



# RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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## THURSDAY, 29 NOVEMBER 2012

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The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

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

### PRIVILEGE

#### Correction



**Mr KRAUSE** (Beaudesert—LNP) (9.31 am): Madam Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege. While speaking on the Racing and Other Legislation Amendment Bill yesterday, I stated that there will be fortnightly TAB meets at the Beaudesert Racecourse. I have since been informed that there will in fact be monthly TAB meets at the Beaudesert Racecourse, and I wish to clarify this for the information of the House.

### PRIVILEGE

#### Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House by a Minister



**Ms TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (9.31 am): I rise on a matter of privilege regarding an answer given by the Minister for Education, Training and Employment on 15 November 2012. In his response to a question without notice from a government member, the minister stated that TAFE teachers are paid full-time wages to work 21 hours a week. Many TAFE teachers have told me that they believe the minister's comments are misleading and damage their professional reputation. I believe his comments may constitute a breach of standing order 266(2) and be a contempt of parliament. As the cabinet member responsible for Education, Training and Employment, the minister would be well aware that the TAFE teacher award stipulates that hours engaged in direct teaching—

**Madam SPEAKER:** Will the member please write to me about the matter?

**Ms TRAD:** I will.

### PRIVILEGE

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



**Madam SPEAKER:** On 4 September 2012 I received correspondence from the member for South Brisbane alleging that the member for Stretton deliberately misled the House during the adjournment debate on 22 August 2012 when the member for Stretton accused the member for South Brisbane of swearing at her in the chamber. In accordance with standing order 269(5), I wrote requesting further information from the member for Stretton who supplied further information, including correspondence from two other members supporting her allegation. After receiving the member for Stretton's response, my inclination was to attempt to mediate this matter so as to not bring further indignity to the House. However, this would have required the member for South Brisbane to withdraw her complaint, and the member for South Brisbane was not prepared to do so unless the member for Stretton made a complete withdrawal and apology. I table the correspondence in this matter.

*Tabled paper:* Bundle of correspondence regarding complaint by the member for South Brisbane, Ms Jackie Trad MP, regarding an allegation made against her by the member for Stretton, Mrs Freya Ostapovitch MP [[1761](#)].

I have, after considering all of the correspondence and failing to settle the matter informally, simply decided to rule on the matter. I note that there is a dispute on the facts of the matter. On one side is the member for South Brisbane's denial of the matter of which she has been accused. On the other side is the version of the member for Stretton, arguably supported by two other members. Normally, on such a dispute of the facts, I would refer the matter to the Ethics Committee for resolution. However, I have come to the conclusion that this is akin to a quarrel between members and the matter does not warrant the attention of the committee and I will not be referring the matter in accordance with standing order 269(4).

In closing, I would like to remind all members of their personal obligations to act in a dignified manner in this House. They must not use unparliamentary language either in debate or as an aside. It does not behove the dignity of this House for members to act in an undignified manner, nor does it assist for members to use the proceedings of the House to prosecute personal quarrels. In this respect, I draw standing order 246 to the attention of all members.

## PRIVILEGE

### Speaker's Ruling, Referral to Ethics Committee

 **Madam SPEAKER:** On 30 October 2012 I made a statement about the confidentiality of members' papers and I reminded all members, their staff and others that members have individual rights and immunities—privileges—regarding documents prepared for members for a parliamentary proceeding and, in some circumstances, a document being used by members for parliamentary proceedings. The rights may include the right of confidentiality in respect of a document. A breach of that right to confidentiality may constitute a breach of privilege and a contempt. Yesterday I received correspondence from the member for Mount Isa alleging that material was removed from his desk and the desks of other members during a division. I am very concerned about the issue of confidentiality of members' papers. I have referred the matter to the Ethics Committee for its consideration.

## PRIVILEGE

### Speaker's Ruling, Referral to Ethics Committee

 **Madam SPEAKER:** On 31 October 2012 the then Minister for Housing and Public Works, the member for Moggill, wrote to me alleging that the member for Bundamba deliberately misled the House in debate. The member claimed to have been approached by a constituent, a resident of public housing, who had in that week received what the member claimed was 'what can only be known as an eviction notice'. The member for Moggill alleged that the department had no record of an eviction notice such as that described by the member for Bundamba. The member for Moggill noted that this was a serious matter as it could engender fear amongst public housing tenants.

*Tabled paper:* Bundle of documents regarding alleged deliberate misleading of the House by the member for Bundamba, Ms Jo-Ann Miller MP [[1762](#)].

In accordance with standing order 269(5), I wrote requesting further information from the member for Bundamba. I note that both the explanation provided by the member for Bundamba and the material supplied by the member do not appear to adequately address the issues in the complaint. In particular, the material sent by the department to the constituent and provided by the member for Bundamba in correspondence is clearly identified as an occupancy review, not an eviction notice. I have, therefore, referred the matter to the Ethics Committee.

## PRIVILEGE

### Speaker's Ruling, Alleged Deliberately Misleading of a Committee by a Minister

 **Madam SPEAKER:** On 13 November 2012 I received correspondence from the Leader of the Opposition alleging that the member for Moggill deliberately misled the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee in its estimates hearing held on 18 October 2012 by tabling an inaccurate lobbyists register in the committee's hearing and attesting to its accuracy. At the time of the estimates hearing, the member was the Minister for Public Works and Housing. In accordance with standing order 269(5), I wrote requesting further information from the member for Moggill. I table the correspondence in this matter.

It appears to be common ground that the lobbyists register tabled in the committee was inaccurate or incomplete. The only issue at stake is whether the member for Moggill knew at the time that the register was inaccurate or incomplete. I have considered all of the evidence available to me—including the statements made by the member for Moggill in the House on 13 and 14 November 2012 and the proceedings before the estimates committee—and I am not convinced that there is any evidence that the member for Moggill knew at the relevant time that the register was inaccurate or incomplete. I will not be referring the matter to the Ethics Committee.

## APPOINTMENTS

### Katter's Australian Party

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (9.38 am): I rise to inform the House that both I and the member for Dalrymple have asked the member for Condamine to be the state parliamentary leader of Katter's Australian Party. The member for Condamine has accepted this and I welcome him to this important role. I also wish to inform the House that I am now the parliamentary secretary of Katter's Australian Party and the member for Dalrymple is the parliamentary whip of Katter's Australian Party.

## PETITIONS

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

### Biddi Biddi Community Advancement Cooperative Ltd

**Mr Knuth**, from 18 petitioners, requesting the House to investigate the management and administration of the Biddi Biddi Community Advancement Co-operative Limited, Atherton [\[1763\]](#).

### Caravan Parks

**Mrs Miller**, from 2,283 petitioners, requesting the House to stop the sale of the Monte Carlo Caravan Park at Cannon Hill, Woombye Gardens Caravan Park at Woombye and the Lazy Acres Caravan Park at Torquay [\[1764\]](#).

### Bethania, Holzheimer Road-Church Road

**Mr Latter**, from 184 petitioners, requesting the House to investigate an alternate access for the residents in the area from Holzheimer Road to Church Road, Bethania in the event of an emergency that shuts down the level crossing on Station Road [\[1765\]](#).

### Public Housing

**Ms Palaszczuk**, from 189 petitioners, requesting the House to guarantee that no tenants will be disadvantaged by the changes to public housing; rent rises will not place further pressure on families and individuals already struggling to pay bills; individuals and families living in the dwellings identified as under-occupied be allocated a suitable roof over their heads in the same community where they choose to live now; and that the changes will not result in the use of private-sector management of public housing [\[1766\]](#).

The Clerk presented the following paper petitions, sponsored by the Clerk in accordance with Standing Order 119(3)—

### Eventide Nursing Home and Ashworth House, Closures

27 petitioners, requesting the House to reverse the decision to close facilities at Eventide Nursing Home and Zillmere's Ashworth House but if the facilities do close to rule out selling the land to developers for purposes such as high-rise units [\[1767\]](#).

### Toowoomba, Biosecurity Laboratory

531 petitioners, requesting the House to retain the Toowoomba Biosecurity Queensland, Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Animal Disease Surveillance Laboratory and continue these services at the existing premises with facilities suitable to the requirements of this vital work [\[1768\]](#).

The Clerk presented the following paper and e-petition, sponsored and lodged by the Clerk in accordance with Standing Orders 119(3) and (4)—

### Criminal Code, Amendments

252 petitioners, requesting the House to urgently amend s.222(8) of the Criminal Code [\[1769\]](#) [\[1770\]](#).

The Clerk presented the following e-petitions, sponsored by the honourable members indicated—

### Plastic Bags, Ban

**Mrs Cunningham**, from 530 petitioners, requesting the House to introduce legislation for putting a ban on single use light weight plastic bags at retail points of sale in Queensland by the end of 2012 [\[1771\]](#).

### Burleigh Heads, Police Resources

**Mr Hart**, from 171 petitioners, requesting the House to commit to providing a dedicated number of uniformed police officers to Burleigh Heads, as was part of the original proposal for a Police Beat [\[1772\]](#).

### Community Memorial Restoration Program

**Mr Byrne**, from 268 petitioners, requesting the House to reinstate the Community Memorial Restoration Program and that the program be reviewed after the centenary of ANZAC Day, with a priority placed on projects with a strong association with World War I in the meantime [\[1773\]](#).

### Mount Gravatt Bus Lines, Services

**Mr Kaye**, from 347 petitioners, requesting the House to provide a TransLink subsidy to Mt Gravatt Bus Lines bus route 7 so this service can be reinstated [\[1774\]](#).

