and Moggill dreamed they would champion for their electorates? Is this the great achievement for progressing humanity in Queensland these members envisaged? Did these members dream of rescinding and denying the people of their electorates the dignity of equality because a loud, conservative minority with a direct line to the Premier have judged the celebration of their relationship as immoral and offensive?

I am greatly concerned about the impact of this bill on the mental health of LGBTI Queenslanders, particularly young people. This bill sends a very strong message to some of the most vulnerable people in Queensland. It sends the clear message that their relationships are not worthy and therefore their love is wrong.

In the context of this debate, it is shameful to note that same-sex attracted youth are between five and 15 times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers, although these figures are almost definitely underreported due to obvious difficulty in collecting such data. Those who work with these vulnerable young people suggest that suicide is more likely due to the internalising of homophobic attitudes expressed by their peers, families and community leaders. Psychologist Paul Martin, Queensland's political liaison officer from the Australian Psychological Society and a psychologist with more than 25 years experience in the mental health of same-sex people, states—

I have worked with Queensland Mums and Dads who have lost their same sex attracted young son or daughter and will never be the same again. They have stated that they knew that it is because their much loved son or daughter believed what people said around them. This included that they were defective, not worthy for social inclusion and that their relationships were a farce. This results in hopelessness, shame, depression, anxiety and other precursors to suicide.

These stories of discrimination and hopelessness are a stain on our community and something we should all be asking to remedy. I ask members opposite, knowing these facts, how they can justify and explain today's amendments to members of their community who are struggling with their sexual identity.

The introduction of civil partnerships in Queensland is a great Labor achievement, an achievement built on the shoulders of other historic reforms enacted by decades of Labor governments. Indeed, it has been successive Labor governments that have removed discrimination and inequality from Queensland laws. This is particularly true for the rights of same-sex Queenslanders in this state. It has always been Labor that has delivered historic reforms for same-sex people in Queensland including: introducing antidiscrimination legislation making it illegal in Queensland to discriminate on the grounds of sexuality; strengthening protections for same-sex Queenslanders who are suffering from violence, particularly domestic violence; ensuring same-sex relationships are protected under property law, under succession laws; and enshrining countless other entitlements that people living in committed relationships have come to expect in this state. These are great Labor achievements for which members of our party and the wider community can be very proud. To them I say: we have taken a great step towards equality together. While today's vote will be a step backwards, we will turn this around and we will move forward again together. Labor will always fight against discrimination. That is what the Labor Party does.

The bill before the House is nothing more than a backward step for Queensland. It is about extinguishing a right for same-sex couples and it is an abomination. The Premier wants to ram this through tonight and get on with more important matters. Well, for many Queenslanders—for thousands of Queenslanders—this is an important issue and this bill is an insult and a disgrace.

Last night Anna Funder was afforded the prestigious Miles Franklin Literary Award for her novel *All That I Am*. It is a rigorously researched and superbly penned literary accomplishment and I can personally recommend it to all members of the House. Today when asked about the Newman government's decision to scrap the Premier's Literary Awards, Ms Funder said—

I have spent my professional life studying totalitarian regimes and the brave people who speak out against them.

Mr STEVENS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Literary awards have no relevance to this bill whatsoever. I would ask the member to return to the subject at hand.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member has the call, and I would just remind the member to—

Ms TRAD: Yes, it is connected, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Continue.

Ms TRAD: I will return to her quote—

And the first thing that someone with dictatorial inclinations does is to silence the writers and the journalists.

Well, as someone who has read this award-winning novel, I am compelled to mention—

Mr STEVENS: I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The member said that she was moving towards the direction—

Ms TRAD: And I am—

Mr STEVENS: My point of order—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Take a seat. There is no point of order. The member has the call.

Ms TRAD: It compels me to mention, in the context of this debate, that one of the other groups singled out for persecution and marginalisation in this novel is gay men in pre-World War II Germany. History has demonstrated again and again that it is not a sign of strength to crush the spirits—

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting. The member has the call.

Ms TRAD: It is not a sign of strength to crush the spirits of those who are a minority or different.

Mr CHOAT: I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mrs Miller interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Bundamba will be quiet and listen to the point of order.

Mr CHOAT: Mr Deputy Speaker, I find the comments about pre-World War II Germany completely and totally offensive and I ask the member to withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order. It is not a personal reflection on you as the member, and I just remind the member about frivolous point of orders.

Ms TRAD: It is the action of those with ambitions of greatness who fall short in character and nobility so that they then stand on those who are easily crushed before them. This day will be written down in history as a day the Queensland parliament used hate to crush equality and discrimination to crush love.

 **Dr DOUGLAS** (Gaven—LNP) (9.35 pm): I might come from a slightly different approach to the previous members. I believe that the bill is urgent because we need certainty in this area. Honourable members, when you and I were elected to parliament—in my case I was re-elected—we swore an oath to serve this state and all the public to the very best of our endeavours. I might just remind some members about the words of that oath of allegiance. In my case, and it is the same for all members, it states—

I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, as lawful Sovereign of Australia and to Her heirs and successors, according to law; and

I will well and truly serve the people of Queensland and faithfully perform the duties and responsibilities of a member of the Legislative Assembly to the best of my ability and according to law.

So help me God!

I have signed it, in my case it was signed by the Treasurer and it is stamped.

Tonight we have a key revision legislative instrument, the Civil Partnerships and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. It is part of the LNP government's commitment to review the Civil Partnerships Act 2011, which was rushed through by the former Labor government prior to the recent election. I do not need to restate the points that have been made clear, particularly those made very elegantly by the member for Southern Downs tonight.

These two issues—our commitment as parliamentarians and the LNP pledge—are critically intertwined, and anything that flows from those two pledges has to pass the test of fairness, which is equity, and honesty, which is integrity. These two objectives are very important qualities of any person or action that may come from them. Therefore, we need to balance anything we do as a parliament with everyone's interests in mind.

It is unfair to be inconsiderate of another position by virtue of their unique situation. It would be dishonest to ignore the legitimate aspirations of another by pretending they had no right of recognition. It would be equally dishonest to state that I would agree to do something that, when the time came, I chose to recant. I also believe that Labor's statements now and just six months ago are ingenuous and dishonest—that is, Labor stated they had an implacable right to implement the former bill. It was two steps too far at the time, and it is certainly going to be reconsidered in this revision tonight.

The current act has been clearly defined by the minister and the speakers, and I will not repeat it. The amendments have similarly been detailed. In the interests of clarity, the effect of the amendments is to provide for a legitimate scheme to register relationships. It is consistent with terminology used in other state jurisdictions and, critically, it ensures the rights of those couples who have registered their relationships as a partnership to be preserved. The Attorney-General has clearly detailed all the other changes and consequential amendments.

I, too, am a Catholic. I wish that I were a better one. I am a father of four adult children, sadly having lost a child now 24 years ago. I understand that life has its ups and downs and that no-one is perfect. In fact, all humans are flawed and it is for their flaws that we either like or dislike one another.

The world has changed, as it should, and always will. Decisions we make have to reflect our times, our needs and our circumstances. Everyone has a right to be happy, to have security such as a roof over their heads and to be recognised for their individual contribution. I realise that over 10 per cent of the population is homosexual and many of our relatives have that as a tick-box option in their profiles. It is not for me to declare that a key basic aspiration of theirs can be extinguished after a democratic

decision was made to grant it to them. But I do not believe that state sanctioned marriage, as I understand it, fits the criteria. Therefore, in a conventional approach, it is equitable and honest to excise that term from the legislation that is the current law.

I am sympathetic to those who will be affected by these changes and I understand their reactions. But the change will disappoint a small but vocal minority and will appease a more silent, anxious majority. On both sides they have compelling reasons to feel so strongly. I know young people are keen on change. My 19-year-old daughter—who is caring for my sister-in-law's foster-children tonight whilst she and her husband are out having a break—is concerned, too, about this bill and wants to know what her father might be doing in the debate, and I am sure there are plenty of others feeling the same. The world is imperfect. We do not all have choices, and sometimes what few choices we have are not that attractive. I learnt one big thing as a child in a Catholic school—last night we had the Archbishop of the Catholic Church, Mark Coleridge, here, whom I deeply respect, and he talked about the values in Catholic schools—that is, often that greatest unacknowledged human virtue is forgiveness. It enables a person to move on with their lives, others in theirs and harmony again prevails.

The series of amendments in this bill is a compromise. If they offend anyone, please forgive them. The progression to a more tolerant world via this bill might just help a solitary soul left alone after the passing of a life partner, with the ability to live in their home free of transfer stamp duty—if that was only one thing—by virtue of the registered relationship. I respect all those who find this too difficult and I ask that they embrace the change. Try to understand what it is that makes this bill fair and then I can reassure them that their integrity remains intact irrespective of what relationships they may find themselves in. I support the bill and I urge all members to do the same.

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—KAP) (9.41 pm): I rise to speak against the Civil Partnerships and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, rushed in by the LNP last night, which endorses former Treasurer Andrew Fraser's civil union legislation. Six months ago every LNP member voted against this legislation. Six months ago the LNP accused the ALP of rushing this legislation over a two-week period. The LNP is steamrolling this through in less than 24 hours and it is completely unacceptable. A value is a value. A belief is a belief. A belief stands the test of time, whether it is from 500 years ago or five days ago. I, along with millions of Christians, take offence at the Premier stating that our views are outdated and I request that on the parliamentary record in this House the Premier make a formal public apology to the Queensland Christian community.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr KNUTH: I want to read an extract from an article in which Catholic Archbishop Mark Coleridge urges the LNP to—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! I cannot—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I cannot hear. There is too much audible noise. I will take the point of order.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The Attorney-General keeps interrupting. He is not sitting in his designated seat. I ask you for your ruling.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Attorney-General has a choice—either to sit quietly in that seat or to return to his seat if he wishes to interject. I call the member for Dalrymple.

Mr KNUTH: I will now read an extract of an article, and it states—

Archbishop Mark Coleridge of Brisbane has appealed to the Liberal National Party to uphold a promise made before the recent Queensland state election to repeal the previous Government's civil partnerships legislation.

It continues—

'It is not at all clear to me or to the Church I represent that it requires any kind of registration or civil partnership, let alone some kind of same-sex marriage.'

It continues—

'The Catholic Church is disturbed by anything that reduces traditional marriage to just one among a number of equally valid or invalid options; and registration, civil partnerships and same-sex marriage do that with differing degrees of intensity' ...

It continues—

'To reduce marriage in that way would be to do a real disservice to the common good.'

I table that article.

Tabled paper: Article from *The Catholic Leader*, dated 24 June 2012, titled 'Push to repeal legislation grows' [\[390\]](#).

It continues—

'The Church does not claim ownership of marriage, but we do have a strong sense of responsibility for the common good, which I do not doubt the Premier and his Government share.'

'That is why I have contacted them, asking that they vote to repeal the civil partnerships legislation in toto.'

I also table an article from the *Australian* on 21 June 2012 which states—

But addressing an ACL gathering in Brisbane on Sunday night, Mr Newman said 'if we get into government and can (repeal the law), we will repeal it.'

Tabled paper: Article from the *Australian*, dated 28 February 2012, titled 'Campbell Newman "panders to Christians" on repealing civil unions' [391].

An article from the *Courier-Mail* from 28 February 2012 states—

The LNP membership across the state wanted civil unions repealed, the president of the party Bruce McIver says.

Mr McIver, in what he says will be his only campaign interview, said the LNP's state council voted against the civil unions last year and that reflected the view of the party's 14,000 members.

If he supported the views of members opposite, I would be supporting them tonight as well.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Courier-Mail*, dated 28 February 2012, titled 'Video exclusive: Bruce McIver reveals LNP's challenges' [392].

Not once did the LNP say during the election that it would retain the register of same-sex relationships, and it is like listening to the Labor Party all over again! The Assembly of God community opposes this bill. The Catholics oppose this bill. The Mormons oppose this bill. The Baptists oppose this bill. The Australian Family Association opposes this bill. Family Voice opposes this bill. The LNP membership opposes this bill. The LNP state council opposes this bill. LNP President, Bruce McIver, opposes this bill. Katter's Australian Party opposes this bill, and I oppose this bill.

 **Hon. MF McARDLE** (Caloundra—LNP) (Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (9.46 pm): Let the record show that the member for Dalrymple supports the law as it currently stands—the same man who turned his back on the LNP not all that long ago and ran with his tail between his legs. I listened to the contribution by the member for South Brisbane, and I could not believe it when she used the phrase 'Andrew Fraser's leadership'. 'Andrew Fraser's leadership'! How high is that dollar stack at the moment, Premier?

Mr Newman: One hundred and sixty!

Mr McARDLE: One hundred and sixty kilometres. That is the leadership of Andrew Fraser! That is what he led this state to via his magnificent leadership! Andrew Fraser won his seat in the campaign on 7 February 2004, and from that day until late in 2011 he never raised an issue in relation to same-sex couples—never said a word in relation to same-sex couples. Suddenly with an election looming, he leapt into the chamber all agog with a bill that he thought just might get him and the Labor Party over the line. There is no doubt it was a ruse. It was a political ploy to look for votes from a man who, through his own leadership, had sunk this state into incredible debt. So please, member for South Brisbane, do not try to con us with the leadership of Andrew Fraser. The man was a dud and he only did it for a stunt and nothing else.

It is also true that the member for South Brisbane was up in the gallery tonight. Does anybody here believe that the member was not up there stirring the possum?

Ms TRAD: I rise to a point of order.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! All members need to cease interjecting until I hear this point of order.

Ms TRAD: I have placed on record exactly what I was doing. I find those remarks personally offensive and I ask for them to be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I heard no personal offence in that. There is no point of order.

Mr McARDLE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Perhaps the member could identify what it was that was personally offensive.