### Magnetic Island Active Recreation Centre

**Mr Katter**, from 692 petitioners, requesting the House to reverse its decision to close the Magnetic Island Active Recreation Centre [[1775](#)].

The Clerk presented the following e-petition, sponsored by the Clerk in accordance with Standing Order 119(4)—

#### M1, Upgrade

134 petitioners, requesting the House to take the necessary steps to link the M1 at Bald Hills with a freeway to the Brisbane central business district, replicating infrastructure south of the Brisbane River [[1776](#)].

Petitions received.

## TABLED PAPERS

### MINISTERIAL PAPERS TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following ministerial papers were tabled by the Clerk—

Minister for Police and Community Safety (Mr Dempsey)—

[1777](#) Response from the Minister for Police and Community Safety (Mr Dempsey) to an ePetition (1906-12) sponsored by the Clerk of the Parliament in accordance with Standing Order 119(4), from 402 petitioners, requesting the House to amend current State firearms law at the next firearms legislation review

[1778](#) Response from the Minister for Police and Community Safety (Mr Dempsey) to an ePetition (1913-12) sponsored by Mrs Miller, from 31 petitioners, requesting the House to investigate options for making Goupong Park (Collingwood Park) safer for local residents and families

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### Newman Government, Accountability

 **Hon. CKT NEWMAN** (Ashgrove—LNP) (Premier) (9.42 am): My government is determined to be open and accountable. We have shown that we are prepared to release an unprecedented amount of information that has been gathered and held by government for years. We will be continuing to release new information onto our data.qld.gov.au website and build its capacity so more people can access data in useful formats. We are talking openly about the results we achieve, the services we provide and the decisions we make for Queenslanders because we want people to have sensible, well-informed debates about our policies and our actions. The government has committed to retrospectively releasing ministers' diaries monthly commencing early next year. Therefore, today I am pleased to table my diary for the first time. I table the document now.

*Tabled paper:* Calendar of the Premier of Queensland, Hon. Campbell Newman MP—26 March 2012 to 31 October 2012 [[1779](#)].

This section covers the first six months of government, since the election in March. The information is being released in accordance with the right to information principles, the content of which has been determined—and I stress—by an independent RTI officer in the Public Service. We have asked that, in making this determination, as much information as possible be released.

Perversely, the reason I have not released it earlier is that I was advised that I am unable to do it in a more normal way because, ironically, that could have breached privacy laws. This shows what a load of codswallop we have when it comes to the framework set up by those opposite as a dress-up for open and accountable government. It illustrates clearly why we are revisiting our privacy, integrity and information framework to make sure it is doing what it is meant to do: to make information about government more accessible for Queenslanders. Unfortunately, Labor amended integrity laws time and time again in knee-jerk reactions to political problems or stories in the paper. That is not what this government is about. A bandaid will not be good enough this time around.

In reforming the system, we will focus on creating an accountability system that is workable and sensible. The many perverse problems that we face in promoting real, open and accountable government were all left to us by a failed Labor administration. In contrast, this government is committed to fixing the system properly so that Queenslanders can have confidence in a government with integrity that is open and accountable in all of its activities.

Today I again issue a challenge to the Leader of the Opposition to release some of those lobbyist contact registers that seem to have gone missing or perhaps her diary or those of her former ministerial colleagues.

### Overseas Trade Mission

 **Hon. CKT NEWMAN** (Ashgrove—LNP) (Premier) (9.45 am): Tonight I will fly out leading a large group of Queensland companies on an overseas mission to India to find new exporting and investment opportunities for our industries. Seventy-five representatives from 66 companies are joining me on a five-city visit which takes in Mumbai, Mundra, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad and Kolkata, with a focus on developing Queensland's resources, tourism, agriculture, construction and education sectors. This mission is about opening doors for Queensland companies with some of India's key decision makers. It will include meetings with companies such as Adani Group, GVK and Tata Group—companies with diversified interests and investments across a range of key industry sectors.

Coinciding with my visit will also be Oz Fest, the largest and most expansive Australian cultural festival ever held in India. There are also three Queensland missions happening at the same time: Tourism Queensland's Queensland on Tour mission promoting our state as a tourist destination and two Trade and Investment Queensland missions—an education and training mission to Mumbai, Hyderabad and Kolkata as well as the mining, equipment, technology and services mission.

India is a major trading partner for Queensland, with merchandise exports worth more than \$6 billion in 2011-12, making India the state's fourth largest merchandise export destination. Some of India's best and brightest students also choose to study in Queensland, with enrolments of nearly 12,000 in 2011-12. We are also starting to receive more Indian tourists, with the value of our India visitation going to \$210 million in the financial year 2011-12.

I believe the best years of Queensland-India relations are ahead of us and the best opportunities for both India and Queensland exist right now. It is a time for a partnership that will be of great benefit to Queensland and India. I look forward to strengthening our ties and forging new ones. I take this opportunity to officially notify the House that the Deputy Premier and member for Callide will be the Acting Premier during my short absence and he has my full support as he takes on that temporary role.

### Ella Bay Development

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (9.47 am): The LNP government is about growing the economy, putting Queensland back in business and creating jobs now and for future generations of Queenslanders. Last week the Premier and I announced that Queensland's biggest ever tourism development has been given the green light to proceed. This \$1.4 billion integrated tourism and residential community planned for Ella Bay near Innisfail will create hundreds of jobs and generate many millions of dollars in state taxes and duties.

Developer Satori Ella Bay Pty Ltd proposes to build three resort precincts, four residential precincts, a retail village, an 18-hole golf course and a cassowary research and education centre on the site of a 450-hectare former cattle property. The tourism development will comprise 860 units and villas and the residential component 540 permanent residences. The developer expects to employ a workforce of more than 400 at the peak of construction and, more importantly, create more than 800 full-time operational jobs with additional part-time peak season work. The Coordinator-General's approval of this project is based on a rigorous environmental assessment and is subject to a range of conditions. It is a great example of how we can balance social and environmental concerns with the need for economic growth. To proceed, it must also gain other statutory state approvals and, of course, Commonwealth approval under the EPBC act. The ball is now firmly in the court of the federal minister Tony Burke.

I think it is noteworthy that the Coordinator-General is concluding projects and bringing projects to fruition that have been languishing for years—in some cases decades. Ella Bay has been locked in the approvals process since 2005—seven years, going nowhere under Labor. Seven years on and in a mere seven months this administration has got a result and finalised the approvals process.

We are focusing on getting this state back on track, just like we told the people of Queensland we would. For too long such projects in this state have been delayed by indecision, by dithering and by dirty deals with the Greens. Currently the Coordinator-General has more than 30 major projects under active assessment, with the potential to attract \$78 billion worth of investment and create more than 40,000 construction jobs and 20,000 ongoing operational jobs. The LNP government is in the business of making things happen in this great state, where there are great opportunities.

### Police, Corrective and Emergency Services, Review

 **Hon. JM DEMPSEY** (Bundaberg—LNP) (Minister for Police and Community Safety) (9.50 am): I am pleased to announce a major review of the Queensland police, corrective and emergency services. A review of this magnitude has not occurred in emergency services for more than a decade, and nearly 20 years in police. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to ensure Queensland has the best police, emergency and corrective services possible, not just now but for decades to come. This review will

investigate current organisational structures, decision making, emergency response capabilities and interagency cooperation while making certain the state's 20,000 professional and 40,000 volunteer emergency services staff are supported by the best operational procedures.

We want to ensure Queensland continues its proud history of first-class emergency services, and this review will allow us to compare and contrast national and international service delivery models. I want the world to look at Queensland for the best emergency management practices. I want people to look at Queensland for new and innovative ideas.

To get the best results we need the best people, and I am delighted to announce the appointment of former Australian Federal Police Commissioner Mick Keelty to head this review. To help future-proof these organisations I can think of no-one better to lead such a significant review. Mr Keelty has vast experience in leadership in policing and emergency management, especially while at the helm of the Australian Federal Police, and is well-recognised and respected amongst emergency services experts. Mr Keelty led the Australian Federal Police during some of Australia's most defining moments in modern history, such as the Bali bombing, and since his retirement as the Australian Federal Police Commissioner has continued to contribute to international security on the world stage. Assisting Mr Keelty with this review will be senior and respected members of the Queensland Police Service and the Department of Community Safety. Together as a team they will help shape the future of this state's emergency response.

I reiterate that Queensland currently has some of the best emergency operational capabilities in the world, of which we are all proud. Our many professionals and volunteers do an outstanding job. We saw that during cyclones Yasi and Larry and the state's 2010 and 2011 floods. This review is about Queensland being the leader in policing and community safety. It is not about following the world; it is about leading the world. Mr Keelty will commence his review immediately and will present me with his findings mid next year. I look forward to his recommendations.

### **Bovine Johne's Disease**

 **Hon. JJ McVEIGH** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) (9.53 am): On Tuesday I advised the House about my department's efforts to trace and contain a case of bovine Johne's disease, a serious wasting disease in cattle which is rarely seen in Queensland and of no risk to human health. As we speak, Biosecurity Queensland officers are contacting properties which have bought cattle from a stud property near Rockhampton where some stock have been confirmed with the disease. Movement restrictions will be placed on properties whilst Biosecurity staff conduct risk assessments. These assessments are expected to take some months. Biosecurity Queensland will work with the property owners to develop an individual property disease investigation plan. The aim is to conduct the risk assessments and test each affected property to resolve disease status as quickly as possible.