Ms TRAD: I found the remarks that he made that I was up there inciting the crowd personally offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr McARDLE: I rise to a point of order. I never used the word 'inciting' at all.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member has asked for a withdrawal. Perhaps the minister might feel that he could withdraw and we can move on. But I do make the point to the member for South Brisbane that I will not be tolerant—

Ms Palaszczuk: Is that as good as it gets?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition! I warn the Leader of the Opposition under 253A. I will not be tolerant of points of order if they turn out to be frivolous. I will warn the member on the next occasion if it does turn out to be frivolous. On this occasion I have asked the minister to withdraw.

Mr McARDLE: I withdraw. There is no doubt that the member was in the gallery. There is no doubt that the gallery erupted into vocal violence. Those are two distinct but accurate facts and I put on record now that the member is now smiling. Let this chamber come to its own conclusions as to a connection between those two facts. Let this chamber judge the member upon those two facts. Everybody in this House acknowledges the right to demonstrate and to also put their point of view across. However, what we saw tonight was an absolute disgrace. I believe it is a clear indication of the ALP's attitude towards democracy in this state. They will use any trick, any method, any way to try to get their message across no matter who it hurts or who suffers because of it.

The member also said some other things which I think are absolutely appalling. In some manner she was trying to compare this bill to what occurred in Nazi Germany before World War II.

A government member: Shame!

Mr McARDLE: That is an absolutely shameful situation and a shameful statement. Last night the member stood in this House and claimed that the LNP did not care for children. Now she is trying to connect the atrocities of Nazi Germany to this chamber, and that is an appalling situation, a disgusting situation and a situation that we have come to expect from the member over and over again. It is hard to believe that a member can be so full of hate and hatred that she can stand and make an allegation along those lines. It is an appalling slight on her character but, more importantly, an appalling slight on the ALP for preselecting her to stand for the seat of South Brisbane. That member should be apologising for what she has said in this chamber, both tonight and last night, but I guarantee she will not be doing so.

What the ALP do best is twist the truth and take any trick, take any method, take any plan to achieve their own goals. Unfortunately, that is epitomised in the member for South Brisbane and her attitude to this chamber and how things should be conducted. When this chamber voted on the act in late 2011 the LNP made it clear that it opposed the terms of the bill as it then stood, and one of the basic reasons was that it mimicked marriage. The LNP policy is very clear: we do not support same-sex marriage—it is as simple as that—and neither does Julia Gillard, neither does the Prime Minister. However, I have not heard one member of the ALP on their feet tonight condemning her for her stand. I did not hear one member of the ALP saying that she was wrong in any way, shape or form. They are selective in whom they attack and do not attack. They do not attack the Prime Minister because she is one of them, but they are prepared to attack anybody else on this side of the House who holds a different point of view. Hypocrisy upon hypocrisy upon hypocrisy—and that is the ALP.

In the election campaign the LNP made it quite clear that we would review this act if we were elected but we also made it very clear that we were aware that rights were enacted as a consequence of the act coming into force and that we would find a balance between the two and move forward in that vein, and that is exactly what we did. We looked at the act. We took on board the fact that marriage between a man and a woman is what the LNP believes in and not same-sex marriage. We took that principle on board and the bill tonight does three things. One, it affirms the opposition to a process that mimics marriage. That is, it opposes a process that puts in place a ceremony and a divorce application procedure, as exists under the current act. Secondly, it provides for continuity of recognition of the rights of people who are registered under the terms of the current act and, thirdly, it allowed further couples, both same-sex and male-female couples, to register under the act and gain the rights achieved by way of registration. In my opinion, this particular bill that we are debating tonight upholds the spirit of the legislation; it upholds the spirit of allowing a couple—same-sex, male or female—to register their relationship and thereby acquire rights under the terms of the act that flow as a consequence thereof.

Everybody in this chamber knows men and women who are either gay or heterosexual. We all know people like that. We all have had conversations with them. I can guarantee that everybody in this House will have had conflicting stories given to them based upon who they talk to. Gay men and women have said to me that they are torn between whether the act does anything at all, whether they want to use it and whether it is rubbish. Quite clearly only 600 couples have registered under the terms of this act. Of those, 158 are heterosexual. Therefore, 451 gay couples have used the act, but there are thousands of gay couples out there. I do not think that trying to say that a bill that guarantees gay couples the right of registration of its own merit is sufficient to constitute continuation of the act. In my opinion, what the act does do is secure those rights for those people who wish to utilise the terms thereof.

Sadly, the debate tonight has focused purely on the fact of same-sex relationships to the detriment of the rights garnered by couples who register under the terms of the act. That is the true purpose of this act. At the end of the night the LNP had made a statement very clearly during the election campaign as to what we were going to do. There should be no surprises. We made it absolutely crystal clear that we would review this act. We went out there on the election campaign and made that commitment to the electorate over and over again. What we did was take a balanced perspective. We understood the rights that had been given by the terms of the act to those people who had made an application and were registered and we secured those rights but then further went on to secure and garner rights for other people who wish to use the terms of the act. The ALP have tried to turn this into a

same-sex relationship issue. It is not; it is the issue of rights being garnered for people who want to use the terms of the act. The bill we are debating tonight simply puts in place a common-sense alteration of the terms and secures rights for many other couples for years to come. I support the bill.

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (9.58 pm): I rise in the House to make a contribution to the debate on the Civil Partnerships and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I would like to support the comments made by my colleague the member for Dalrymple in the strong contribution he has made this evening. It was the contribution of a man with a backbone and one who will always stand for what is right, regardless of the heckling he will cop. He is a great representative for his community and an example for everyone in this House who wishes to contribute honourably to the parliament.

Let us be clear about what we are debating today. To put it simply, the government has introduced a bill that will allow government recognition of same-sex partnerships. It does not matter whether people call them civil unions, registrations, partnerships or anything else; it is the same thing.

This is an attack on marriage and therefore I will oppose it, just as I would have opposed Labor's Civil Partnerships Bill brought in last year. I am dead against it. Let us be clear about who stands where on this issue. It is a fact that two parties went to the Queensland people at the last election with a policy opposed to civil unions. Then we had an election. It is now a fact that one of those parties has since changed its position. I am happy to be in the party that has not lost its values or changed its spots or deceived Queenslanders to back an unfortunate Labor policy. I am happy to be in the party that has maintained its position in accordance with core values and principles and will continue to do so in the future.

 **Mr GIBSON** (Gympie—LNP) (9.59 pm): I rise because tonight has not been one of the finest nights of the Queensland parliament. What occurred in the gallery tonight we can very clearly put down to what occurs when a delicate issue is hijacked politically and becomes a political stunt. What occurred tonight, and the very clear unrest and distress that those people in the gallery felt, can be traced back to the manner in which this issue was hijacked for political purposes last year. What we saw with those seeds being sown in 2011 resulted in what occurred during the election campaign, with Katter's Australian Party running homophobic ads and a new low in Queensland politics. It is not appropriate for us as legislators, for us as people who represent all Queenslanders regardless of their sexual orientation or regardless of their faith, to adopt a language that is so politically charged that it results in what we saw in our parliament tonight.

We heard from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that tonight is the winter solstice. What that means is that tomorrow the sun will shine a little bit longer than it did today. It will do so not because of anything that occurs here but because for millennia that is how it has occurred. For millennia people have fallen in love; for millennia people have fallen out of love. And for millennia legislators will deal with difficult issues. Our role is to deal with this issue in a manner that is befitting its seriousness. I hope that the House will continue its debates in such a manner.

 **Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—Ind) (10.01 pm): I rise to participate in this debate on the Civil Partnerships and Other Legislation Bill. Last night when the Attorney-General introduced this bill into parliament and he moved that it be declared an urgent bill, bypassing the standard committee process, I asked about the reason for the urgency. *Hansard* shows his response was words to the effect that this is only a couple of pages and I would have time to look at it. On page 4 of the explanatory notes, under the heading 'Consultation', the Attorney-General says—

Consultation on the Bill has not been undertaken. However, the Act was the subject of the consideration by the relevant Parliamentary Portfolio Committee prior to its passage with public submissions sought and public hearings conducted. The Liberal National Party Government made an election commitment to review the Act with the possibility of amendments to repeal or partially repeal the Act being publicly made.

That is the case. Since the election we have heard the government and a number of ministers explain the urgency of various bills being rushed into parliament because they were part of the government's 100-day commitment. I went and looked at the Premier's 100-day commitments and nowhere in those 100-day commitments is there any reference to the need to rush through this amendment tonight.

The previous speaker, the member for Gympie, was pointing fingers and complaining that the disruption in the chamber was a direct result of not the Liberal National Party but the opposition. We can all blame someone else for the action. My view is that one of the reasons we had the disruption in the chamber was that this government has shown it is as bad as other governments in terms of the excesses we have seen in the past. There was no need for this matter to be introduced at half past eight last night and debated and put to bed at—what?—just after 10 o'clock tonight. In less than one day it is introduced and guillotined.

The Premier said in his first speech in parliament, 'In making our case to Queenslanders for election we made five pledges,' and the fourth pledge was 'to restore accountability in government, which has been so sadly lacking and has caused Queenslanders to lose faith in their leaders'. There is no doubt that was true. What did we see when we saw the last government introduce the new committee system? We saw member after member from the government and the opposition stand up

and say that it was the new way for accountability of the future governments of Queensland because, unless there were an exceptional circumstance, when bills were going to be introduced into parliament they would go to a committee for consultation. The Attorney-General says, 'There is no need for consultation. We had it all during the last parliament.' Yet in the Attorney-General's dissenting report to that committee report he criticised the lack of consultation. He cannot have it both ways. I say to the Premier: tonight you are showing you are just as bad.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! Member for Nicklin.

Mr WELLINGTON: I withdraw the word 'you'.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member will address his comments through the chair.

Mr WELLINGTON: I will rephrase it. I believe that tonight the Premier has clearly marked himself as being prepared to exercise the powers that he has simply because he has the capacity to exercise those powers. I believe that the Premier is showing to all Queenslanders that if there is a capacity to override the standard accountability checks and balances that were put in place by the last parliament the Premier will do so. I think that is wrong.

I believe there was no urgency for this bill to be rushed through parliament in less than a day. There was no urgency whatsoever. There was all that waffle about me being able to read it overnight. What about giving members a chance to consult with their constituents? We have seen angry people in the gallery because I believe they think they have been taken for granted and no-one is interested in their views, whether they are right or wrong. There was a rally a couple of weeks ago of people who were concerned about the issue. Members in this House have had no opportunity to leave this chamber, go to their constituents and ask them what they think about the bill before us, not about the last one.

At the last election there was a strong campaign waged against me by people who did not like the position I took in the last parliament when the bill was debated. As I said at that time, I did what I thought was right. Tonight again I am going to do what I think is right. I think Queenslanders deserve the right, unless there are extenuating circumstances, to have bills that are introduced into parliament go to a committee so that they have an opportunity to have input. I believe that is a right that the last parliament, and all members in the last parliament who supported the introduction of the new committee system, believed would be exercised in the future. I think tonight we are seeing the government abuse the power that Queenslanders gave it only a short time ago and I will be supporting the opposition tonight. I am not afraid of taking that position.

Government members interjected.

Mrs Miller: Shut your mouth.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member will withdraw the comment.

Mrs MILLER: I withdraw the comment.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I warn the member under 253A.

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (10.08 pm), in reply: I thank members for their contributions to the Civil Partnerships and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, which we have debated tonight. At the start of this debate, I could only have asked that those in the public gallery and those in this place retain a level of decorum and respect each other's views in this debate. However, that is hard to do when members of this place use political opportunism and rally the gallery against what is being debated in this place tonight. Of course, I am talking about the member for South Brisbane. Members may like to know who, two weeks ago, was rallying the troops out the front at another protest. It was the member for South Brisbane. In this place the honourable member for Redcliffe, Mr Driscoll, said some very cautious words that the member for South Brisbane used outside. I am being cautious with paraphrasing, but I think it was along the lines that the member for South Brisbane was attacking people in this place for particular religious beliefs.

Ms TRAD: I rise to a point of order. It is personally offensive. It is incorrect. I find the remarks offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am going to ask the Attorney-General to withdraw. Again I remind the member that, if she makes points of order that end up being frivolous, I will warn her.

Mr BLEIJIE: For the benefit of members, I will run through some elements of the bill and then I will come to the actual debate tonight and respond to the issues raised by members in the House, particularly those opposite. I have a little more to say on the contribution of the member for South Brisbane and the role she played in that very undemocratic and unparliamentary performance tonight.

Mrs MILLER: I rise to a point of order. The member for Waterford and the member for Yeerongpilly were also up in the gallery tonight.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. I have warned the member for Bundamba already. Under standing order 253A, I now ask her to withdraw from the chamber for one hour.

Mrs MILLER: Mr Deputy Speaker, the comments made up there I find personally offensive. I ask for them to be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member will leave the chamber.

Whereupon the honourable member for Bundamba withdrew from the chamber at 10.11 pm.

Mr BLEIJIE: I wonder what the opposition leader thinks of the performance of her members in this place tonight. It is unbelievable. This bill fulfils the government's election commitment to review the Civil Partnerships Act 2011. The act currently provides for the relationship registration scheme similar to schemes operating in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania. However, the current Queensland act, in providing the option for the couple to have a legislatively sanctioned ceremony prior to the registration of the couple's relationship, wrongly departs from the relationship registration scheme and other legislation in other states around Australia. The state sanctioned ceremony has been perceived by many people in Queensland to mimic marriage. That is inappropriate, as a registered relationship under the act is not a marriage. Marriage is provided for under the Commonwealth Marriage Act 1961 as the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life. Providing for marriage is the jurisdictional responsibility of the federal government, not the state. Marriage is a unique institution to uphold and support as it fosters monogamous lifelong partnerships that are the foundation of many family units.

Let me make it abundantly clear: the LNP does not support same-sex marriage. However, equally important to the Liberal National Party government is acknowledging that many de facto couples experience difficulties in proving the existence of their relationship, both in a social and a legal context. For this reason, this government is seeking to amend the act so that the relationship registration provisions are retained, but the provisions in the act that allow a couple to make a declaration of their intention to enter into a civil partnership declaration ceremony are removed. Also removed are any ceremonial related provisions such as the provisions relating to the establishment of civil partnership notaries. That scheme will be gone and I have instructed the department to refund the application fees that notaries paid for that provision. These amendments greatly improve the act and make its purpose clear.

The bill also removes from the act the requirement for a District Court order to terminate the relationship. These provisions may be seen to equate to the legal procedure to dissolve a marriage. This onerous legal process is not appropriate to terminate the registration of a relationship that is not a marriage. It is not appropriate for a court to make an order to remove this application. The current termination provisions will be replaced with a simplified administrative process of an application for termination made to the Registrar General for Births, Deaths and Marriages. These amendments will bring the act into line with the termination provisions in relationship registration schemes that exist in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania.

As I mentioned before, the purpose and objectives of the act are to provide de facto couples with a legal process for recognition of their relationship. For this reason, the bill will change the name of the act and the terminology used in the act to more appropriately reflect the nature and its purpose. The act will now be known as the Relationships Act 2011 and the legal relationships created will be called 'registered relationships'. A member of the registered couple will be a registered partner. What was previously called the 'cooling-off period' will be known as a 'registration period'. Again, this terminology is similar to that used in other interstate relationship registration schemes—incidentally, that were set up by Labor governments in other states.

The bill includes several transitional provisions that preserve the rights of couples who have registered civil partnerships or have lodged an application to register their relationship as at the commencement date of the bill, whether or not a ceremony has taken place. A registered civil partnership will be taken to be a registered relationship and all the rights accorded to that couple will be continued. An application lodged under the act, but not yet finalised as at the commencement date of the bill, whether or not a ceremony has been requested, will be taken to be an application lodged under the Relationships Act and will be registered in accordance with the provisions of the Relationships Act. Further, any document issued that refers to a civil partnership will be taken to be a reference to a registered relationship. Therefore, for those couples who have a civil partnership certificate, there is no need for those couples to be reissued with a new certificate. As a result of the change in the name of the act and the terminology used, this bill includes amendments to the various acts and regulations that will ensure those acts and regulations reference the new title and the terminology.

It is fair to say that this issue is one of contention across Queensland. It was contentious when the original legislation was introduced last year. It was contentious right across Queensland. To a certain extent I think it was contentious because of the way it was introduced. On this side of the House, we accept that there are wide-ranging views and we respect those views. We have seen far too often—and we saw it in the House tonight—that on the one hand people claim equal rights and equality, but, on the other hand, they have such a disregard for other people's rights, responsibilities, opinions or views.

What is not contained in the bill but is a government commitment is the renaming of the Office of Births, Deaths and Marriages. The Liberal National Party has listened to that issue and taken it on board. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General will be proceeding to change the name of the Office of Births, Deaths and Marriages to a name that more appropriately reflects what the office of Births, Deaths and Marriages in fact does. Of course, we know it becomes a registration office of many different documents. The LNP gives a commitment to Queenslanders that the name of that office will change. It is not contained in this bill, but I am anticipating that in the not-too-distant future, if any legislative changes are required, that office will no longer be named the office of Births, Deaths and Marriages but will be known by a new name.

Secondly, in the correspondence that the honourable the Premier and government members received regarding this debate there were two confusing issues, one of which was marriage and one of which was surrogacy. This bill is not about marriage. The federal government and the federal parliament are dealing with that issue. I know the Labor Party is dealing with it in quite difficult situations. I do not think the Prime Minister even supports that form of marriage. We should let the federal parliament debate marriage under the Commonwealth Marriage Act. What we are debating is a registration scheme to allow couples the right that they currently have in existing law but cannot prove or have difficulty proving—that is, the issue of marriage.

The second issue is surrogacy. In this debate and in the correspondence that the government received with regard to this debate there was much talk about mixing these issues with surrogacy. I can also advise the House tonight that the government will be changing the surrogacy laws in the future. We will be introducing amendments similar to those introduced by the honourable member for Southern Downs when he was the shadow minister. We will be repealing the provisions in the Surrogacy Act that deal with same-sex couples, de factos of less than two years and singles. That was a clear commitment given many years ago when that original debate took place. The government will proceed to amend the Surrogacy Act.

What we are also going to deal with is the other issue that that bill dealt with and that is parentage presumptions and parentage orders. Honourable members will recall at the time that the member for Southern Downs supported two lesbian women, who had a natural birth, both having parentage orders. I make it absolutely clear that going forward the government will be amending the provisions around altruistic surrogacy and the Surrogacy Act to repeal the provisions with respect to same-sex couples, de factos of less than two years and singles. That is the policy position we took years ago when we debated the Surrogacy Act.

I will turn to the debate and the contributions of members opposite. I would like to address some of the concerns raised. I will start with the concerns of the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition talked about this passing without real debate. I have said it in this place, and I will say it again: what hypocrisy for the seven opposite to come in here and talk about urgency and legislation passing without real debate.

Can I remind the Leader of the Opposition what her government did with regard to the debate on the Civil Partnerships Bill last year. Do honourable members recall how the government advised that they were going to proceed with civil partnerships in Queensland? It was on the *7.30 Report* on the ABC. The member for Mount Coot-tha did an interview and dropped the bombshell. They were a dying government and they knew it. For the benefit of new members, the real story was that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General had in fact drafted the legislation. The honourable Attorney at the time, Paul Lucas, took it to cabinet and was rolled. The only way that Andrew Fraser could get it through was to introduce it as a private member's bill.

So do not come into this place and talk about real debate and democracy, because that was broken to the Queensland public on the *7.30 Report* on the ABC. If that is how they announce issues which were to divide the conservative side of politics in Queensland—

Ms Trad: Private members' bills.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection. For the benefit of the member, because she was not here at the time, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General drafted the bill. We had that confirmed in the committee process. It was drafted in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. When a member has a private member's bill the department does not draft it. The Office of Parliamentary Counsel drafts it. I say to the member, with all respect, because she was not in this place at the time, that this went through the committee process where we debated that and got to the bottom of the issue that the bill was drafted by the bureaucrats in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. That is not the ordinary course of events for a private member's bill.

What happened was that Paul Lucas took this to cabinet and was rolled. Andrew Fraser was a little worried about his seat in Mount Coot-tha and Grace Grace was a little worried about her seat in Brisbane Central.

Mr Emerson interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: They should have been concerned but for the wrong reasons, I might add. After it was announced on the *7.30 Report* four days passed and then we had a bill in this parliament. After this most contentious issue was announced on the *7.30 Report* four days passed and we had a bill in parliament.

I can remember the Deputy Premier coming in here with his private member's bill. They were meant to be introduced during the two minutes. Guess what? The then government suspended standing orders and introduced it the day before it was debated.

Mr Cripps: To make sure he could get on telly!

Mr BLEIJIE: To make sure he could get on the television that night. Do not come in here with those disgraceful tones and say, 'The hypocrisy of this. You are letting this be debated. There is no real debate.' If members look at history to see how those opposite introduced this most contentious piece of legislation at the start they will fully understand and appreciate the issue.

The member for South Brisbane is over there shaking her head. If she does not believe me she should read the transcript of the committee process. I know about this because I was on the committee that dealt with this bill and dealt with the issue at the time.

Can I also say to the Leader of the Opposition that one of the fundamental differences with this side of parliament is that we took our policy to an election. We took it to an election. The honourable the Premier and I said—I was the shadow minister at the time of the election—on many, many occasions that we would review the Civil Partnerships Act. We said we would look at repealing it, but we would not want to leave people in legal limbo. We are doing that. We are actioning that commitment tonight.

No-one can argue that they ought not have known what the Liberal National Party would have done in government. We made it clear. The difference is that the former member for Mount Coot-tha based his whole campaign on this issue. We would have thought the Treasurer at the time would have been able to base his campaign on economics, the state of our finances, the budget, debt recovery and having good plans for the future, but he could not. He could only rely on this socially divisive issue. Let the record show he lost. Let the record show and reflect that the former member for Brisbane Central, Grace Grace, campaigned vigorously on this.

When we debated the bill in the committee we saw the member for Brisbane Central plot herself onto that committee on the day of the public hearing. We also saw the member for Brisbane Central bring her constituents into the committee. It was a staged operation at the time. The Liberal National Party will not apologise for going to the election and saying, 'We will review this act.' I was set a task by the honourable the Premier to review and look at the legal options for this. I did that. I discharged my duties and the government is now implementing those recommendations.

We listened. We had a clear commitment. I would like to say that the number of members on the Liberal National Party side of the House reflects the fact that we took a position to an election and it was voted on. I believe we are in a good position to be able to introduce and debate this legislation tonight.

The Minister for Health talked about his private member's bill and gave the rendition of the stage show that we had which was absolutely right. We know, quoting the Minister for Health, that 'they did not have the courage of their convictions to bring it in as a Labor Party bill'. During the debate at the time Andrew Fraser was out with hate and vile. It is reflective of what we have seen tonight from the member for South Brisbane. It is like looking in a mirror from a year ago. Andrew Fraser was in this chair. Incidentally, that is where I was sitting. It is like looking in a mirror when we hear the sort of vile that came out of her mouth tonight. We had the courage of our convictions. We took a policy to an election and we did not mislead the public. The member for Rockhampton quoted the petitioner, who in fact was the Labor Party—

Mr Newman: Someone wrote the speech for him.

Mr BLEIJIE: Well, somebody did write the speech.

Mr Newman: One of the 22 staff.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the Premier because I have been wanting to say this for a while but have not had the opportunity. I nearly asked myself a question this morning, but I will take the opportunity while I now have it. They always used to say that we were the most overresourced opposition in Australia's history. I remember when I was shadow Attorney-General I had a third of a staff member—Michael Reid, the chief of staff to the communities minister. I had a third. The shadow police minister at the time, John-Paul Langbroek, had a third and Tracy Davis—

Mrs Stuckey: It was me.

Mr BLEIJIE: Oh, Jann Stuckey. Tracy did, too. So it was four. How many staffers do the shadow ministers opposite have today?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: They are the most overresourced opposition in Australia's history.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! The Attorney will take his seat. I will hear the point of order.

Ms PALASZCZUK: This has absolutely nothing to do with the bill that we are debating here tonight. I ask the Deputy Speaker to rule on relevance. The Attorney-General is talking about a completely different subject matter—

Mr BLEIJIE: I am talking about the contributions of members' speeches.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No—a completely different subject matter that is not related to the bill here before us this evening.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Attorney to continue—he has the call—and to focus on the bill.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The member for Rockhampton wrote a speech—no, he did not write a speech. He had a speech written for him. He read some extract from who I think was the Labor Party candidate in the Surfers Paradise electorate saying that he was the principal petitioner. If we do the sums and we accept that argument that that petitioner had this great amount of support behind that petition, I might remind the honourable member for Rockhampton that the member for Surfers Paradise received the highest recorded primary vote in Queensland and the second highest two-party preferred vote. He went to the election with an LNP policy. I would have thought that the overwhelming support that the member for Surfers Paradise got was reflective of the election commitment.

The member for Gladstone talked about the political stunt. Member for Gladstone, I can do nothing but agree with you. It was a political stunt at the time. We knew it. We knew it was to divide the conservative side of politics. Their campaign fell flat, because it did not. We were at one.

The member for South Brisbane—I have a couple of pages on this! I was sitting here listening to the debate and the gallery had been warned I think at that stage three times. I looked up and the member for South Brisbane was clearly engaging in discussion with the gallery. Then we saw the most disrespectful thing I have ever seen in this public gallery.

Ms TRAD: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: I said 'engaging in conversation'. Get with the program!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Attorney-General will take his seat.

Ms TRAD: Mr Deputy Speaker, I find the comments offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting. I am going to ask the Attorney to withdraw and to continue.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker. What we saw tonight, with having the Queensland Police Service and parliamentary security taking people out of the public gallery in force, reminded me of something not too long ago—the Labor Party election strategy.

Mr Newman: Run by Jackie Trad.

Mr BLEIJIE: The Labor Party election campaign strategy, run by the member for South Brisbane. Is it any wonder we saw what we saw tonight because the member for South Brisbane—I was watching—

Opposition members interjected.

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

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. When the public was being taken out of the gallery, I was watching—

Ms Trad interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for South Brisbane will cease interjecting. The Attorney-General has the call.

Mr BLEIJIE: When the public were being forcibly removed from the gallery tonight, I was watching the members opposite. Six—the honourable member for Mulgrave is not here. Five were hanging their heads in shame over there. One was looking up there gleefully, laughing and loving what she was seeing.

Ms TRAD: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Attorney-General will resume his seat.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting. I will hear the point of order of the member for South Brisbane.

Ms TRAD: It is personally offensive. It is wrong. I ask him to withdraw it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume her seat. The Attorney-General has been asked to withdraw. Could the Attorney-General withdraw? The Attorney-General has the call.

Mr BLEIJIE: I will put on notice, though, that again I will write to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, because I said the member was smiling. This camera will reflect that smile. I will withdraw it, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I will be writing to you because it is hard to withdraw it when I am telling the truth.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Attorney-General will resume his seat. What I suggest is that the Attorney-General put that in writing to the Speaker and we will look at that. If the Attorney-General could continue.

Ms TRAD: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. That was a qualified withdrawal. I ask for an unqualified withdrawal for the personally offensive remarks.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting. Perhaps out of the good graces of the Attorney-General, he might consider withdrawing and perhaps moving on and rounding up this point.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I withdraw. Can I get to the second point out of a hundred I have on the member for South Brisbane's contribution. The member for South Brisbane can dish it out but she can't take it. The member for South Brisbane can dish it out but she can't take it.