I repeat my advice from Tuesday: affected producers must not move stock that may have come from the infected stud property because this may greatly extend the time a property is under movement restrictions. Any private veterinarians working on affected properties should first seek advice from Biosecurity Queensland about movement restrictions and testing processes. Testing for this disease is lengthy. BJD test results can take up to 12 weeks or longer so, even for stock tested immediately, definitive results may not be available before next March.

I understand that this will be a difficult and challenging time for some livestock owners. Be assured: Biosecurity officials will be working very closely with all parties to contain any future infections and resolve cases as quickly as possible. Biosecurity Queensland and my office have been consulting with industry stakeholders and other stakeholders in developing this approach.

I will be heading to Rockhampton tomorrow morning to meet with key industry stakeholders including AgForce, the Cattle Council of Australia, the Australian Brahman Breeders Association and selling agents to discuss our plans to quickly identify the affected properties, quarantine and testing procedures. This is a very serious issue for the Queensland beef industry. Government must work very closely with industry and individual producers on this challenge. This is an issue that needs to be above politics and I have therefore invited the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the member for Rockhampton to attend tomorrow morning's meeting if at all possible.

Affected producers who have been placed under movement restrictions by Biosecurity Queensland can apply for support under the national BJD assistance package. In closing, I wish to doubly stress that BJD is of no risk to human health and the restrictions I have outlined will not affect the movement of stock to meatworks for processing.

## Tourism Industry

 **Hon. JA STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games) (9.56 am): I rise to inform the House of the great work the Newman government is doing in my portfolio to get Queensland out of debt, create jobs and build a better future for Queensland families. Not only do we recognise tourism as one of the four pillars of our economy; we are committed to regaining Queensland's position as No. 1 tourism destination in Australia. In a mere eight months we have set up a department for tourism, established a tourism cabinet committee, put in place the aviation attraction fund and the Tourism Investment Attraction Unit and, importantly, conducted the first DestinationQ forum for industry in Cairns.

One of the major announcements at the forum was doubling of funding for our RTOs, with \$3.89 million going towards a contestable fund. Last week I announced the 28 successful projects under this fund. Every one of our state's 13 RTOs has been successful in their bids for a slice of this money. We will see some wonderful innovative projects over coming months. The contestable grants scheme is another example of how we are partnering with industry to deliver. And the industry has brought together groups that in the past have not tended to work together.

This is just the tip of the iceberg, as honourable members heard yesterday. Last night I had the pleasure of welcoming yet another airline to Brisbane, Hawaiian Airlines—aloha!—who will fly direct Honolulu-Brisbane three times a week, adding a further 41,000 seats direct to Brisbane and opening up new routes from other United States cities. I could continue, but I am sure honourable members can see that we are getting tourism back on track and proving yet again that this is a great state with great opportunities.

## TRANSPORT, HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

### Report

 **Mr HOBBS** (Warrego—LNP) (9.59 am): I lay upon the table of the House the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee's report No. 13, *Review of the Retirement Villages Act 1999*.

*Tabled paper:* Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee: Report No. 13—Review of the Retirement Villages Act 1999 [[1780](#)].

This inquiry was referred by the Assembly on 2 August 2012 and required us to consider fair trading practice protections for residents; restrictions and provisions that affect the affordability of retirement village living; the certainty, accountability and transparency residents have with regard to their financial obligations; retirement village closures; clarity of the rights and obligations of residents and operators; best practice standards and accreditation; innovation and expansion of the retirement village industry; resident involvement in decisions that affect their financial obligations; and the dispute resolution process. We have examined each of these matters and made 37 recommendations. I will now highlight some of the key issues and recommendations made by the committee.

Issues regarding the public information document, the PID, were identified by residents, academics, operators and peak organisations. There was general agreement that this document needs to be amended to make sure that residents receive timely, appropriate and clear information about their future living arrangements. We heard that this document can be difficult to obtain from operators and is often provided without enough time for residents to properly consider it before signing a residence contract. This also makes comparison of villages difficult for prospective residents and means that many people are entering retirement villages without being fully aware of their rights and their obligations.

Given an objective of the act is to facilitate the disclosure of information and that one of our terms of reference was to consider whether residents are provided with appropriate material to make informed decisions, the committee unanimously agreed that a new PID should be developed. We recommend that the revised PID should improve the layout of information; reduce the length and complexity of the document; be simplified, for example, through removing unnecessary repetition; provide all information in plain English as far as possible; and include key terms and considerations for residents. We also recommend that PIDs be placed on retirement village websites and that PIDs be provided to prospective residents at least 10 business days before a residence contract is signed, before an application for a right to reside is completed and before any funds are paid to an operator.

The exit fee model was also identified as a key issue. We were told that the model can be restrictive; that the calculation of exit fees is inconsistent, complicated, poorly explained in many contracts and is difficult for residents to understand; that the payment of exit entitlements can take a very long time, sometimes impacting on the future living arrangements of residents; and that additional financial models are needed to meet the changing needs of our ageing population. To assist residents make informed decisions, we believe that increased clarity is required about how their exit entitlement is calculated. This would assist prospective residents to compare villages and would prevent many of the

disputes from arising when a resident leaves a village. As such, we have recommended that residence contracts include the detailed formula that will be used to calculate an exit fee and that the act be amended to prescribe a standard form contract. We agree that additional financial models should be considered. The current one-size-fits-all approach is reducing confidence in the industry at a time when the demand for retirement living options is increasing.

We have recommended that the act be amended to include principles to guide the interactions and relationships between residents, their families and operators of retirement villages. These include residents' and operators' rights to freedom from harassment and intimidation and residents' right to peace, comfort and quiet enjoyment. Through establishing these fundamental principles, it is our hope that many of the issues we heard about will be prevented in future. We have also recommended the development of a number of fact sheets to explain key information in plain English, or a relevant community language. This includes fact sheets about fair trading practice protections, the charging of fees to residents when operators sell rights to reside in retirement villages and obligations about the reinstatement of retirement village units. We recommend that these fact sheets be published on the department's website as a way to translate important provisions of the act and other relevant legislation for the benefit of residents, their families, operators and other professionals.

We hope that the many recommendations we have made will help to guide the retirement village industry to better meet the needs of current and future residents and operators for many years to come. I want to thank committee members for their careful consideration of the issues raised during the inquiry and for their continued commitment to each of our portfolio areas. I also thank the secretariat on behalf of the committee for its ongoing support. I commend the report to the House.

## STATE DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND INDUSTRY COMMITTEE

### Report

 **Mr MALONE** (Mirani—LNP) (10.03 am): I lay upon the table of the House report No. 16 of the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee. This report examines subordinate legislation tabled between 11 September and 30 October 2012 considered by the committee. The subordinate legislation has disallowance dates of 13 February 2013 and 7 March 2013. The committee did not identify any significant policy or technical concerns regarding consistency or fundamental legislative principles. The committee therefore concludes that the subordinate legislation as examined is lawful. I commend the report to the House.

*Tabled paper:* State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee: Report No. 16—Subordinate legislation tabled between 11 September 2012 and 30 October 2012 [[1781](#)].

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

**Madam SPEAKER:** Question time will finish at 11.05.

### Jobs

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (10.05 am): My question is to the Premier. What does the Premier today have to say to the 14,000 Queensland families who face a bleak Christmas this year because of the Newman government's job cuts?

**Mr NEWMAN:** What I say is this: I say that this government has two key priorities. The first is to sort out the terrible state of the Queensland government that we inherited from members opposite—a fiscally unsustainable position, escalating debt and also a Public Service structure and way of doing business that was uncoordinated, chaotic and quite wasteful, as we have seen in relation to issues like the Health payroll system. The other thing I would say in terms of our other big priority is to get the economy going, to create jobs, to get investment. And the only way you do that is by making this the most attractive place in Australia for business to operate, and that is indeed what we are doing. In the last few days honourable members have heard about the first green shoots of recovery—of great news in tourism, of great news in terms of improving business confidence, of great news in terms of retail sales appearing to be on the rise, of great news in terms of property transactions that the Treasurer mentioned yesterday. That is what we are doing.

In relation to the question, what I say is no different from the answer I have given over many months. We are doing what must be done and we are making sure that those who are leaving are getting very generous separation payments—extremely generous separation payments—which, if the honourable member wishes to ask me in more detail about some case studies, I would be happy to provide more detailed information about with regard to the sort of typical payouts that people have been getting. I trust that those families will see that with a vibrant Queensland economy there will be great opportunities in the future for new careers, new directions and a new opportunity to share in the prosperity of this great state. That is what I say.

I ultimately must continue to come back to the financially irresponsible management of those opposite. They have never stood up in this place and apologised to Queenslanders for getting the place into this mess. They have never actually acknowledged that independent ratings agencies like Moody's are saying how bad the situation is. I am surprised that I would even get a question like this in a week where we have seen that Moody's report released, because it clearly underlines how bad things have been. It does reflect very positively on the action that this government is taking and it really shows that if we had not made these tough decisions we really would be in a pickle—in a far worse situation. So that is my answer this morning.

### **Newman Government, Performance**

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** My question is to the Premier. Premier, after five days of infighting which has seen one MP switch parties, another verging on disendorsement and a third pushed aside for daring to speak out about his government, will the Premier advise when he intends pulling it together and start governing for Queensland again?

**Mr Seeneey:** That's a Dorothy Dixer!

**Mr NEWMAN:** It is indeed a Dorothy Dixer and I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the opportunity to talk about how we are indeed pulling this great state together. We are pulling it together, and I talked yesterday about some of the things that we are doing about cost of living. Of course I have talked about the fiscal repair task, but there are so many other things that this government has done in the past eight months. Later today I will talk in more detail, but let us get into them. We have commenced construction on the Sunshine Coast University Hospital. We have handed down our Bruce Highway action plan. We have scrapped the waste levy. We have raised the payroll tax threshold. We have held the DestinationQ forum, and honourable members have heard about all of these airlines that are coming back to Queensland because there is a future here.

We have seen legislation amended to allow beekeepers back into our native forests, access to national parks for other multipurposes and 12 additional officers appointed to strengthen our biosecurity measures in Queensland. In the area of racing, the Racing Act has been amended to establish separate control boards for greyhound, thoroughbred and harness racing together with an All Codes Racing Industry Board. We have started the rollout of 20 additional country race meetings, with the big announcement at Kumbia only a few weeks ago.

There has been the revitalisation of front-line services, with over 450 new police recruits having already commenced training as part of our three-year plan to put 1,100 new police officers on the beat. This morning, we heard the police minister talking about the very important strategic review of policing. The government is cracking down on crime, with tougher sentences for serious offenders. We have increased the non-parole period for murder from 15 years to 20 years and for multiple murders from 20 years to 30 years. There are other things that we have done. There are tougher penalties for drug dealers who have unexplained wealth and those who target children. There are tougher penalties for graffiti offenders and the implementation of mandatory clean-up orders. On many occasions those opposite voted against these tougher measures.

So I ask: is this a government that is getting on with the job? You betcha! I know there is a lot of colour and life that goes on in this place. I am a keen student of history and in recent times I have been re-reading *The Ayes Have It*. I just say that the things that went on 20, 30, 40, 50 years ago truly were signs of turbulence, because essentially on those occasions the process of government stopped. That is not the case here. We have been getting on. Even last night, the House sat until almost 1.30 am working on getting important legislation through the House. In relation to this fine group of men and women, I have never seen a team so galvanised, so fired up and so united as the team I have today.

### **Electricity Prices**

**Mr WALKER:** My question without notice is to the Premier. Can the Premier update the House on developments in the electricity industry and the government's plan to put downward pressure on electricity costs for Queensland households and businesses?

**Mr NEWMAN:** I thank the honourable member for the question. As we know, electricity prices are hurting Queensland families. Recently, the Labor Party, albeit the federal branch of the Labor Party, has caught up with this idea that there is something going on with electricity prices. Could it have been that I put it on the agenda of COAG back in April this year? I will move on.

We have seen the Prime Minister have a sort of road to Damascus view in relation to electricity pricing. From the period 2007 until recently, the Prime Minister and her federal Labor colleagues were quite happy to see electricity prices going up in a double-digit way in Queensland and in other states. What happened? There was an LNP government in Queensland. Clearly, suddenly that was the time to get stuck in.

**Mr Nicholls:** Poor leadership.

**Mr NEWMAN:** Poor leadership. The PM has also been quoted in the media and, indeed, in submissions to the Senate inquiry spruiking her desire for the states to immediately privatise electricity assets. These are the same electricity generation assets that have been devalued by Labor's carbon tax. But now they want an asset fire sale.

The only political party that has stood since the March election and declared that there will be no sale of electricity assets without a mandate from the people is the LNP. We have not heard a word—not a whisper or even the smallest gasp from the opposition—decrying, opposing electricity privatisation. But what about Queensland Labor's new bedfellow, the Electrical Trades Union—the ETU? What is its position? This is the same ETU that walked away from the Labor Party when it endorsed privatisation after the 2009 election. Now, the ETU has been lured back and muted with a promise of \$5 membership and preselections.

Regardless of numerous statements made by me and my senior ministers that there is no privatisation plan, the ETU repeatedly claims that the LNP will privatise the electricity generation assets of this state. Despite the overwhelming evidence that federal Labor wants to privatise electricity assets, the ETU has run to its defence. The ETU forgets the newspaper articles and Senate submissions in which the Labor Party has set out its privatisation agenda in clear black and white terms.

I am pleased to inform the House that I recently wrote to the ETU and invited it to join me in a campaign against the privatisation of electricity assets. I again challenge them. Today, I invite them to join me in a campaign against federal Labor MPs in Queensland who endorse the Prime Minister's electricity privatisation campaign that will drive up electricity prices in this state, particularly in regional Queensland. We will see if the ETU wants to help the state with making the electricity sector more efficient or if it is happy to roll with the federal Labor punches and have this fire sale. What is its position and, by the way, what is the position of those opposite?

### **Train Travel, Pensioners**

**Mr MULHERIN:** My question is directed to the Premier. Does the Premier stand by the decision of his transport minister to cap the number of seats available on trains for pensioners, meaning that many will not be able to book seats to travel for Christmas this year?

**Mr NEWMAN:** Firstly, I want to comment that it is good to hear the member for Mackay sounding a lot better than he did yesterday. I was seriously concerned about him. It is good that he sounds like he is on the mend.

To answer the question, do I support that? Yes, I do. Why do I do that? Because ultimately we have had to make tough decisions and get on with the fiscal repair task in this state. I am surprised that the honourable member would be wondering about that matter.

In relation to the issue of cost of living and a fair deal for pensioners, you cannot be fairer about it when you take real, positive action to deal with cost-of-living pressures. Let us just talk about some of the things that this government has done.

**Ms Palaszczuk:** They can't get home for Christmas.

**Mr NEWMAN:** I hear the interjection from the Leader of the Opposition about Christmas. I will take that interjection. At the moment, they are better off if they are on the pension because we capped electricity prices. We stopped a massive, whacking great Labor Party electricity price increase for this year. We have done that. What else did we do?

**Mr Nicholls:** Rego.

**Mr NEWMAN:** Family car registration.

**Mr Pitt** interjected.

**Mr NEWMAN:** They are interjecting. They ask these questions but they do not want to know the answers. Pensioners are being protected by this government—indeed, all families and individuals are being protected by this government—from the cost-of-living increases that those people opposite in the Labor Party were pushing all the time.

Year after year, from particularly when Anna Bligh became the Treasurer through to her time as Premier, the Labor Party was quite happy to see huge increases on a whole range of charges. We saw a solemn promise on the fuel subsidy, only for it to go straightaway after the election in a cynical move. Did they care about pensioners being able to fill up their cars with petrol as an alternative to perhaps taking the train? No, they did not then. Did they ever increase the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme to help elderly people who needed to come to the big city for medical treatment? Did they double the accommodation allowance or the travel allowance? No, they did not. It was this party that did that. This government is getting on with the job of getting us out of the mess that they created. What other things are we doing? In South-East Queensland there will be an \$80 rebate on people's water bills to again help all of those who have been hit by the high cost of Labor's botched so-called water grid.

I could go on, but with 14 seconds left on the clock perhaps I will just leave it at that. We have made very practical steps to ease the cost-of-living pressures on all Queenslanders and particularly that is to the benefit of pensioners who do it tough always.

### **Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning, Achievements**

**Mr YOUNG:** My question is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning. Can the Deputy Premier please inform the House of the key decisions taken by his department to get this state back on track since the LNP won government?

**Mr SEENEY:** I thank the member for Keppel for the question, because it follows on nicely from the answer that the Premier just gave about how we in the LNP government are focusing on the business of government and delivering on the promises that we made to the people of Queensland, ensuring that we get this state back on track and that we are able to take advantage of those enormous opportunities that the state offers. Since the election, the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning has been focused solely on that task and we have made some major advances in driving the economy of Queensland.

Last night in this House we passed a piece of legislation that will allow for the government to have a much firmer hold on the economic levers of the state to drive economic development. We have completed the first step in the planning reform process, passing the SPOLA bill through this House, and there is plenty more planning reform to go. I acknowledge the great work that is being done by the Assistant Minister for Planning Reform, my colleague Ian Walker, the member for Mansfield, one of the better appointments I think the Premier made when we came to power. One of the better appointments was to appoint Ian Walker as my assistant.

We have made enormous progress in the area of planning reform in the approvals reform process that the Coordinator-General undertakes. I spoke this morning about some of the successes that the Coordinator-General has achieved. Some of the data that is emerging shows the difference between this government and the previous government much better than anything else could. The Coordinator-General's approvals for Ella Bay, for the Alpha Coal Project and for the South of Embley Project are about setting up projects for the next generation of Queenslanders, the next generation of economic growth that our state will need. We have worked with the proponents in the Galilee Basin: Adani, Hancock Coal-GVK, QRN—companies that are serious about developing the resources in the Galilee Basin. We have put in place the GasFields Commission, we have addressed the debacle in the Mary Valley, we have brought the Aurukun bauxite leases back to the market, we have addressed the crisis on the Bruce Highway with the crisis management plan and we have called in a number of significant developments, the Jewel project on the Gold Coast and the Costco development, to ensure that they are not bogged down in court cases unnecessarily.

We have also focused on regional Queensland. We put in place the Royalties for the Regions program, a program that will see royalties returned to regional Queensland for generations to come. We are advanced on the regional planning process to solve the areas of conflict between resources and agriculture. We are getting the state back on track.

### **State of Origin**

**Mr PITT:** My question without notice is to the Premier. I am informed that during a meeting with the Australian Rugby League Commission the Premier had a temper tantrum and expressed that he doesn't much care for State of Origin.