Mr Newman: Poisonous campaign, lies—

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection of the Premier.

Mr Newman: I withdraw.

Mr BLEIJIE: I won't take that interjection.

Ms TRAD: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point order.

Mr BLEIJIE: The poisonous campaign—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Attorney-General will take his seat. I will hear the member for South Brisbane on a point of order.

Ms TRAD: I find the remark that the Premier made that I am a liar personally offensive and I ask it be withdrawn.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. I did not hear the comment. Your accusation is that—

Ms TRAD: The Premier called me a liar. It was clearly discernible to everyone on this side and I find it personally offensive. I ask that he withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Nobody here including the Clerk heard that. You cannot take a point of order on an interjection. The Attorney-General has the call.

Mr BLEIJIE: It was a very melodramatic performance by the member for South Brisbane. It is a shame her followers who were sitting in the gallery left a little early to be able to hear the contribution, though. Irony has no bounds.

I have said it in this place before—I have been in here for over three years now; many members have been here a lot longer than I have—but what we have continually seen now is a pattern emerging from the member for South Brisbane of how she performs in this place and the level to which she performs, with a little poison in the performance. I think it is disrespectful, and I would urge the opposition leader to rein in her member for South Brisbane and show some leadership.

Ms TRAD: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: Show some leadership to rein in—

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. There is a point of order.

Ms TRAD: The Attorney-General claimed that my conduct was disgraceful. I find those remarks personally offensive. I ask him to withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member finds the comments offensive. I ask the Attorney-General to withdraw.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw. I cannot recall the honourable Premier asking for withdrawals during the campaign. This was a man who went on with the job and talked positively about election commitments and the LNP. He talked positively. If we had made the same number of points of order, asked for the same number of withdrawals and took the same offence that the member for South Brisbane has taken

tonight, we would not have got through the state election campaign—we would still be going—because this man to my right, the honourable Premier, would still each day be asking for withdrawals of the poison that the Labor Party threw out in the election campaign. So I have said it. We have seen a pattern.

Mr MULHERIN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting. I want to hear the member's point of order.

Mr MULHERIN: The point of order is to do with relevance. What has this got to do with this piece of legislation? He is talking about the election campaign and the Premier's—

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Continue with your point of order.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let us hear the point of order.

Mr MULHERIN: The point of order is about relevance. The Attorney-General has spoken about the election campaign, particularly the bits about the Premier having to stand up every day and front the media. It has nothing to do with this piece of legislation.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am listening carefully to what the Attorney-General has to say. I am going to allow him to continue but I ask him to round up this point.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am debating the points that were raised in this place tonight and the context in which they were raised, and the members who I have been speaking about spoke in the debate. We had one member in this place talk about Nazi Germany and say that this bill was somehow relevant to that, and then she stood up and demanded withdrawals because she found things offensive. For goodness sake! She can dish it out but she cannot take it again.

I think this is our third sitting in parliament and we have seen the member for South Brisbane go down a level and into the gutter as she has debated important topics for Queenslanders and important issues in this House. I have said this before: we will be in a lot of trouble in a few years time as the member finds her ground in this place. She cannot go much further than the gutter—perhaps the sewer—but, if that is the type of politics that the member for South Brisbane plays in, we do not want to be a part of it. We reject that type of politics. We rejected that type of politics in the Labor Party campaign against—

Ms Palaszczuk: Speak to the bill.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am talking about the conduct of the member for South Brisbane tonight.

Ms Palaszczuk: No, you speak to the bill. You're the Attorney-General.

Mr BLEIJIE: I say this to the Leader of the Opposition: yes, I know I am the Attorney-General, and does the member know what I am doing right now? I am giving a reply to the contributions.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Those on my left will cease interjecting. The Attorney-General has the call.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition has been in here for many, many years, yet the best she contributed to the debate tonight was to tell me to move chairs three times—and then she still got it wrong. The level of debate from that side of the House was simply where I was sitting and where we were interjecting from and, as it turns out, I was in the right chair. That is no reflection on the Deputy Speaker for sending me to the side chair, but I am glad to be back in this chair.

I thank all honourable Liberal National Party members for the way in which they have conducted themselves in this debate tonight. The government had a clear policy and it was to review the civil partnerships legislation. What we are doing now is creating a legal certainty that de facto couples that have a relationship that exists in law nationally and through every state jurisdiction in Australia can prove that relationship easier by a registration certificate. We are taking away the ceremony, the termination provisions and the notaries because we want to keep faith with our constituents who voted for us knowing that we would take out the provisions that mimic marriage.

I just say this to Queenslanders who have been debating this publicly lately: all we are doing here by amending this legislation is allowing a de facto couple who have existing rights under law at the moment the opportunity to be able to prove that existence and if they want to have a civil ceremony or a commitment ceremony they can do it, but no longer will we have state government sanctioned ceremonies. Nothing stops people from privately celebrating that commitment. They can go about their business and have that private ceremony. What we are simply doing is affording them the legal protection and opportunity to prove the existence of that relationship for financial and health purposes. We are then keeping our commitment, which was a solid commitment. I thank members for their contributions.

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

AYES, 69—Barton, Bennett, Berry, Bleijie, Boothman, Cavallucci, Choat, Costigan, Cox, Crandon, Cripps, Crisafulli, Davies, C Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Dillaway, Douglas, Dowling, Driscoll, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, France, Frecklington, Gibson, Grimwade, Gulley, Hart, Hathaway, Hobbs, Holswich, Johnson, Judge, Kaye, Kempton, King, Krause, Langbroek, Latter, Maddern, Malone, Mander, McArdle, McVeigh, Millard, Minnikin, Molhoek, Newman, Ostapovitch, Powell, Pucci, Rice, Rickuss, Ruthenberg, Seeney, Shorten, Shuttleworth, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Symes, Trout, Walker, Woodforth. Tellers: Menkens, Smith

NOES, 9—Cunningham, Katter, Knuth, Mulherin, Palaszczuk, Trad, Wellington. Tellers: Byrne, Scott

Resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Clause 3—

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (10.53 pm): We will be opposing clause 3. Essentially, this clause changes the long title of the bill from 'civil partnerships' to 'registered relationship'. We believe that this change is fundamentally significant and it changes the whole nature of this scheme and is now just a registration scheme. I will not be mentioning this on all the clauses, but these comments will also apply to clause 8.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the point that the opposition will be opposing the long title but, with respect, it will obviously be passed. It is important that the name of the bill, in fact, reflect what the bill is about. This bill is about a registration scheme in Queensland. Therefore, we have to have a title that reflects the bill, hence why we are calling it the 'Relationships Act'.

Division: Question put—That clause 3, as read, stand part of the bill.

AYES, 69—Barton, Bennett, Berry, Bleijie, Boothman, Cavallucci, Choat, Costigan, Cox, Crandon, Cripps, Crisafulli, Davies, C Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Dillaway, Douglas, Dowling, Driscoll, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, France, Frecklington, Gibson, Grimwade, Gulley, Hart, Hathaway, Hobbs, Holswich, Johnson, Judge, Kaye, Kempton, King, Krause, Langbroek, Latter, Maddern, Malone, Mander, McArdle, McVeigh, Millard, Minnikin, Molhoek, Newman, Ostapovitch, Powell, Pucci, Rice, Rickuss, Ruthenberg, Seeney, Shorten, Shuttleworth, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Symes, Trout, Walker, Woodforth. Tellers: Menkens, Smith

NOES, 7—Cunningham, Mulherin, Palaszczuk, Trad, Wellington. Tellers: Byrne, Scott

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clause 3, as read, agreed to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! Honourable members, according to standing order 103, for all future divisions on this bill, the bells will ring for one minute only.

Clauses 4 to 8, as read, agreed to.

Clause 9—

 **Mr KNUTH** (11.01 pm): I move—

1 Clause 9 (Replacement of s 6 (How civil partnership is entered into))

Page 10, lines 5 to 8—

omit, insert—

'An adult male and an adult female who are in a relationship as a couple, and who meet the eligibility criteria mentioned in section 5, may enter into a registered relationship by having their relationship registered under section 9(1)(a).'

I table the explanatory notes to the amendment.

Tabled paper: Mr Shane Knuth's explanatory notes for his amendments [\[393\]](#).

This amendment is quite simple. It removes the provision for same-sex relationships and redefines a relationship as being between an adult male and adult female. This is the crux of the issue—that a relationship, a marriage, a registered union is between a man and a woman full stop. This has the support of nearly 14,000 LNP members. It was agreed to at the LNP state conference, this is what the LNP's Bruce McIver believes and it is the view of the majority of Queenslanders.

This is the position that the LNP took to the election: a marriage between a man and a woman is enshrined in federal legislation, which the minister said, but the biological family unit has always been the fabric that holds society together. This is why we are here in parliament—not to back party factional politics or attempt to further our careers, but to represent and stand up for what we believe deep down in our heart is right, and that is protecting an institution that has been in the foundation of every society since time immemorial. This is very simple; it is about a relationship being between an adult male and an adult female.

Mr Cox interjected.

Mr KNUTH: Is that not simple?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! If you are going to interject you need to take your seat.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We will be opposing the amendment put by the member for Dalrymple. We will not be supporting clause 9, which is essentially the replacement of section 6, titled 'How civil partnership is entered into'. This clause amends section 6 of the act to remove reference to couples being eligible to enter into a registered relationship by making a declaration of civil partnership under section 11 and having their relationship registered under section 12. This basically removes the ceremony that couples would take part in to recognise their relationship.

People have been participating in these ceremonies since they were permitted. In fact, the Uniting Church minister at Ashgrove, in the Premier's own electorate, has been tweeting about the fact that she will perform church blessing ceremonies for gay couples at her church. As the *Westside News* of 13 June reported—

An Ashgrove Uniting Church minister has promised to perform Christian blessing services for same-sex civil unions.

On Wednesday afternoon Reverend Iris Carden took to Twitter to declare: 'No ceremonies for civil unions? See me for a Christian blessing service. @theqldpremier has no authority over the church!'

When speaking to the *Westside News*, Rev Carden said her decision came down to the commandment to love your neighbour.

Mr BLEIJIE: The government will be opposing the amendment moved by the honourable member for Dalrymple. It is interesting to note that the member for Dalrymple voted with the Labor Party against the second reading, which effectively means that Katter's Australian Party supports the current civil partnerships legislation in Queensland. I think they got it right the second time when they ran out in a hurry, but I think they were a bit late. Let the record show that Katter's Australian Party supports the status quo because they voted against amendments, which means they support civil partnerships in Queensland and then they have the audacity to move an amendment to take out same-sex couples and replace it with 'a man and a woman'.

I say to the member for Dalrymple that his party should be unbelievably ashamed about the campaign that he ran during the state campaign. I know I have given a lot to the member for South Brisbane tonight; I will let it rest for a moment. The ad that Katter's Australian Party ran against the Honourable Premier—and if the member looks to his right he will see the honourable member for Mount Isa, who perhaps can just put in a phone call to his father—I think Katter senior apologised later for the ad and said that in hindsight he probably should not have run it.

Mr Springborg: It was the worst moment of his life.

Mr BLEIJIE: It was the worst moment of his life. They flip and change, they flop and change, they come to this side, they go to that side, they do not know if they are in the corner or out the back; they do not know where they have to be. I say that we know where we are. We are opposing the amendment moved. If honourable members want to look to anyone with homophobic views, they need only look to the far corner of the House over there.

As I said, Katter's Australian Party joined the Labor Party in the state campaign in trying to bring down a man of integrity by trying to run a spiteful campaign with innuendo, false information and untruths that, again, the Queensland public rejected and, ultimately, his leader rejected after the election. It is going to be interesting—

Mr Johnson: Who was the leader?

Mr BLEIJIE: Bob Katter senior.

Mr Elmes: That was Bob Katter senior, but the state leader—

Mr BLEIJIE: The state leader? The state leader was Aidan McLindon who, honourable members may recall, was in this place for a short period. It is good that we have a new member for Beaudesert now, a respectful member for Beaudesert. I am sure that I saw the former member for Beaudesert somewhere around the place today and in the gallery. I know that the honourable members in the corner representing Katter's Australian Party do not know if they are in or out or where they are voting tonight. The difficulty for them is that Aidan McLindon cannot be in the chamber writing them the notes on a chalkboard showing them how to vote.

It is going to be a very interesting federal campaign when Bob Katter runs for the Senate or whatever they want to do with Katter's Australian Party in Queensland. They will be asked the question, 'Do you support civil partnerships in Queensland?' How will they hold a position of 'no' when they voted for civil partnerships in Queensland tonight? They voted with the Labor Party. Is there any change? The government will be opposing the amendment moved by Katter's Australian Party.

Ms TRAD: As the opposition leader has already indicated, we also will be opposing the amendment moved by Katter's Australian Party. We will also be voting in opposition to the reworded section 6 as proposed in clause 9. This goes to the fundamental issue that people across Queensland find offensive about this piece of legislation. It is extinguishing a right—a right that this parliament bequeathed to same-sex couples in Queensland only a matter of months ago, a right that is now tonight being trampled on.

This is a backward step in the 21st century. For a modern parliament to be extinguishing a right to its citizens is an abomination and we will not be supporting this amendment.

Mr BLEIJIE: I make the point that the government will be opposing the amendment. I see a theme for the opposition with how they debate these bills now. They reject the bills. This is the second one I have had. I am hoping to get a day where they support something that I bring into the chamber, but I fear that day is a long way away. I do not think it will happen.

Ms Trad interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: We did support Labor bills in our time—many, many Labor bills that came through this place. For the benefit of the member for South Brisbane, there are two forms in Queensland, a form 15 and a form 18A. When one wants to enter a civil partnership under the current legislation they go to the registry and fill out a form 15. That allows them to have a registration and go through a cooling-off period. Or, alternatively, they could get a form 18A which is a declaration. In fact, it is called a notice of intention to enter into a civil partnership. They put that in and they have the option of having a ceremony attached to that.