**Madam SPEAKER:** That is unparliamentary. I ask you to withdraw it and to rephrase your question.

**Mr PITT:** I withdraw. I am informed that during a meeting with the Australian Rugby League Commission the Premier expressed that he did not much care for State of Origin, following which his meeting guests promptly left, with the Premier's advisers going into damage control. I table an article from the *Brisbane Times* where league legend Wally Lewis said anybody who doesn't fight hard to maintain loyalty and support for Queensland isn't a real Queenslander, and I ask: will the Premier admit that his behaviour is the real reason Queensland has lost a home game for the 2013 State of Origin series?

*Tabled paper: Brisbane Times article, dated 20 November 2012, titled 'Lewis angered by Origin switch' [1782].*

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Madam SPEAKER:** I am going to allow the Premier to answer that.

**Mr NEWMAN:** All I can say is that the assertion in the question is complete and utter nonsense and there were multiple people in the room. Firstly, I totally support State of Origin and there was no suggestion whatsoever in that meeting of anything otherwise. What I say though is that I was quite firm with the Australian Rugby League Commission that they should not hock the State of Origin series off to

Melbourne and they should not be taking the game that is owned by the people of New South Wales and Queensland—the fans. I said very clearly to them we were not going to participate in some sort of tawdry exercise where they hocked off the game owned by the fans of Queensland and New South Wales just so they could make money.

I say that again publicly today. I believe that the outcome we achieved over the next five years is a good outcome because what was clearly going to happen was that the game was not just going to go to Melbourne once, as it will be in the next five years as I understand it, it was going to go on multiple occasions to Melbourne and Queensland was going to miss out and, potentially, New South Wales was going to miss out.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Madam SPEAKER:** There are too many interjections across the chamber from my left and my right.

**Mr NEWMAN:** I will say this as well: given that the game is owned by the fans of Queensland and New South Wales, I reject totally the Labor Party's assertion.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order! I will start warning members under the standing orders. Premier?

**Mr NEWMAN:** We have a huge fiscal repair task and we were not going to get in the game of spending millions and millions of dollars to purchase a game for Queensland that Queensland owns. That is responsible financial management, as opposed to irresponsible financial management. I well recall when the previous government were in office the story of Treasurer Andrew Fraser who was sent to Townsville to tell them that there was not going to be a V8 race and he came back making the announcement that there was going to be one. It has been a great race, by the way, for Townsville, but it just shows how lily-livered the previous mob were when it came to these things.

We want great events in this state, but we are going to be tough commercial negotiators and we are not going to allow the Australian Rugby League Commission to trample on the fans of Queensland and, more importantly, the taxpayers of Queensland. The outcome we have achieved is a good outcome which sees one game only going to Melbourne. That is something I am very happy about. Indeed, the New South Wales media have pointed that out as well.

### **Newman Government, Achievements**

**Mrs RICE:** My question without notice is to the Treasurer and Minister for Trade. Can the Treasurer please inform the House about his office's economic achievements since the LNP came to government and are there any alternative views?

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I thank the member for Mount Coot-tha for her question, as yet again I still await a question from the shadow Treasurer. I thought he might ask something at some stage. I think we will have to see whether the Christmas break will inspire him to actually read perhaps the *Economist* magazine, or maybe he will get to the business section of that esteemed local journal, the *Courier-Mail*, and ask me something that is going on. There might be something as he frantically scans the paper looking for the next question that he might want to ask.

The member for Mount Coot-tha is on the ball, having been involved in businesses large and small and in academia as well. She wants to know what we are achieving for Queensland and if there are any alternate views. Of course, we have not heard from the shadow Treasurer so we have to glean his alternate views from what he puts out in media releases and from those he associates with. Since being elected this government has delivered on all of its election commitments to cut the cost of living. We have heard the Premier detail how we are doing that. We heard today a pusillanimous question from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** If everyone pays attention—the benefits of a classical education. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition asked what we were doing for Christmas. What we are doing for Christmas is making sure that people have more money in their pockets by freezing car registration. What we are doing is making sure that people have more money in their pockets by freezing electricity bills. What we are making sure of is that after Christmas they will have more money in their pockets because we are going to give everyone in South-East Queensland a water rebate. What was the opposition's position? They opposed it all. Remember, they voted against the budget. They did not support giving people relief against the increasing charges and fees that they put in place.

To top off some of the achievements for our great state, what will happen in the future? There was a Bureau of Resources and Energy Economics report out yesterday that tells what a great state Queensland is and what great opportunities there are here in Queensland. I am going to steal a bit of the Deputy Premier's thunder in relation to these projects. Queensland has the second highest number of projects at the committed stage, with 22 projects that have a total worth of \$78.4 billion. We have it

through mega projects. We do not just have coal and gas, we also have other projects. Although smaller in value than large coal and LNG projects, there are numerous other metals and minerals mines progressing through the investment pipeline in Queensland. The member for Mount Isa will be celebrating the fact that this government is driving investment in his part of the world with over \$5 million worth of investment up there. Great state, great opportunity under the Newman government.

### Local Government, Development Approvals Process

**Ms TRAD:** My question without notice is to the Premier. I note reports today about the environmental concerns for the proposed north-east business park and I table a copy of that media article for the benefit of the House.

*Tabled paper: Courier-Mail article, dated 29 November 2012, titled 'Fears for bay as project backed' [1783].*

Will the Premier rule out that the Economic Development Bill that was passed overnight by this government to establish priority development areas will not be used to interfere with the council's approval process and its legal right to reject this development?

**Mr NEWMAN:** Yes, I have seen that article today. There are elements that are probably correct and other elements that I need to scotch this morning. It is like this: as I understand it, the council has concerns about the project. Mayor Allan Sutherland and his team have every right, as the local authority, to express those concerns. It is not the desire of this government to come in over the top of any local government in this state. We have been saying that for some time and those opposite would be well advised to listen to what we say and then actually deal with legislation in this House, because it is consistent. We are about empowering local communities. The Labor Party was about centralisation. It was about all the power coming in centrally. Contrary to the spin and nonsense they talk about this government, we are about giving Queenslanders, particularly those in the regions across this vast state, the authority and responsibility to make local decisions.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr NEWMAN:** They are interjecting. They ask the questions, but they have to listen to the answers and maybe they will learn something. I am answering their questions.

**Ms Trad** interjected.

**Mr NEWMAN:** There is no need to be rude. There is no need for rudeness. Surely we can be nice to one another here. It is Christmas. They might even get Christmas cards from me. Our philosophy is that councils should be making these decisions. I turn to the article. My understanding is that we are making some amendments to other pieces of legislation that will essentially facilitate a council approval. It seems to be a misinterpretation in the article to say that that means that we are coming in over the top. We are not. It allows the Moreton Bay Regional Council to look at the project in front of it and not have any roadblocks or obstacles to an approval. It is our firm belief and desire that it should be making this decision.

I say to the council: it is your decision. I ask the council to remember that there are many unemployed people in the Moreton Bay Regional Council area, particularly tradies. They need to be given opportunities to get back on the tools. Ultimately, this project should be about how that can be made to happen while protecting the environment. I am sure that every constituent of the Moreton Bay mayor and the local councillors will be thinking about that. That is what everybody is thinking about. They want the jobs and they want the investment. We want the council to have the tools to do the job and to make the approval. That is what I hope and trust they will do, in an environmentally responsible manner.

### Department of Housing and Public Works

**Mr DAVIES:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Housing and Public Works. Can the minister provide an update to the House on the Newman government's achievements to date within the minister's portfolio and outline how those actions are helping to build a better future for Queensland families?

**Mr MANDER:** I thank the hardworking member for Capalaba for his question. The Newman government came to office with a promise to restore Queensland finances and put our state back on track. This is a great state with great opportunity and I am happy to advise the member that my department has been working hard on a number of initiatives to reduce waste and cut red tape and, most importantly, ensure our most vulnerable have a roof over their heads. Those opposite left us with 30,000 households on the waiting list, no money to build new houses and a housing fund that was losing \$1 million a fortnight.

Earlier this year we offered an amnesty where tenants could declare previously unregistered occupants with the department. That amnesty uncovered more than 1,600 people who had been living in public housing without paying any rent whatsoever. The rent we collect from those tenants will bring in an additional \$4 million each year, which we can put back into the creation of new properties.

Members will also be aware of the Logan Renewal Initiative, a partnership between the Newman government, the Logan City council and various non-government organisations aimed at revitalising Logan's ageing social housing portfolio. That is a model we hope to reproduce right across the state.

The Newman government is also moving to introduce a three-strike approach to managing antisocial behaviour in public housing. While the majority of public housing tenants do the right thing, there is a minority whose antisocial behaviour causes serious disruption to the lives of those around them. Last year, \$4 million worth of damage was done to government owned properties. This policy is about ensuring that the taxpayers' investment is protected and that public housing goes to those who need it most. These reforms and others like them are about building a better future for those families on the margins of society; those people whom the opposition claimed to represent, but instead used as pawns for political purposes.

We are rethinking the way that we provide housing in remote Indigenous communities. The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing is supposed to deliver over 1,100 new houses over a 10-year period. Over the first four years of the program, the former government delivered fewer than 200. What is more, the houses that were built were often unsuitable for the tropical climate. To address this issue, the government will introduce modular prefabricated dwellings that are not only more appropriate for the climate but also will be delivered faster and at less cost to the taxpayer.

We are committed to cutting red tape and lowering the cost of living for Queensland families. We have scrapped the former government's sustainability declarations. We have reformed plumbing laws to remove the cost of council approvals. We have overhauled the BSA's judgement debt system and implemented a broader review of the organisation. I am proud to be part of a government that is building a better future for Queensland families.