Part of the amendments in this bill, and ultimately we will have the Relationships Act, does in fact get rid of the form 18A because it was our commitment that we would get rid of the parts that mimic marriage. As honourable members will know, under the federal legislation you have to give notice 30 days and not six months before a marriage. It is a provision that mimics marriage. We are keeping faith with our constituency in getting rid of those provisions. Therefore, I note the objection from the honourable member for South Brisbane but the government is not changing its position on that clause.

Mr KNUTH: The fact is that this bill has been rushed through and the people of Queensland have not been given time to talk to MPs about their position and what they believe deep down in their heart is right and wrong. The people who have been talking to me say they want civil unions thrown out. That was the promise by the LNP in the election campaign. During the then shadow minister's speech he criticised the Labor Party for rushing this through in two weeks. In this circumstance it is 24 hours. We can talk about the riff raff and run down Bob Katter, but this is about acknowledging what is a registered relationship and that is between a man and woman. You can criticise, you can cop flak, you can laugh, but this amendment that I am putting through is to acknowledge what is a registered relationship and that is between a man and woman. You have the choice. If you do not want to support it, do not support it, but that is my position and I believe that it is the position of the people who have lobbied me, including LNP members who are disappointed that you have not fulfilled your commitment.

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

Resolved in the negative under standing order 108.

Non-government amendment (Mr Knuth) negatived.

Division: Question put—That clause 9, as read, stand part of the bill.

AYES, 69—Barton, Bennett, Berry, Bleijie, Boothman, Cavallucci, Choat, Costigan, Cox, Crandon, Cripps, Crisafulli, Davies, C Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Dillaway, Douglas, Dowling, Driscoll, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, France, Frecklington, Gibson, Grimwade, Gulley, Hart, Hathaway, Hobbs, Holswich, Johnson, Judge, Kaye, Kempton, King, Krause, Langbroek, Latter, Maddern, Malone, Mander, McArdle, McVeigh, Millard, Minnikin, Molhoek, Newman, Ostapovitch, Powell, Pucci, Rice, Rickuss, Ruthenberg, Seeney, Shorten, Shuttleworth, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Symes, Trout, Walker, Woodforth.
Tellers: Menkens, Smith

NOES, 8—Byrne, Cunningham, Mulherin, Palaszczuk, Trad, Wellington. Tellers: Miller, Scott

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clause 9, as read, agreed to.

Clause 10—

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (11.20 pm): No doubt members will be aware that clause 10 amends section 7, which deals basically with the application for registration. This amendment is part of the process of removing the ability to hold a ceremony and thereby recognise a civil partnership, now to be called a registered relationship. My previous comments apply to this clause as well. We will be opposing clause 10.

Mr BLEIJIE: What a surprise! It is all right for the opposition leader to stand up to speak on every clause and say they have opposed it. They have already voted against the second reading. They are going to vote against the third reading. Can they not spare us all the trouble tonight—

Ms Trad: Do you want to go home?

Mr BLEIJIE: No, I do not want to go home. We are happy to be here. I make the point that if the opposition is voting against the bill in its entirety, why on earth would it vote against every clause? On the point that the Leader of the Opposition raises about deleting the provisions with respect to the declaration, yes, that is the government's policy. That is what we announced. That is what the bill is. I note the opposition's objection to it. It is an objection not worthy of any further debate.

Division: Question put—That clause 10, as read, stand part of the bill.

AYES, 69—Barton, Bennett, Berry, Bleijie, Boothman, Cavallucci, Choat, Costigan, Cox, Crandon, Cripps, Crisafulli, Davies, C Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Dillaway, Douglas, Dowling, Driscoll, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, France, Frecklington, Gibson, Grimwade, Gulley, Hart, Hathaway, Hobbs, Holswich, Johnson, Judge, Kaye, Kempton, King, Krause, Langbroek, Latter, Maddern, Malone, Mander, McArdle, McVeigh, Millard, Minnikin, Molhoek, Newman, Ostapovitch, Powell, Pucci, Rice, Rickuss, Ruthenberg, Seene, Shorten, Shuttleworth, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Symes, Trout, Walker, Woodforth. Tellers: Menkens, Smith,

NOES, 8—Byrne, Cunningham, Mulherin, Palaszczuk, Trad, Wellington. Tellers: Miller, Scott

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clause 10, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 11 and 12, as read, agreed to.

Clause 13—

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (11.26 pm): Clause 13 essentially deals with the omission of sections 10 to 12 of the act. Once again, those sections deal with the ceremony, which is why we will be opposing this clause. This clause removes the sections that allow a couple to advise of their intention to enter into a civil partnership and to make a declaration before a civil partnership notary of their intention to enter into a civil partnership with each other. It also removes those provisions in the act that allow registration of the relationship as a civil partnership after the declaration of the civil partnership ceremony by the Registrar General of Births, Deaths and Marriages. This effectively removes the ability of two people who love each other, irrespective of their sexuality, to hold a civil partnership declaration ceremony and to have that relationship thereby registered. This is an appallingly backward step for Queensland and it is discriminatory against those people who wish to participate in such a ceremony.

Mr BLEIJIE: I note the opposition's objection to the clause. I simply make the point, which was made during the debate, that if a couple wish to have a commitment ceremony they can do that. This does not hinder in any way anyone having any private or public ceremony they wish. They can go and have a commitment ceremony in a park or any other place they wish. With respect to the reference to the office of Births, Deaths and Marriages, I make the point again to honourable members in the House that the government's intention is to change the name of the office of Births, Deaths and Marriages. In the next couple of months, we will work to change the name of that office to reflect more of what the office does. The government will transition that amendment. We will be working on that in the weeks ahead.

Ms TRAD: I wish to contribute to the debate in terms of the opposition's argument against this particular clause. Thankfully, the Attorney-General acknowledged that same-sex couples can have whatever ceremony they like. The issue is that same-sex couples would like to have their relationships acknowledged and their ceremonies acknowledged and sanctioned by the state. That is at the heart of the issue we are debating tonight. It is at the heart of the amendments before us tonight. Many Queensland couples in a same-sex relationship travel abroad to places where they can actually have state sanctioned ceremonies and have their relationships acknowledged when they come back into this country. The issue is not that you allow them to go off and do something that is not sanctioned; it is that you are taking away their right to have their union celebrated and sanctioned by the state. That is offensive to the maximum.

Mr BLEIJIE: The state is not in the business of marriage. It is a federal responsibility. If the member wishes to pursue that line of argument, I suggest she picks up the phone and calls Julia Gillard to see what Julia Gillard thinks of gay marriage. I think the member for South Brisbane might get a rude shock. I do not think even all her pull as deputy state secretary of the Labor Party would change Julia Gillard's mind on that. We know that the federal Labor Party is bringing forward the debate on gay marriage in Australia, because it suspects it will lose it and it wants to get the debate happening, done and dusted. It does not want what has happened with the Queensland Labor Party and have this as a distraction in Canberra, as has been the case in Queensland. We know that all the Labor Party want this to become is a continual distraction. The Liberal National Party government will not be part of that distraction.

Ms TRAD: Because I am sure the Attorney-General is missing out on his Horlicks and is feeling quite tired, he did not quite hear me properly. I did say a state sanctioned ceremony. It has nothing to do with marriage; I am debating the bill. I am talking about state sanctioned ceremonies which the government is extinguishing in this amendment bill.

Mr BLEIJIE: Let me make it abundantly clear for the member for South Brisbane if she did not get it the first 100 times. The state is not in the business of state sanctioned ceremonies. We oppose state sanctioned ceremonies hence we are deleting them from the legislation.

Division: Question put—That clause 13, as read, stand part of the bill.

AYES, 69—Barton, Bennett, Berry, Bleijie, Boothman, Cavallucci, Choat, Costigan, Cox, Crandon, Cripps, Crisafulli, Davies, C Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Dillaway, Douglas, Dowling, Driscoll, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, France, Frecklington, Gibson, Grimwade, Gulley, Hart, Hathaway, Hobbs, Holswich, Johnson, Judge, Kaye, Kempton, King, Krause, Langbroek, Latter, Maddern, Malone, Mander, McArdle, McVeigh, Millard, Minnikin, Molhoek, Newman, Ostapovitch, Powell, Pucci, Rice, Rickuss, Ruthenberg, Seeney, Shorten, Shuttleworth, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Symes, Trout, Walker, Woodforth.
Tellers: Menkens, Smith

NOES, 8—Byrne, Cunningham, Mulherin, Palaszczuk, Trad, Wellington. Tellers: Miller, Scott

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clause 13, as read, agreed to.

Clause 14, as read, agreed to.

Clause 15—

Ms PALASZCZUK (11.35 pm): Clause 15 is very relevant to the discussions that we have had this evening in so far as civil partnerships, which are now called registered relationships, are terminated. The Attorney-General's explanatory speech explains that this is because the provisions mimic marriage because they require an application to a court to terminate the registration. The method under this amendment will be to make an application to the Registrar-General. The Civil Partnerships Act was never intended to mimic marriage. It was a system which allowed heterosexual or same-sex couples to hold a state sanctioned ceremony which recognised their relationship and then allowed the couples to register that relationship.

I note the comments made earlier in the House tonight by the member for Gladstone and the member for Nicklin that it would have been appropriate for this bill to have gone through the committee system. That is the proper process. If it had gone through the committee system all of these issues could have been discussed at length and we would have had a committee report tabled in the parliament which would have made recommendations to the House for its consideration. We will be opposing this clause.

Mr BLEIJIE: I note the opposition's opposition to the clause. The clause that is being amended obviously deals with the termination. The government gave serious consideration to how one terminates a civil partnership when one has entered into one or now a relationship registration once one has been entered into. We did consider this in detail. Lots of submissions on this particular issue were received by the offices of all members of parliament. Our commitment was clear. We would repeal the provisions that mimic marriage.

If we look at the existing termination provisions under the legislation we find that they say that the relationship had to have broken down over a continuous period of 12 months and you then have to apply to the District Court to have the application heard. That is very similar to a divorce situation where you apply to the Family Court or Federal Court and hence why the government is amending it to delete that particular provision.

What will happen instead is that a couple who wish to terminate a relationship will lodge an application. It is not as easy as the member for South Brisbane indicated—that is, that they simply rock into Births, Deaths and Marriages and lodge a piece of paper and they get out their termination. Firstly, they have to file an application and, secondly, in a transparent process they have to serve that application on their partner. The Registrar General will not terminate or register the termination of the relationship until such time as he or she is satisfied that the other party and the other particulars were in fact served. Then the bill sets out the process for serving documents. It is not simply a case of going in and deregistering a relationship. There is a process for serving documents on the party. The Registrar General must be satisfied that those elements were in fact satisfied before he or she terminates the relationship.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have a follow-up question to the Attorney-General.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. I want to hear the question.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have a question in relation to comments the Attorney-General has just made in relation to clause 17. I notice the Premier is quite tired and is yawning. My question is to the Attorney—

Honourable members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: You are bored.

Mr Newman: Bored with the Leader of the Opposition's nonsense.

Ms PALASZCZUK: So you do not expect that we should go through the normal processes of the parliament.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will speak through the chair.

Ms PALASZCZUK: This is called consideration in detail. This is actually a very important part of the processes of this parliament. The Attorney-General stated to the House that he had received in relation to clause 17 numerous submissions. I ask the Attorney-General to table those submissions, to explain in more detail who made those submissions to you and what they actually said. Of course those submissions would be part of the bill pack that is prepared for the Attorney-General. I now ask him to go through them for us, to explain them and to table them, thank you.

Mr BLEIJIE: The opposition leader would just love me to do that! Sorry to disappoint the opposition leader, but I am not going to do it. The reason I am not going to do it is that I think it has been pretty public for the last couple of weeks what our position is on this.

Ms Trad: It became public yesterday, the bill.

Mr BLEIJIE: The bill—but the announcement was made some weeks ago. Where was the member?

Ms Trad: You tabled the bill yesterday.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! The member on my left. Let the Attorney-General answer.

Mr BLEIJIE: Where was the member two weeks ago?

Mr Cripps: Plotting.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection of the honourable minister for natural mines—

Government members interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: All mines are natural! I take the interjection of the minister. The announcement was made a couple of weeks ago and the member for South Brisbane obviously did not hear it. She was sitting behind there plotting. It reminds me of Hitchcock's movie—someone can sing the theme song for me, because I have sung in this place once before and I will never make that mistake again, Deputy Premier! So we have the member for South Brisbane not listening for two weeks, plotting—as in Hitchcock's movie—behind the opposition leader because we know the honourable opposition leader ain't going to be there for too much longer.

The whole process, the whole show, the stage managed performance, the overresourced opposition staff members—I ask the honourable ministers who were shadow ministers in the former parliament: would it not have been a good situation for our shadow ministry had we been able to have two or three staffers sitting at the back there? We would have taken one!

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Those on my left.

Mr BLEIJIE: We would have taken one to be able to hand us the phone and look at the tweets going on tonight and what they are saying about the member for South Brisbane. Because that is what they base their politics on—social media. Whatever they are saying on Twitter must be true. Whatever they are saying on Facebook must be true. We saw just before the division the opposition leader's chief of staff not advising the honourable opposition leader but the member for South Brisbane! 'Look at this tweet. Look at this tweet.' Oh, I would have liked a time when we would have been an overresourced opposition when we could afford to have two or three staff members sitting to the right there—

Mr Springborg: Three each!

Mr BLEIJIE: Or three, or even half a one.

Mr Newman: The ABC want Jackie Trad. They don't want the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take that interjection. The Liberal National Party spoke about this issue throughout the election campaign. Until the cows came home we talked about this issue. We talked about it. We debated the former legislation. I think what Queenslanders want now from this government is to get on with the job of running Queensland, fixing the debt, paying down the debt. In fact, I inquired today following the revelations from the Treasurer this morning with respect to the money and how high is—

Mr Newman: Space.