### **Queensland Health, Alleged Unauthorised Disclosure of Information**

**Mrs MILLER:** My question is to the Premier. I refer to a recent article quoting the health minister and citing extracts from a Queensland Health briefing note about a specific patient at The Park Centre for Mental Health. I also note that at a recent estimates committee hearing the director-general of Queensland Health undertook to examine this article for a possible breach of the Hospital and Health Boards Act relating to unauthorised disclosure of information. I table the documents.

*Tabled paper:* Article from *Courier-Mail* article, dated 1 October 2012, titled 'State's \$1 million patient' [[1784](#)].

*Tabled paper:* Page 49 of transcript of estimates hearing for Health portfolio, dated 17 October 2012 [[1791](#)].

Will the Premier ensure that such an investigation has been initiated by the director-general and will he commit to advising this House of its progress and outcome?

**Mr NEWMAN:** I am afraid I really cannot shed too much light on this. It is really a matter for the health minister.

### **Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs**

**Mr KAYE:** My question is to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs. Can the minister provide an update to the House on the Newman government's achievements to date within the minister's portfolio and outline how those actions are helping to building a better future for Queensland's families?

**Mr ELMES:** I thank the member for Greenslopes for his question. Not so long ago I had the great pleasure of spending some quality time in Greenslopes with the fine local member. For too long in Queensland, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy has been driven by good intentions rather than outcomes. Despite the injection of increased funding from both state and federal governments, outcomes have barely improved for Indigenous people in areas of housing, education, health and employment.

Queensland's Indigenous communities are not looking for charity. They want practical and meaningful assistance, such as training that leads directly to employment, not more training for the sake of keeping a welfare cheque. Indigenous communities want to participate in the real economy and that is what they will get from this government. The key to relieving the effects of disadvantage lies in promoting enterprise as the basis for developing local economies. We want to invert the Indigenous policy agenda away from putting money into alleviating the consequences of economic and social disadvantage. We need to help develop business capacity and local economies within Indigenous communities, for example, owning the local shop, establishing trade based businesses and becoming local service providers.

Some of the areas in which we have made progress include: negotiating agreements with mining, construction, agricultural and tourism companies for Indigenous employment opportunities; creating options for homeownership on Indigenous land; working with Indigenous councils to implement their

community plans; and engaging with Indigenous communities to start a review of alcohol management plans. Employment, sustainable enterprise and land tenure reform to provide improved options for homeownership are high on my list as a means for Indigenous people to achieve better outcomes.

One of the principal mechanisms for realising those priorities will be through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economic participation framework currently being developed. This will link the many emerging economic opportunities in the resources and agricultural sectors to greater employment opportunities for Indigenous communities.

Other immediate priorities for me are continuing the AMP review to develop and implement a comprehensive Cape York and Torres Strait Islander development strategy covering all communities, to progress the collaborative work with agencies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to enable homeownership and business ventures on Indigenous land and to introduce an enhanced set of events, activities and services to celebrate Queensland's rich cultural heritage and meet the particular needs of people with specific language, employment and other needs. I want to get beyond the rhetoric of Indigenous employment development into action which will produce real jobs, real businesses and real prosperity for Indigenous communities.

### **Wet Tropics Water Resource Plan**

**Mr KNUTH:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines. The draft Wet Tropics Water Resource Plan is being pushed on farming communities in Far North Queensland over the top of objections raised by the agricultural community and despite the fact that there is a planned review of the Water Act in March 2013. Due to the deficiencies in it for the agriculture industry and it being burdened with unrealistic and unworkable water management programs, my question is: will the minister stop the rollout of the Wet Tropics Water Resource Plan and bring forward the planned review of the Water Act to address these deficiencies as soon as possible?

**Mr CRIPPS:** The Wet Tropics Water Resource Plan is the second last water resource plan that needs to be completed in the state of Queensland for the whole state to have current water resource plans and resource operations plans in place. It is a requirement for all catchment areas across the state of Queensland to have a water resource plan under the Water Act. It is no secret whatsoever—it ought not be any secret—to continuing members of this House, but for the benefit of new members in this House, that the LNP has, for many years, expressed concern about the development of water resource plans and resource operations plans in the state of Queensland. My colleague the Deputy Premier has been amongst the most vocal critics of the development of those water resource plans under the former government.

We have no argument, we have no truck with the need for sustainable resource planning in the state of Queensland. But what we do insist on in terms of the development of water resource plans and resource operations plans is that they are done based on science and that they take note of local knowledge about water resources.

In relation to the specific question from the member for Dalrymple regarding the Wet Tropics Water Resource Plan, one of the first actions that I took as Minister for Natural Resources was to meet with the community reference panel that was appointed during the development of the Wet Tropics Water Resource Plan. They expressed to me two concerns. They expressed to me a concern that they had not had an opportunity to view the socioeconomic reports associated with the development of the water resource plan. They also expressed to me a concern that they had been asked by the previous government to sign-off on the Wet Tropics Water Resource Plan prior to the state election in March. They refused to do so. I give credit to the community reference panel for refusing to do so.

When I met with them I gave them an undertaking that I would get them the socioeconomic impact report before they were asked to sign-off on the Wet Tropics Water Resource Plan. That has unfortunately delayed the finalisation of that plan. But I will do my utmost for the community, for local stakeholders and for industry to have confidence in the provisions of the Wet Tropics Water Resource Plan before it is finalised and implemented through this House.

In doing so, we will be taking on board all of the feedback from industry and community stakeholders in the development of that plan. I have a keen interest in it obviously because the Wet Tropics Water Resource Plan covers a large part of my electorate of Hinchinbrook. But certainly I will be implementing the Wet Tropics Water Resource Plan because we are required to do so under the Water Act. We will be proceeding with the review of the Water Act to ensure that it is allocating those resources sustainably across the state of Queensland.

### Local Government, Achievements

**Mr GULLEY:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Local Government. Can the minister provide an update to the House on the Newman government's achievements to date within the minister's portfolio and outline how these actions are helping to build a better future for Queensland families?

**Mr CRISAFULLI:** I thank the honourable member for the question because it is indeed a great question. This is a great state, with great opportunities and it has some great local leaders. The members asked what are some of the great achievements that we have had to deliver. First and foremost it was to heal the wounds—the wounds that were inflicted on local councils by those opposite. I did not want to assume that just because the government had changed that somehow that relationship would change. I wanted to earn that trust. You do not earn trust by sitting down and calling people to you; you earn trust by going and speaking with them—speaking with those communities that were so brutally damaged by those opposite when in government.

So one by one I have gone to those communities. We have spoken about what needs to be done. We have signed a partners in government agreement—an agreement that was ripped to shreds because the relationship had broken down between the former state government and local councils. We have passed through this House some of the greatest changes to local government in a generation—changes that empower local communities to control their own destinies; to empower mayors and councillors to end this cookie cutter, this one-size-fits-all approach to local government and to give them their power back.

We have also had to embark on giving an opportunity to those local governments still hurting from the forced amalgamations to express their concerns to the Boundaries Commissioner. Yesterday I received a report from the Boundaries Commissioner, which I will be analysing. Madam Speaker, with regard to the new seating arrangements in this 89 member parliament, can I thank you for placing the member for Noosa right beside me—a man who has more than a passing interest in the contents of that document. We will indeed continue to work with all of these councils. We have sat down with those councils that were not able to put forward a financial case for deamalgamation and attempted to work a way forward from what was a brutal time for local government.

The waste levy approach to government is gone. No longer will we force local councils to do things. The fact that all 73 local governments have participated in the graffiti stop program is proof of that. The Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program is something I am particularly proud of. Over 90 per cent of funding in that program for infrastructure and flooding will go to rural and regional councils. Councils like those represented by the member for Gregory, the member for Warrego, the member for Hinchinbrook and indeed even the member for Condamine. There is record infrastructure going into these rural and regional councils because on this side of the House there are people who will kick, fight, scratch and scream for local communities. We are passionate about regional communities. There are others who will sell their soul for 30 pieces of silver. We will deliver for regional communities. We will deliver for regional councils. This is a great state with great opportunities.

*(Time expired)*

**Madam SPEAKER:** Before calling the member for Rockhampton, I point out that the conversation level is creeping up in the House. Please take your conversations outside. Please give courtesy to the member who is on their feet. I call the member for Rockhampton.

### Government Buildings

**Mr BYRNE:** My question is to the Premier. I refer to the government buildings located at 111 George Street and 33 Charlotte Street and ask: will the Premier advise when these two buildings were included on the list of public assets to be sold? Will he provide a full list of CBD properties earmarked for sale to fund the new executive building for the Premier himself?

**Mr NEWMAN:** There is a whole lot in that question that is just dead wrong. I probably better just talk about the process for 1 William Street so that those opposite can start to understand that you can save money and do more with less and it is not just how much money you spend or how many people you have or whatever delivers outcomes. It is about how you responsibly manage finances, which they were never able to do.

What we are seeking to do is deal with the fact that we have large CBD property holdings. They are old, they are run down and there is 100,000 square metres of CBD office space approximately more than we need if the people we had were in modern efficient floor plates, modern buildings, where we could have teamwork and collaboration happening, rather than dark, dingy corridors with threadbare carpets for public servants trying to do a great job for Queenslanders, so that we actually did a better job for them as well.

So the idea is that the private sector get to tender to build a building at 1 William Street. We do not have to raise money to build it. For the benefit of those opposite, why? Because the private sector are going to invest the money, and they are very keen to invest the money. We will be a tenant. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Rockhampton would reflect on the arrangements of their own electorate office. Do they rent? I assume they do. I assume that the parliament actually rents their office. So what is the difference? They have an office that is rented. The private sector owns it. Someone is getting a rental cheque. If they can just allow their minds to look forward a bit bigger, if they could imagine that there is an office and a high-rise building has a number of offices stacked on top of one another writ large. So that is what we are doing. The private sector will be taking the risk. The private sector will be owning that building and maintaining that building, and that is a great outcome as well.

Then what does that allow us to do? It allows us to get public servants into a great new building that they can then be productive in. It allows us then, as I have said before, to revitalise some important parts of the Brisbane CBD. That process can then proceed when we have gone a bit further down the track of the RFP. But you would have thought that at a time when the building industry was in the doldrums those Labor members opposite would support working men and women, members of the CFMEU and the Builders Labourers Federation. I have a good relationship with both those union leaders, and they want jobs. They want this project. They want to see the building constructed and who knows? It might even be a large super fund that actually puts up the money, with union members benefiting ultimately through their superannuation.

### World AIDS Day

**Mr HOLSWICH:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. I refer the minister to the upcoming World AIDS Day and the Newman LNP government's commitment to build a better future for Queenslanders. I ask: will the minister update the House on how the government is tackling this important health issue after a decade of indifference and inaction by the previous Labor government?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I thank the honourable member for his interest in this area. I really appreciate his question and also commend him and other members who are in here today wearing the ribbon which symbolises international World AIDS Day, which is going to be celebrated on 1 December. Indeed, this is the 25th such year of celebration and recognition of international World AIDS Day, and it is a very important to understand that right throughout the world millions of people actually suffer from HIV/AIDS as we sit here this morning. Indeed, many millions of people have actually died as a consequence of this scourge over many decades.

Fortunately, as we have gone forward, we have been able to create a greater environment, a safer environment and a more stable environment for people who are actually suffering from HIV. Fortunately, with regard to the antiretroviral drugs which have been on the market in recent years, we have been able to ensure that people who have tested positive for HIV have been able to go on and live a long and very productive life.

One of my concerns over a long period of time has been the way the HIV/AIDS program and awareness campaigns have been run in Queensland. That necessitated some very tough decisions in recent times and that was to establish a ministerial AIDS advisory committee, which is going about the work now of actually targeting the strategies that are going to make a difference. Indeed, the Commonwealth government has recently signed up to very ambitious international targets which aim to reduce the HIV diagnosis rates by some 50 per cent by 2015. That is going to be extremely hard to achieve, but they have gone further than that and they are wanting to commit to, say, 80 per cent.

As part of that, we need new strategies to be able to arrest this scourge, because last year in Australia 1,137 new diagnoses were recorded for people with HIV. Indeed, there was an 8.2 per cent increase. The ministerial AIDS advisory council, which is ably chaired by Dr Darren Russell, an expert in his field, and many other representatives, are hard at work. Already we are putting in place programs such as rapid testing so that we can actually diagnose people who are positive to HIV. That in itself with our education programs is likely to result in a spike over a period of time as we actually now target and identify and encourage more people to come forward.

The other thing that we are going to be doing is to ensure that strategies such as test and treat—that is, treatment as prevention—are going to become part of the way we deal with HIV/AIDS in Queensland. This is rather controversial but we do know that it does make a difference, because when people are tested and if they test positive they are treated, then that is going to make a difference to further contractions of the disease.

*(Time expired)*

### Member for Gaven

**Mrs SCOTT:** My question without notice is to the Premier. Would the Premier advise the House if he or any of his staff have had discussions with Santo Santoro and his staff in the lead-up to the government's decision to remove the member for Gaven as chair of the Ethics Committee?

**Mr NEWMAN:** I am delighted to rise to answer that ridiculous question. I certainly have not had any conversations with Mr Santo Santoro for many, many months—no conversations, no meetings, no little careless whispers or anything like that. I have not had anything to do with him at all. I cannot speak for my staff, but I have no knowledge of them doing so, and I quite frankly would be surprised if they had. And any suggestion that we would indeed have a conversation about that is ridiculous. It is preposterous. It just shows that the Labor Party do not have a lot to offer. If they had a lot to offer, they would be in the paper today. They would be in the paper today proposing alternative policies.

**Ms Trad:** You took all the room!

**Mr NEWMAN:** Well it is a sign—

**Ms Palaszczuk:** There wasn't any room for us.

**Mr NEWMAN:** I hear them interjecting but I have to say that today's coverage in the paper is indeed an opposition-free zone. I could make other comments about it. We cheerfully accept the commentary in the paper today. But one thing is that those opposite have been unable to articulate an alternative future for Queensland, an alternative policy future. And all they do is come in here with these nonsense questions day after day, week after week. Come on!

Through you, Madam Speaker, I urge the opposition to do better. I urge the opposition to work harder. I urge the opposition to have some New Year's resolutions, resolutions to get to the heart of the real issues. Any government should be challenged on the real substantive policy issues, the things that really matter. And what are the things that matter? I urge them to think about questions next year that challenge the government on areas such as are we doing enough to create jobs? Are we doing enough to restore the fiscal stability of the great state of Queensland? Are we doing enough to protect the environment? Are we doing enough on the cost-of-living issues?

These are things that an opposition that had real gas in the tank would be out going after a government on. That is what we stood for. Surely the opposition should be challenging us on those things, holding us to account on those things, rather than letting the media do all the work for them, doing all the heavy lifting for them. They are not doing any heavy lifting. This government I say will ignore those sorts of unproductive interventions by the Australian Labor Party. What we will do is get on with the job of creating a great state with great opportunity, and we are getting on with the job of dealing with those matters.

### Newman Government, Achievements

**Mr DRISCOLL:** My question without notice is to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. Having regard to the significant community concern over the failure of previous Labor governments to respond to the genuine concerns of Queenslanders, how does the approach of this government in getting this state back on track contrast with that of its predecessors?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I thank the member for Redcliffe for a great question, albeit amended three times this week. But it is a good question. I thank the honourable Premier for sitting down earlier in an answer to allow me three minutes to answer this important question that I have been trying to answer all week. It is a great question because this government is about getting on with the job. We can see the headlines in the paper and all the trash that everyone wants to throw at us, but we are determined to get on with the job of getting this state back on track—just like the member for Redcliffe did in his electorate. We only have to look at the last six months to see what the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and this government have been doing.

I was pleased that one of the first pieces of legislation passed through this House was to make it illegal to lie to parliament. I know the Labor Party voted for it. I suggest there was possibly a conflict of interest. It should have excused itself from voting for that legislation, but we got it through. We restored the independent Public Advocate in Queensland and appointed a permanent Public Advocate. Those opposite voted against an independent Public Advocate.

We enacted legislation for tougher sentencing. We have evading police laws now. We have the first two-strike legislation in Australia, getting tough on sex offenders because we want Queensland to be the safest place to raise a child. We appointed a red-tape expert panel to look at liquor licensing. I have recultured my department to make sure they have none of these restaurant licences on their desk and we let businesses get on with the job of running their businesses.

We engaged community organisations, and I am on the verge of announcing \$2 million in additional grants to victims of crime groups right across Queensland. The opposition leader came in here a couple of days ago and talked about Christmas. We have talked a lot about Christmas. I am the minister responsible for consumer affairs.

**A government member:** For Christmas?

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Not for Christmas; for consumer affairs. The opposition leader tabled a bunch of newspaper articles and suggested that they be used as Christmas wrapping paper, and it was all unflattering things against us. As the consumer affairs minister of this state, I looked at what sort of Christmas paper the Labor Party would offer up if we used some of the headlines. I table the Labor Party Christmas wrapping.

*Tabled paper:* Bundle of various newspaper articles regarding the Bligh government [1785].

The headlines read: 'Only the Lonely'; 'All Aboard: Ministers' Secret Luxury Dinner'; 'Taking to the Skies'; 'Peace Train: Bligh rolls in share float to appease opposition to asset sales'; 'Guilty'; 'Tears and Denial'; 'Under Fire'; 'Chosen Few'; 'Gloves off: Debate sets up bitter election'—and wasn't it a bitter election from those opposite, particularly the member for South Brisbane?—'Nudge Nudge, Link Link'; 'Shower Power'—that would make a good Christmas wrapper—and of course 'Guilty'.

*(Time expired)*

### Health and Hospital Boards

**Mrs CUNNINGHAM:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. The health executive in Rockhampton told local Gladstone doctors that no further meetings will be held with doctors until a clinical engagement strategy is in place. Queensland Health claims the strategy is a requirement of the Commonwealth government. Health and hospital boards have now been in place for five months, and I ask: when will these strategies be drawn up? Are they public documents? In the interim, is the board disinterested in the concerns and advice of local clinicians?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I thank the honourable member for Gladstone for her question. As I indicated yesterday in answer to her question, I understand the passion, commitment and advocacy of the honourable member for Gladstone on matters to do with her hospital and her community's access to health care, and that is very much appreciated.

It is true that for a long period of time now there have been some very serious issues regarding engagement, morale, attracting staff and those sorts of things at the Gladstone Hospital. I think we are seeing a situation that is now almost becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. As morale is dropping off, there are issues with attracting staff. No doubt there are some issues of concern and conflict and misunderstanding or failure to properly integrate the concerns of Gladstone with the bigger body that is based in Rockhampton.