Mr BLEIJIE: Space. I made inquiries with Richard Branson to see how much it would cost me to get up in space and have a look at the debt pile, because they tell me that the only other thing you can see instead of the Great Wall of China is the Labor Party debt built up by the seven dwarfs opposite!

Ms TRAD: In relation to clause 17, the particular reason we are opposing it is that it seeks to lower the bar in terms of terminating a civil union—now to be a registered relationship. What this clause seeks to do—

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. If I may, through you, assist the member, we are actually on clause 15, not 17. She has jumped ahead.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member can address the relevant clause, which is clause 15.

Ms TRAD: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, and, through you, I thank the Attorney-General for pulling me up on that. Clause 15 or clause 17—the intent is all the same. It is about lowering the bar. It is about extinguishing rights.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Those on my right. The member has the call.

Ms TRAD: As in most of the actions of this government to date, we are lowering accountability and governance in this state. We are extinguishing people's rights at a rapid pace. We are returning to the old National Party rule of old. That is what we are doing.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Those on my right will cease interjecting. The member has the call.

Ms TRAD: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am very interested in these submissions that the Attorney has spoken about at quite some length tonight. Obviously, he has received numerous submissions from a whole range of electorate offices, as he stated tonight, in relation to this particular bill. I think it would enhance our debate tonight, given that we have not had an opportunity to have this bill presented to a parliamentary committee, nor have we had an opportunity to talk to our constituents in detail about the fact—

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Those on my right. The member has the call.

Ms TRAD: Nor have we had the right to take the bill in its detail and go back to our constituencies and discuss with them that they are not entitled to have a state sanctioned ceremony and that in order to terminate their relationship they need nothing more than a mere form submitted with an application.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Those on my right will cease interjecting. We will all be able to finish earlier if we allow the member to finish her statement.

Ms TRAD: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. As I said, this clause is about lowering the bar. It is about saying that same-sex relationships are not as meaningful. They are not as valuable. They are easy come, they are easy go. Nothing could be further from the truth. When you look at a number of high-profile celebrity relationships that are entered into with much fanfare and much religious ceremony, some of them have lasted a matter of days or hours. I know people in same-sex relationships who have been together for decades. What you are saying in clause 15 is that their relationships are easily expired, they are less meaningful and they are not as important to the state. That is an abomination. I ask the Attorney-General to please assist our debate here tonight by tabling all of these submissions that he has received to inform his drafting of this bill, to inform his decision making around the cabinet table. Please, share it with us.

Mr BLEIJIE: Has the member for South Brisbane not connected her computer in her electorate office? Does she not receive submissions on a daily basis? Does she not receive emails from her constituents saying, 'We like this; we don't like that'?

A government member interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection. She has Facebook. In fact, I have seen her tweet. I will stand to be corrected, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I am sure that when the honourable the Premier and I made our announcement in terms of the government's commitment to do what we are doing today, I was told the member for South Brisbane tweeted that she was happy with what we had done.

Mr Newman: That's right.

Mr BLEIJIE: I will stand to be corrected but we will check the records.

Ms TRAD: I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I have never expressed any happiness with anything this government has done. I find that remark personally offensive and I ask it to be withdrawn.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw. I have lost all hope in trying to convince the member for South Brisbane.

Mrs MILLER: Mr Deputy Speaker—

Government members: Yeah!

Mrs MILLER: Thank you, I have returned. In all seriousness, I have been here in this parliament for six terms now. I am very concerned about a couple of things. The first thing is that last year, as everybody here knows, we had an all-party report in relation to the committee system which was, in fact, endorsed by the Minister for Health and the Deputy Premier. But today this particular bill has not been sent to the appropriate committee. Our only chance of being able to scrutinise this bill is on the floor of the parliament here. I think it is important for us—

Mr STEVENS: I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. This has absolutely no relevance to this clause and to this bill—

Mrs MILLER: It does.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member has just begun to speak. She has a little more time to get to it but I ask her to stay focused.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you very much for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. What I am saying here is that I want to know why the Attorney-General is hiding behind this parliament and why he is not going to table these submissions here. Is he suggesting that we have to use the Right to Information Act to get them?

Mr STEVENS: I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. The utterances from the member have nothing to do with this clause whatsoever.

Mrs Miller: Yes, they do.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am going to ask the member for Bundamba to speak to the clause very, very soon because it is about how civil partnerships are terminated. I have given you some latitude but you need to speak to the clause soon.

Mrs MILLER: In relation to clause 15, the Attorney-General referred to submissions. This bill never went to a committee, so we want the Attorney-General, on behalf of the people of Queensland, to please let the parliament know how many submissions there are and what is contained in them, and we want them tabled. We want to know which area of his department in fact analysed these submissions, which area of his department briefed the Parliamentary Counsel and how many LNP members have come to see him about this particular bill. We want to know all of this. Is he suggesting to us that we have to use the right to information legislation to get this information? This is information that we are entitled to get on the floor of this House because he did not send this bill to the committee.

Mr BLEIJIE: There is only one thing I remember in this House and that is that this member voted against her former Labor government's legislation. She voted against civil partnerships. So she should not come into this place and argue that she wants to see submissions on why we are changing it, because she voted against it.

Mrs MILLER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I brought up specific questions in relation to clause 15. What this—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is not a point of order. The Attorney-General has answered the question.

Division: Question put—That clause 15, as read, stand part of the bill.

AYES, 69—Barton, Bennett, Berry, Bleijie, Boothman, Cavallucci, Choat, Costigan, Cox, Crandon, Cripps, Crisafulli, Davies, C Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Dillaway, Douglas, Dowling, Driscoll, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, France, Frecklington, Gibson, Grimwade, Gullely, Hart, Hathaway, Hobbs, Holswich, Johnson, Judge, Kaye, Kempton, King, Krause, Langbroek, Latter, Maddern, Malone, Mander, McArdle, McVeigh, Millard, Minnikin, Molhoek, Newman, Ostapovitch, Powell, Pucci, Rice, Rickuss, Ruthenberg, Seeney, Shorten, Shuttleworth, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Symes, Trout, Walker, Woodforth. Tellers: Menkens, Smith

NOES, 8—Byrne, Cunningham, Mulherin, Palaszczuk, Trad, Wellington. Tellers: Miller, Scott

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clause 15, as read, agreed to.

Clause 16, as read, agreed to.

Clause 17—

Ms PALASZCZUK (11.58 pm): I will be very short in relation to this clause. Clause 17 basically omits that part of the act dealing with the civil partnership notary scheme. These are the provisions that allow someone to be registered as a civil partnership notary and perform the declaration ceremony. Of course, if declaration ceremonies are no longer allowed, then notaries to carry them out will no longer be allowed. However, my previous comments about the removal of this ceremony also apply to this clause, and the opposition will be opposing this clause.

Mr BLEIJIE: I note the opposition's opposition to this bit dealing with the civil partnership notaries. This is an amendment that has to happen, because if you get rid of the declaration ceremonies then you do not need to have people who are able to perform those ceremonies.

I make the point again that people will still be able to legally have their relationship recognised in Queensland following the passing or otherwise of this bill tonight. They can have a ceremony if they wish—and it can be anywhere they want all around Queensland—but it will not be a state sanctioned ceremony. We have deleted the provisions with relation to state sanctioned ceremonies; therefore, we delete the provisions with respect to the civil partnership notaries because they will not be required.

This is just one of the former government's policy failures—that is, how they introduced this legislation. It was announced on the *7.30 Report* and four days later we had a bill. I was on the committee and the committee process was rushed through as well. People objected to not being able to have an opportunity in that committee process. I think this issue has well and truly been debated in

Queensland. People understand and respect the position now that we ought to have registrations in Queensland, but that we need to let the federal parliamentarians deal with the federal marriage issue. I remember Andrew Fraser saying at the time, and the opposition leader has said it tonight, that it has nothing to do with marriage. Yet the former Deputy Premier who introduced that legislation said, 'It's the closest we can get to marriage and it's like marriage so that's why we're doing it.' We are getting rid of those provisions so therefore we do not need the notaries.

Ms TRAD: I also rise to speak in opposition to this clause. This clause, as the opposition leader has articulated, seeks to do away with notaries. The issue here, as the Attorney-General has pointed out, is that notaries are not needed if you are doing away with ceremonies—and you are doing away with ceremonies. The benefit of having a notary preside over your ceremony is that it gives it state sanctioning. It gives it a sense of being official. It is about having someone who is a registered celebrant who is able to bring the wisdom, the skills and the experience of presiding over ceremonies to the ceremony you want to have as a person in a relationship who wants that union recognised and celebrated by the state. It is important to same-sex people and it is important to heterosexual de facto couples to have someone who can preside over the union of their relationship on their special day in a way that is sanctioned by the state.

Division: Question put—That clause 17, as read, stand part of the bill.

AYES, 69—Barton, Bennett, Berry, Bleijie, Boothman, Cavallucci, Choat, Costigan, Cox, Crandon, Cripps, Crisafulli, Davies, C Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Dillaway, Douglas, Dowling, Driscoll, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, France, Frecklington, Gibson, Grimwade, Gulley, Hart, Hathaway, Hobbs, Holswich, Johnson, Judge, Kaye, Kempton, King, Krause, Langbroek, Latter, Maddern, Malone, Mander, McArdle, McVeigh, Millard, Minnikin, Molhoek, Newman, Ostapovitch, Powell, Pucci, Rice, Rickuss, Ruthenberg, Seeney, Shorten, Shuttleworth, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Symes, Trout, Walker, Woodforth.
Tellers: Menkens, Smith

NOES, 8—Byrne, Cunningham, Mulherin, Palaszczuk, Trad, Wellington. Tellers: Miller, Scott

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clause 17, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 18 to 23, as read, agreed to.

Clause 24—



Mr KNUTH (12.06 am): I move the following amendment—

2 Clause 24 (Insertion of new pt 6)

Page 18, lines 1 to 7—

omit, insert—

'38 Existing civil partnerships

- '(1) A civil partnership between a male and a female in effect immediately before the commencement is taken, on the commencement, to be a registered relationship under this Act.
- '(2) A civil partnership other than between a male and a female registered before the commencement is, on the commencement, void and taken never to have been registered.
- '(3) To remove any doubt, it is declared that subsections (1) and (2) apply to a civil partnership registered under former section 9 or former section 12.'

The LNP said that if it were legally possible to repeal same-sex civil unions without leaving couples in legal limbo they would do so. This amendment fulfils that election commitment for the government. I am glad to help the government fulfil its election commitment to the people of Queensland.

Mr BLEIJIE: We will be opposing this amendment moved by the member for Dalrymple. I am not sure whether he even talked in length about the amendment or said what it was, but essentially what they are trying to do is void all civil partnerships currently entered into. I recall that during the state election campaign I said that any such position would be an untenable situation to put people in. We said at the time that we did not want to leave people with existing partnerships registered in limbo.

We could have come into this place and repealed the whole act—we had many options open to us—but we are not going down that path because we realise that these people have legal rights under existing legislation and those people should have those rights protected. That is what we are doing. There is absolutely no way we could possibly support a repeal of all those registered partnerships because, if you want to talk about legal limbo and legal uncertainty, that would leave nearly 700 couples in Queensland with certificates in their homes which had no legal effect when there are actually serious consequences for which these people need the protection of a piece of paper—legal consequences in relation to financial or medical purposes.

As I said, doing that would create an untenable situation. The member really should be ashamed for even coming into this place and trying to get rid of the act. If we talk about getting rid of people's rights, we are talking about 700 couples across Queensland that he would be putting in immediate legal uncertainty. We on this side of the House—and I suspect the other side of the House—certainly do not support or endorse that.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Like the Attorney-General, we will be opposing the amendment put forward by the member for Dalrymple. However, we will be opposing clause 24 as it is a transitional provisions clause. It provides that if a civil partnership declaration ceremony has not yet taken place when the amendments take effect it will not be permitted to take place and the application will be taken to be an application to merely register the relationship.

Civil partnerships already registered, whether by virtue of the ceremony or by registration of their relationship, will continue to be recognised, as will those asking for registration of an interstate relationship. It is unfortunate that civil partnership declaration ceremonies will no longer be part of this scheme. However, as the Uniting Church minister in Ashgrove has already outlined, this will not stop couples holding ceremonies to declare their love and commitment to each other in front of families and friends. This should, however, be permitted to be part of the registration process for civil partnerships.

Mr NEWMAN: I rise to speak in opposition to the amendment being moved by the member for Dalrymple. At this point I think I could draw a few threads together. This evening we have heard a lot of mock indignation from the opposition members who are here. We have heard words like 'abomination' and phrases like 'taking away people's rights'. We have heard huffing and puffing and chest beating and it is all nonsense. When we see an amendment like this being moved by Katter's Australian Party, that is when we see an amendment that is worthy of those terms. Frankly, honourable members, this is a completely unacceptable amendment. This is an amendment that will cause pain, suffering and a lot of trauma to many innocent people. Through no fault of their own they freely entered into an arrangement put forward by the previous government. We at the time may not have agreed with the way it was done, but they took advantage of the law that was created by the previous government and what we are seeing with this amendment is the taking away of that right. I think Katter's Australian Party needs to think about what it stands for and to look deep into its heart—its soul—about the way it is going to conduct itself in the future. We saw an unacceptable advertisement in the campaign that was, frankly, homophobic. I have said it before, I will say it again: this amendment this evening should have them hanging their heads in shame. It is unacceptable. It is un-Australian. It is not fair, it is not reasonable, because it takes away a legal right that was given by the parliament of the time and, through no fault of their own, those people would have been left in a legal limbo.

This whole position this evening illustrates the fairness, equity and the decency of the government's position in the amendments we are proposing. We are allowing people, both men and women and homosexual couples, to register these relationships; to formalise the legal rights they have as de factos under the law. That is the appropriate and right thing to occur. That is why the government most firmly rejects this amendment—most firmly and unequivocally rejects this amendment—and will stand up for the rights of both heterosexual and homosexual couples who chose to use the previous government's legislation.

Mr KNUTH: The LNP received a mandate from the people of Queensland to repeal this law. They won on a landslide victory and this was a pivotal commitment of the campaign. It is good to see that it has showed a compassionate side. This bill should not have been rushed through in the last 24 hours. This bill should have been appropriately scrutinised before it was pushed through so that the people of Queensland could have a say. I read from the minister's second reading speech given before the last election—

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

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

So what we are hearing is a government that is saying it is compassionate, it is listening, but then does not have the decency to bring something that it has committed to through the committee system to be scrutinised by the people of Queensland, to allow members here an understanding of what the people of Queensland are saying. It is great to see that this government is compassionate, but this should not have been rushed through in 24 hours. This government, when it was in opposition, condemned the Labor Party for giving two weeks for this scrutiny. The people of Queensland want more time to scrutinise this legislation.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the member for Dalrymple's amendment be agreed to.

Mr SEENEY: I rise to a point of order. There were no voices. They cannot call a division unless they vote on the voices. There were no voices.

Mr KNUTH: There was a no.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Dalrymple has the call.

Mr KNUTH: I called divide.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is did you call no?

Mr KNUTH: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Did you call yes or no?

Mr KNUTH: I called no.

Government members: Exactly!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Dalrymple, can you resume your seat.

Non-government amendment (Mr Knuth) negatived.

Division: Question put—That clause 24, as read, stand part of the bill.

AYES, 69—Barton, Bennett, Berry, Bleijie, Boothman, Cavallucci, Choat, Costigan, Cox, Crandon, Cripps, Crisafulli, Davies, C Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Dillaway, Douglas, Dowling, Driscoll, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, France, Frecklington, Gibson, Grimwade, Gulley, Hart, Hathaway, Hobbs, Holswich, Johnson, Judge, Kaye, Kempton, King, Krause, Langbroek, Latter, Maddern, Malone, Mander, McArdle, McVeigh, Millard, Minnikin, Molhoek, Newman, Ostapovitch, Powell, Pucci, Rice, Rickuss, Ruthenberg, Seeney, Shorten, Shuttleworth, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Symes, Trout, Walker, Woodforth. Tellers: Menkens, Smith

NOES, 8—Byrne, Cunningham, Mulherin, Palaszczuk, Trad, Wellington. Tellers: Miller, Scott

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clause 24, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 25 to 59, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading



Hon. JP BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (12.21 am): I move—

That the bill be now read a third time.

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

AYES, 69—Barton, Bennett, Berry, Bleijie, Boothman, Cavallucci, Choat, Costigan, Cox, Crandon, Cripps, Crisafulli, Davies, C Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Dillaway, Douglas, Dowling, Driscoll, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, France, Frecklington, Gibson, Grimwade, Gulley, Hart, Hathaway, Hobbs, Holswich, Johnson, Judge, Kaye, Kempton, King, Krause, Langbroek, Latter, Maddern, Malone, Mander, McArdle, McVeigh, Millard, Minnikin, Molhoek, Newman, Ostapovitch, Powell, Pucci, Rice, Rickuss, Ruthenberg, Seeney, Shorten, Shuttleworth, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Symes, Trout, Walker, Woodforth. Tellers: Menkens, Smith

NOES, 10—Byrne, Cunningham, Katter, Knuth, Mulherin, Palaszczuk, Trad, Wellington. Tellers: Miller, Scott

Resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title



Hon. JP BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (12.24 am): I move—

That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

Division: Question put—That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

AYES, 69—Barton, Bennett, Berry, Bleijie, Boothman, Cavallucci, Choat, Costigan, Cox, Crandon, Cripps, Crisafulli, Davies, C Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Dillaway, Douglas, Dowling, Driscoll, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, France, Frecklington, Gibson, Grimwade, Gulley, Hart, Hathaway, Hobbs, Holswich, Johnson, Judge, Kaye, Kempton, King, Krause, Langbroek, Latter, Maddern, Malone, Mander, McArdle, McVeigh, Millard, Minnikin, Molhoek, Newman, Ostapovitch, Powell, Pucci, Rice, Rickuss, Ruthenberg, Seeney, Shorten, Shuttleworth, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Symes, Trout, Walker, Woodforth. Tellers: Menkens, Smith,

NOES, 8—Byrne, Cunningham, Mulherin, Palaszczuk, Trad, Wellington. Tellers: Miller, Scott

Resolved in the affirmative.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT



Mr STEVENS (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (12.28 am): I move—

That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 am on Tuesday, 10 July 2012.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT



Mr STEVENS (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (12.28 am): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Cross River Rail

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.28 am): This week we saw some very interesting revelations from the Newman government to deal with public transport in South-East Queensland. And what was that unique development that we saw this week? What was the complete backflip of priorities that we saw from the Newman government this week? I can tell members of the House what that backflip was. It was to adopt the Labor government's previous policy of Cross River Rail.

I do want to highlight for the House some interesting comments that have been made by various members of the government in their past roles in this state. For example, on 14 July 2010 in a *Brisbane Times* article, then Councillor Newman said that he and other South-East Queensland mayors would back the project despite each having other projects to pitch to the federal government for funding. In fact, he said—

I, and the other mayors, all have other projects with different priorities which we would like to get up, but we think this should have the priority.

That is what then Councillor Newman said at the time. Then on 18 March 2011 what did we see in a *Brisbane Times* article? We saw then Councillor Newman speaking at a Property Council forum. And what did he say? He said—

I'd like to actually see this cross river rail project completely stopped right now.

So one minute he is supporting it and the next minute he is not supporting it. Then we saw a press release issued by the Minister for Transport. What did the Minister for Transport say? He said very clearly—

Priority delivery of ... Cross River Rail works followed by northern and southern surface works.

So now we see the government adopting Labor's previous policy of Cross River Rail. This is the solution to the inner-rail capacity problem in South-East Queensland. It will benefit the Gold Coast. It will benefit the Sunshine Coast. This is the answer.

But in another ironic backflip, the Minister for Transport said that he supported the Cleveland solution. The Cleveland solution was touted during the election campaign as being the preferred option. He did an exclusive interview with Spencer Jolly on Channel 9. They also interviewed the Lord Mayor, Graham Quirk, who said that 'the Cleveland solution is going to be our solution for inner-rail capacity'. What we have seen very clearly from the transport minister and the Premier this week is that their answer is Cross River Rail. Let it be noted in this House that Cross River Rail was the Labor Party's policy and this government has adopted Labor Party policy once again.

(Time expired)

The Spot Community Services

 **Mr SHORTEN** (Algera—LNP) (12.32 am): Tonight I rise to talk about a wonderful community hub that I had the pleasure of touring last week. It is simply called The Spot. The Spot Community Services started out in 1996 as a youth drop-in centre in an empty warehouse in Browns Plains and it was run by five volunteers. As an initiative of the Southside Community Church—now Church on the Spot—The Spot later registered as a limited not-for-profit company. Now approximately 30 paid and volunteer staff with a passion for the community make The Spot a safe, comfortable and non-sectarian environment for participants in the southern region of Brisbane and Logan.

The Spot has grown over the years and has now moved to a purpose-built building in the industrial park on the corner of Beaudesert Road and Johnson Road in Parkinson. This new community youth hub will enable The Spot to grow its programs and social enterprises and will continue to provide high-quality services to the community. The youth hub includes an indoor rockclimbing gym, a performance hall, a community radio station, a recording studio, a cafe, a 24/7 chapel and training rooms. I was shown around the new hub by Mr Ken Houlston, executive director, and Ms Dorleen Bradshaw, the marketing and business manager. As Ken said to me, he is the ideas man and Dorleen is the woman who makes it all happen.

The Spot community hub is supported by an in-house company called Spot on Homes. Spot on Homes has two objectives: to raise funds that will contribute to the operation of The Spot Community Services and to provide an environment in which our young people can gain hands-on experience in the construction industry. Spot on Homes began in 2008 with the construction and sale of the 'house of hope'. Since then, Spot on Homes has built more than 19 homes. Spot on Homes is beginning to break into the investment property market and anticipates construction of 20 homes in the next financial year. I commend Ken Houlston for his initiative in setting up an independent line of financial support rather than pinning hope on the vagaries of government funding. That is not to say that alternative funding sources are not welcome—on the contrary. The services that The Spot provide for the community are made possible because of the multiplier effect of every dollar received.

Earlier I mentioned the fully equipped rockclimbing gym. I honestly do not think words do it justice. It has a three-storey centre rock wall built around a four-sided pillar and it has three other walls of varying degrees of difficulty. Also, it does not stop on the vertical but continues across the roof. The beauty of it is that, once you get to the top, you can actually abseil back down. They are currently using it to run a linesmen's course for Energex, but the centre will be open to the public when it is not in use for courses.

I commend Ken Houliston and Dorleen Bradshaw for their initiative at The Spot. It is a wonderful community hub. I look forward to taking my family and any ministers who wish to come with me there for a cup of coffee at their fully catered cafe.

Ferny Grove Electorate, Lions Clubs

 **Mr SHUTTLEWORTH** (Ferny Grove—LNP) (12.34 am): I rise in the House this evening to pay tribute to the Lions clubs throughout the electorate of Ferny Grove, all of which are preparing for their annual changeover events for the changing of the guard of the presidencies. Lions is an international network of 1.3 million men and women in 200 countries and geographic areas who work together to answer the needs and challenges of their communities around the world. Known for working to bring an end to preventable blindness, Lions participate in a vast variety of projects important to their communities. These projects range from cleaning up local parks to providing supplies to victims of natural disasters.

Beginning in 1917, the association of Lions clubs has provided millions of people with the opportunity to give something back to their communities. Lions clubs are an integral part of community life throughout our cities and regional areas of Queensland. Lions clubs are easily identified by their distinctive logo and according to their motto 'We serve'.

Throughout the electorate of Ferny Grove there are six established Lions clubs: the Golden Valley Keperra Lions Club, Brisbane Bunya Lions, Samford Lions, Golden Valley Keperra Lioness Club, Keperra Kings Lioness Club and the Golden Valley Keperra Leos Club. The largest of these, the Golden Valley Keperra—or GVK—Lions was chartered in April 1972 and has grown to be a large and dynamic organisation of volunteers who devote a portion of their spare time to helping those in the community who need their support.

As well as celebrating their 40th birthday this year, they are holding their changeover evening on 30 June. I would like to thank the current president, Lyn Pysden, for her dedication and enthusiasm in her service over the past year and I wish her well in her continued service to the GVK Lions. I would also like to wish the incoming president, Jan Spathonis, all the best for the coming year.

On 12 February 1981 the Lions Club of Brisbane Bunya was officially chartered. The charter night was held on 28 March 1981 and from that night until now the Lions Club of Brisbane Bunya Inc. has continued to function and currently enjoys membership of over 40 men and women. The Brisbane Bunya Lions are holding their changeover on 7 July and current president, Margaret Keen, has my well wishes for the year ahead as does the incoming president.

The Samford Lions president, John Burnham, is holding the changeover on 1 July and will continue to provide outstanding service to the many community groups throughout the Samford Valley regions. Frank Assink is the incoming president of that club. Throughout the year, while many hours of volunteers' time is spent on numerous activities throughout the electorate and surrounds, the pinnacle fundraiser event is the Hills Community Carols held annually in the George Willmore Park.

(Time expired)

Mastermyne

 **Mr MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.37 am): On Friday, 1 June 2012, I had the privilege of attending the opening of the Myne Start underground training facility located in Pinkenba, Brisbane, along with the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Andrew Cripps. This is the second underground training complex for the Mastermyne Group. The first opened in Mackay in 2010. Since its opening, the Mackay complex has introduced 240 people into full-time work.

Mastermyne is a Mackay success story. It was founded in 1996 in Mackay by Andrew Watts and Darren Hamblin with two employees operating in one mine. From this humble beginning it is now listed on the ASX and employs over 780 people operating in 20 mine sites across Queensland and New South Wales. The Brisbane facility is significantly larger than the Mackay facility and has been built to respond to demand from industry, government and regulators for the training provided by Mastermyne. It provides a wider array of training activities and is conveniently located 10 minutes from the Brisbane International Airport.

As part of the opening, guests were able to tour the facilities that are designed to replicate the workings of an underground mine. Some of the features of the facility include 465 linear metres of roadway within the 2,800 square metres of simulated mining area, which includes underground crib room facilities and development and longwall panels with a working conveyer belt.

Mastermyne provides training to inexperienced personnel entering into the underground coalmining industry, as well as upskilling miners from hard-rock mines and tunnel miners. The training programs focus on hands-on work based training, utilising on-the-job equipment and actual activities to enhance and reinforce learning in addition to the development of safe behaviours.

Mastermyne is working with industry to maximise its training facilities provided. Anglo American is utilising this facility to recruit and train its workforce for significant projects in the next five years. Anglo has donated the underground mining equipment to the Brisbane facility. Providing world-class training is vital to ensure the wider Mackay region continues to benefit from the current mining boom.

According to the local RDEC economic profile for March 2012, 19.8 per cent of the labour force in the Mackay-Isaac region was employed in the mining and manufacturing industry. These two industries contributed 47.2 per cent of the gross regional product. I would like to congratulate the board, the CEO of Mastermyne, Tony Caruso, and their staff who have built a successful training company to service the mining industry not only here in Queensland but also in New South Wales.

Gaven Electorate, Schools; Pacific Pines, Expo



Dr DOUGLAS (Gaven—LNP) (12.40 am): It seems children will go to any lengths to have a Facebook account these days, such is the power of social media. Whilst Facebook is one of the most visited websites on the internet, on the planet, with 11 per cent of the world having active accounts less than 12 months ago, including myself, it has its downsides.

Last week, during Cyber Safety Week, half of the students in years 5 to 7 at the Nerang State School admitted they had been untruthful about their ages to get an account. As I am sure most people are aware, a child has to be 13 to legally open a Facebook account. There was only one student who had legally opened an account. Such is the concern, the school's adopt-a-cop, Sergeant Leanne Hay from Nerang Police Station, spoke to the students about the dangers of their activity on Facebook. Sergeant Hay discussed how many people were untruthful about aspects of themselves in order to befriend children for the wrong reasons.

The school principal, Rod Kirkland, says that he is not aware of anyone closing their account after the talk, such is the strong draw of Facebook. However, the children will be more aware of the dangers. Whilst the school has had a few cyberbullying cases this year, he said it was evident at the talk that children were too trusting when they posted comments and photos on their site and did not appreciate that nothing was really private once posted.

Nerang State High School, another school in my electorate, has recently launched a program run by Beacon, a national non-profit organisation working in secondary schools. They are one of three schools in the state doing this. Their motto is that every young Australian can develop an independent will to achieve personal success for themselves and their community. Twelve year 10 students were endorsed as ambassadors for the program. I would particularly like to congratulate Brent Cue from the foundation for his work and also Jamie Quinn, the school's responsible-thinking classroom coordinator, and the school principal, Scott Ison. Along with the supermarket managers at Coles and Woolies and other local businesspeople, I was fortunate to attend the launch last week.

The community spirit at Pacific Pines, right on the northern border of my electorate, was well and truly alive at the weekend when the local community association, led by Melita Scully and her hardworking helpers, organised what has become an annual expo. Residents also marked the first anniversary of the tragic death of Detective Senior Constable Damian Leeding at Pacific Pines, a tragedy that is remembered with much sadness and sorrow in this community. The community turned up in droves from 10 in the morning until four in the afternoon to see the expo. The stars were the children, and the CADA dancers particularly. The jumping castle was the highlight. As always, it is children who make any event the success that this expo was.

Queensland Greats



Mr WALKER (Mansfield—LNP) (12.43 am): During Queensland Week 2012 our Premier recognised six Queensland Greats, including Meals on Wheels Queensland, which received the award for the Queensland Institution of the Year in recognition of the valuable services and support it provides to Queenslanders. The Queensland Greats Awards acknowledge individuals and institutions whose long-term or lifetime achievements have played a significant role in the history and development of Queensland.

I was pleased that the representative chosen to accept the award on behalf of Meals on Wheels was Mrs Mary Lowe AM, the president of Mount Gravatt Meals on Wheels. Mary has been both Queensland and national president of Meals on Wheels, and her personal honour in receiving the award was well deserved.

We are all very aware of the wonderful work of the many volunteers in our local communities who carry out the work of this iconic organisation. I have been provided with the following information by my local Meals on Wheels members. Meals on Wheels in Queensland commenced in Ipswich in May 1956. The original meals were delivered using household pudding basins and thermos flasks.

Mount Gravatt Meals on Wheels delivered its first meals on 1 July 1975. The inaugural secretary and one of the deliverers on that first day, Mrs JM 'Bunty' Hughes, is still delivering for the service, almost 40 years later. The service started with 12 clients, and meals were obtained from the Salvin Park Nursing Centre. One of the guiding hands in setting up the service was Mr Arthur Scurr, who chaired various meetings and provided tangible support.

Over the past 37 years, the meals have been obtained from various sources and presently from a commercial food supplier of chilled and frozen meals. The service also supplies a sandwich pack if required by the client. At the present time, the service meets the needs of 120 clients in the areas of Mount Gravatt, Wishart, Mansfield, Upper Mount Gravatt, Eight Mile Plains, Macgregor and Greenmeadows. The service provides both chilled and frozen meals for up to seven days per week.

The 100 volunteers operate from a purpose-built facility, and a very good one, at Broadwater Road, Mount Gravatt. The volunteer drivers receive a petrol subsidy and the service provides thankyou functions from time to time. The service provides some special treats for clients throughout the year, including a birthday cupcake, hampers at Easter and Christmas time, Anzac biscuits on Anzac Day, a lamington on National Meals on Wheels Day and special homemade biscuits for Mother's Day and Father's Day. These goodies are supplied via fundraising barbecue activities which the service undertakes.

The service also receives valuable support from service clubs, its local councillor and the Westpac Bank. The local Lions Club always donates some of its Christmas cakes at Christmas. The Mount Gravatt service is unique in that it delivers its meals around 8 am so that both clients and volunteers can plan the rest of their day. That enables young volunteers to call in and undertake a run before going to work. It is a very happy place for volunteers and provides a wonderful service to our local Mansfield community. It is a Mansfield great as well as a Queensland Great.

Burleigh Heads State School

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (12.46 am): I rise this evening to talk about one of my local schools, the Burleigh Heads State School. About three weeks ago I visited the school and acted as principal for the day. I spent the afternoon shadowing the principal, Peter Tong. I had a wonderful time at the school. I spent a good half an hour out in the playground with the year 4 students. They were high-jumping. They were attempting to jump something that was about two foot high. They seemed to spend a lot of time actually picking up the bar up and putting it back in place. Hopefully their high-jump skills will kick in over the next few years.

We did a tour of the special education unit. I must say that the wonderful teachers there are an inspiration. The way they deal with the children in the special education unit is something to behold.

I spent a good 10 minutes playing in the playground with a group of year 3 children. They attempted to teach me how to skip. Members can see by looking at me that I am not made for skipping.

Mr Ruthenberg: Skip the skipping!

Mr HART: I will skip the skipping. We then moved into one of the classrooms and I sat on the floor with some year 2 children and I read them a story. I think it had a tree, a giraffe and a farm in it. They seemed to be very enthusiastic about the story. That went for four or five minutes. I thoroughly enjoyed that.

Then I went back to the staffroom. I sat and talked to the teachers. We had a good natter about the issues that they have in their school. One theme is repeated at every school I go to, and I will talk more about that later.

I sat with the business services manager, Tracey Crawley, and an operator, Lisa, and we talked about the issues with OneSchool—seemingly another Labor failure as far as software goes. They seem to have a little trouble with that particular bit of software and it does not seem to be getting any better. The problem seems to revolve around their internet connection. So I took it upon myself to talk to Telstra later that week. Telstra sent out one of their service representatives. They dug up one of the local pits and figured out that they needed a new cable into the school. Having heard back from Tracey yesterday, I am pleased to report that Telstra has been in and replaced the cable and that their internet is now working 100 per cent of the time. Things seem to be very good. Burleigh Heads State School is a great school. I fully support all the teachers there.

Royalties for the Regions; QR National

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (12.49 am): I wish to return to a critical issue for my electorate of Mount Isa and across the regions in Queensland—royalties for the regions. I am pleased to table a draft bill for the House and the government to consider. If taken up it will provide a royalties for the regions scheme directing some \$700 million each year to regional development. A large commitment like this is critical to those areas that will deliver the growth that is so desperately needed to drag the government out of the very serious fiscal situation it is now in. Investment in infrastructure such as rail, road, electricity supply, land and housing would be a benefit of this scheme and is imperative to facilitate the development of critical infrastructure that is required to take full advantage of the resources boom.

Tabled paper: Draft Royalties for Regions Bill 2012 [394].

The bill will allocate an additional \$70 million each year for trade training and apprenticeships. I call on the government to implement this scheme that has been successfully adopted in Western Australia, albeit at a stronger commitment level than what this bill proposes. Western Australia has many common characteristics with Queensland in its vast nature. It is a large state, with a strong mining sector and a population centred around its capital. Unlike Queensland, the west has been prepared to take a long-term approach to building its wealth. Central to Western Australia's approach is its royalties to the regions scheme that ploughs mining royalties back into the productive areas of the state. It does this to build capacity and services in regional communities and, most importantly, to grow the prosperity of the state.

To achieve this, the WA government is spending record amounts in the regions. Figures of around \$1.2 billion this year and over \$6 billion by 2014-15 are not to be sneezed at. In contrast, Queensland's regional spend remains such smaller—suggested to be around \$500 million over the next four years, as identified by the Deputy Premier earlier this week. I acknowledge that this is a substantial commitment but it is below what is required to facilitate substantial growth. I respectfully urge the government to change this and adopt the royalties for the regions program to deliver the growth that Queensland so desperately needs.

I move on to QR National and the effects of the asset sales and the potential loss of jobs and service levels that inevitably will follow from this initiative. It is very concerning for regional Queensland to be hearing about potential new asset sales when it is reeling from the ongoing impact of the last round unleashed by the former government. In the Mount Isa electorate hardworking QR National staff are facing an uncertain future. The men and women do not just deliver high-quality rail services but they are an integral part of their communities. That is lost in the endless pursuit of profit, which I remind the House QR National is making.

In Cloncurry, Mount Isa and Hughenden staff are fighting to keep their jobs. They have been left with a couple of weeks to outline to management why they should stay. I have heard many of their stories and how they provide essential rail services in the most productive areas of our state. Unfortunately, this may not convince QR management, but I urge them to look to the long term. North-west Queensland exports 75 per cent of our state's non-coal minerals, and volume is only set to grow.

(Time expired)

Life Without Barriers

 **Mrs SCOTT** (Woodridge—ALP) (12.52 am): Ten years ago a small group of people responded to a need in their community to support 30 local young people who needed specialist foster care. This year, 10 years later, that small group has grown into one of our largest support agencies, Life Without Barriers. It was my pleasure to attend their recent celebration with their chief executive, Claire Robbs; all four state managers, including present state manager, Scott Bray, and other managers and heads of programs; Barry Salmon from the commission for children; and over 130 workers, guests and, of course, most importantly, some of their clients. We attend many celebrations as MPs, but some are full of heartfelt stories and speeches which attest to the special care and love that pervades their services and this was one such occasion.

LWB supports children and their foster carers, some children with very high needs, people with disabilities, Home and Community Care, Indigenous services and provides support to unaccompanied minors. Shannon Ruska set the scene with a very moving welcome to country and, following a number of official speeches, we were then given a very personal insight into the life of many of LWB's clients and carers. I wish to read to this House the words of Donna, a former corporate manager, now devoted to the full-time care of her young grandson, aged 6, with very complex needs. She says—

My grandson was having 30 to 50 tonic clonic seizures a day, 10 seizure meds several times a day, doctors kept counselling me that he could die, he almost did countless times, and I was scared. We spent the majority of time in hospital keeping him alive.

When things were at their worst, LWB came into our life. That was October 2008. From that day on I felt that I had the support, care and the respect to enable me to assist myself and my grandson to overcome or at the very least cope with the day to day challenges that we face.

She is a very, very brave and truly remarkable grandmother.

There was also an Aboriginal elder, Uncle Barry Mann, who took two young men to Central Australia to learn and experience their culture. He continues to mentor them. We heard from a wonderful foster carer, Jude, and were very moved by an original song from Elizabeth, a very young woman in care, with an angelic voice. Then there was Shaun, who accesses disability support and has been awarded for his participation in soccer at the Special Olympics. It was a delight for me to listen to Jawad Askari, who shared his story of arriving from Afghanistan in 1999, and now he, too, is working there, mentoring another young man from Afghanistan who is now studying at Woodridge High.

(Time expired)

Refugee Week

 **Mr RUTHENBERG** (Kallangur—LNP) (12.56 am): This week is Refugee Week. In fact, 20 June was Refugee Day. It is quite fitting that in Refugee Week I had the pleasure of attending a citizenship ceremony. This evening I was granted leave to attend that citizenship ceremony. That ceremony happened to be in the electorate of Redcliffe. My good friend the member for Redcliffe sits next to me.

Twenty-five per cent of Australians were born overseas. In fact, I am one of those Australians and my son is one of those Australians. Over four million people have become Australian citizens since 1949, when Australian citizenship was created. People from 35 countries became citizens in that inaugural year of citizenship. In 2010-11, 95,284 people were welcomed as Australian citizens. Tonight I was privileged to watch 100 people become citizens of Australia. In fact, some 20 of those people were from my electorate. It was a real pleasure for me to be able to witness them becoming an Australian citizen and then briefly address them.

I give encouragement to all people who are considering or have become an Australian citizen in the last year. I know those people are people of courage. And I know this because I, myself, have been put in a position where I have lived in at least six countries for over a year and in some of those countries the native tongue was not English. It is interesting when you go into a store and you cannot read the instructions on the back of grocery packets and you cannot go to a hairdresser and tell them how you want your hair cut and you cannot get into a taxicab and tell them where you want to go. It creates an interesting dilemma.

I empathise with the struggles of some of those folk who bring with them all sorts of experiences, and I encourage them. I know they have courage and I know they have vision and I know that they dream of a better future for their families. Australia offers that where one in four people in Australia have been born overseas. I am glad to have chosen to live where I live. I look forward to serving those folk and I look forward to working with them in community. I encourage them to engage in our community and to become active members of our community.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 12.58 am (Friday).

ATTENDANCE

Barton, Bennett, Berry, Bleijie, Boothman, Byrne, Cavallucci, Choat, Costigan, Cox, Crandon, Cripps, Crisafulli, Cunningham, Davies, C. Davis, T. Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Dillaway, Douglas, Dowling, Driscoll, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, France, Frecklington, Gibson, Grant, Grimwade, Gully, Hart, Hathaway, Hobbs, Holswich, Johnson, Judge, Katter, Kaye, Kempton, King, Knuth, Krause, Langbroek, Latter, Maddern, Malone, Mander, McArdle, McVeigh, Menkens, Millard, Miller, Minnikin, Molhoek, Mulherin, Newman, Nicholls, Ostapovitch, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Powell, Pucci, Rickuss, Rice, Robinson, Ruthenberg, Scott, Seeney, Shorten, Shuttleworth, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Symes, Trad, Trout, Walker, Watts, Wellington, Woodforth, Young