I indicated just after becoming minister that I would like to see this issue comprehensively addressed. Indeed, with the establishment of the hospital board there is a person on that board who is from Gladstone. Only recently a couple more people have been appointed to the hospital board. It is true that it was formed on 1 July this year. Many of those boards are still taking on new members and, indeed, some of them have had only three or four full meetings to be able to consider certain issues.

With regard to the community engagement strategy and the clinician engagement strategy, it is very true that the expectation is that there will be a clinician engagement strategy, there will be a community engagement strategy, and there will also be protocols that will have to be developed with Medicare Locals. It is envisaged that those things will be generally completed by the end of this year. Are those documents to be readily available to the public? Yes, because I have indicated that we want those things available to the public because they are in response to the public's need and the public's requirements, and that is something which we are very much committed to.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order! The time for questions has expired.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Valedictory

 **Hon. CKT NEWMAN** (Ashgrove—LNP) (Premier) (11.05 am), by leave: I rise to address the House as we conclude the parliamentary year for 2012 today. While the House will observe the traditional valedictory debate later today, I will be absent from the House tonight given my departure leading a Queensland trade and investment mission to India. This is an important trade mission for Queensland. India is already Queensland's fourth largest merchandise export destination, but with its

growing middle class it presents many opportunities to enhance trade in the construction, energy, education, tourism and mining sectors. This mission will be specifically focusing on these sectors, and I will be unashamedly encouraging the Indian government and business leaders to invest further in Queensland.

In March this year the people of this great state elected the 54th Parliament of Queensland. As honourable members well know, the election heralded Queensland's first conservative government since 1998, and it was a privilege and an honour for me to be sworn in as Queensland's 38th Premier on 26 March 2012. The state election and a closely followed by-election resulted in 51 new members joining the parliament. I understand that this is the single largest intake of new members in the history of the Legislative Assembly. While I am speaking of historic events of the Legislative Assembly, Madam Speaker, your election in May as Queensland's first female Speaker was another historic event.

The government was elected with a clear mandate. Our No. 1 priority is to get Queensland back on track, and we hit the ground running. Despite the \$60-plus billion legacy of debt left by Labor, the government implemented measures to bring government spending under control and delivered on our commitments to the people of Queensland.

My government went to the election with a commitment to lower the cost of living for families. We have delivered on our commitment by reintroducing discounted weekly fares for regular commuters; freezing the standard electricity tariff; halving the Labor government's scheduled public transport fare increases; reinstating stamp duty concessions for the principal place of residence; streamlining home sale contracts; and freezing the cost of registering the family car.

We are a government that actually does what it says it will do. We ticked off every item on our 30-day action plan and our 100-day action plan, and we are well on the way to completing our six-month action plan. We are committed to issuing a six-monthly progress report on the implementation of the government's 2012 election commitments and other action items.

It is vital that we continue to share our plans with Queenslanders and set out clear delivery targets. We are doing this because we are committed to delivering on our promises and to remaining accountable to Queenslanders, and we are not afraid to give them a yardstick to measure us against.

We are delivering for regional Queensland through the Royalties for the Regions program. Over the next four years, this program will invest \$495 million in new and improved community infrastructure, roads and flood plain security projects that will benefit those who live, work and invest in our resource regions. Successful projects from the first round will be announced early next year.

The burden of red tape is something that must be dealt with, and the government has already reduced red tape and made planning simpler through amendments that have been made to the Sustainable Planning Act. Construction has commenced on the new Sunshine Coast University Hospital, which will open in 2016, and the Mary Valley Economic Development Strategy was released in July.

I want to now talk about the Bruce Highway, our economic artery which must be improved. To this end, the Bruce Highway Action Plan was released in October. This is a 10-year engineering based plan to fix the Bruce Highway developed by a technical advisory group. With this plan the government has lobbied, and will continue to lobby, the federal government for funding for this and other Queensland infrastructure priorities.

In growing a four-pillar economy, the government has scrapped the waste levy and increased the payroll tax threshold for 2012-13 to \$1.1 million, with planned increases up to 2017. The inaugural DestinationQ forum was held in June to focus whole-of-government support for tourism. It was the first forum of its kind to be held in 25 years in Queensland and I am reliably informed that tourism operators state-wide are still talking about the forum. In a vote of confidence for the state, new aviation routes to Queensland have been established this year, including China Eastern Airlines flying direct from Shanghai to Cairns, Qantas restarting flights direct from Sydney to the Gold Coast and Etihad Airways increasing its flights between Brisbane and Abu Dhabi from February 2013. These flights will certainly help our tourism industry as we strive to double annual overnight expenditure to \$30 billion by 2020.

Throughout this year, the government has commenced amending legislation to restore access for beekeepers to native forests, and access to national parks has also been granted for other multiuse purposes. Twelve additional officers have also been appointed to strengthen Queensland's biosecurity. In the area of racing, the Racing Act has been amended to establish separate control boards for greyhound, thoroughbred and harness racing, together with a new all-codes racing industry board. The government has also started rolling out 20 additional country race meetings across Queensland as we try to reinvigorate racing in this state.

The revitalisation of front-line services is being delivered, with over 450 new police recruits having commenced training as part of the government's three-year plan to put an additional 1,100 new police officers on the beat. The government is also cracking down on crime with tougher sentences for serious offenders. We have increased the non-parole period for murder from 15 to 20 years imprisonment and for multiple murders from 20 to 30 years imprisonment; we have established a new offence of murder of a police officer with a non-parole period of 25 years imprisonment; and we have doubled the maximum penalty for serious assault on a police officer from seven to 14 years. Legislation has also been introduced with tougher penalties for drug dealers who have unexplained wealth and those who target children. The government has also introduced legislation which will increase penalties for graffiti offenders and implement mandatory clean-up orders. This is supported by the establishment of GraffitiSTOP—a dedicated hotline for people to call to request the removal of graffiti. At the centre of all these initiatives is our aim to make communities safer.

In the environment sphere, the protection of dugongs and turtles has been increased through amendments to the Animal Care and Protection Act. Under the government's Koala Habitat Program, more than 150 South-East Queensland landowners have offered to sell their properties, and in October the Koala Rescue and Rehabilitation Grants Program was opened for eligible front-line organisations to further develop their services now and into the future. Furthermore, the Everyone's Environment program was launched earlier this year, and the successful recipients in this program will be announced next month.

Education is central to our future. State schools with special education programs have been provided with more than 7,000 e-tablets. We have also provided up to 20 iPads and e-tablets to more than 40 state special schools across Queensland and up to 10 devices to other state schools offering special education programs so that children have access to the latest technology. At the beginning of the 2013 school year, 26 independent public schools will commence and 154 prep classes in 107 schools will get a boost in teacher aide hours. The Get in the Game grants initiative for local sport and recreation clubs was also launched in September. And, after years of Labor neglect, we are dedicating \$200 million to fix the school maintenance backlog and give our children safe places to learn.

The government is also restoring accountability. We have again made it illegal to lie to the parliament, and we have given communities a greater say about the previous government's forced council amalgamations. We have appointed a Boundaries Commissioner to oversee the process and identify those local councils best suited to be de-amalgamated. We are also delivering accountability through our open data initiative. Already we have released diverse data sets—ranging from dental waiting lists to 15 years of crime statistics, and more is coming. My government has also committed to releasing both my diary and ministers' diaries monthly as part of the government's commitment to a new era of openness and accountability.

The government established the Queensland child protection inquiry on 1 July this year. The inquiry is reviewing the progress related to the recommendations from the Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions, otherwise known as the Forde inquiry, and the Crime and Misconduct Commission's report entitled *Protecting children: an inquiry into abuse of children in foster care*. The inquiry's final report, due by 30 April next year, will propose a plan for child protection for the next decade.

These are but an outline of some of the government's achievements and other initiatives that we have been progressing since coming to office this year. We have done a great deal already, despite the economic challenges we face, and I assure Queenslanders that the energy and commitment my government has displayed in its first eight months will not flag. As the 2012 parliamentary year comes to an end, I assure the House that the government remains committed to delivering better government for Queenslanders and ensuring Queensland is a great state with great opportunity.

In 2013 my government will continue working to ensure Queensland remains a great place to live, work and raise a family where the cost of living is low. We will continue our work to deliver a strong four-pillar economy focused on tourism, agriculture, resources and construction and we will empower businesses by cutting red tape and regulation. By working with business and industry, we will create jobs, opportunity and prosperity, keeping our best and brightest here in Queensland. Across the state, we will continue working to provide access to the best health care and to provide our children with the best education. We will ensure our communities are safe and our vulnerable are protected. We will deliver well-planned infrastructure across the state. And we will ensure that we have a government that is open and accountable and delivers the results Queenslanders expect.

As I alluded to earlier in my statement, 2012 has been a historic year for the Queensland parliament. There are many people I would like to thank including the Clerk of the Parliament, Neil Laurie, the Deputy Clerk, Michael Ries, and their team and all of the officers of the Parliamentary Service; Michael Hickey, Director of Corporate and House Services, and his staff; the Chief Hansard Reporter, Lucinda Osmond, and all of her staff; all of the officers from the Committee Office, managed

by Stephen Finnimore, together with all of the officers from the Parliamentary Education and Communications Secretariat; our Librarian, Katherine Brennan, and all of the library staff, as well as the officers of Chamber and Procedural Services, managed by the First Clerk Assistant, Leanne Clare; the Manager of Property Services, Darryl McCarthy, and all of his team, including the gardeners, cleaning and maintenance staff; the Acting Manager of Security and Attendant Services and Sergeant-at-Arms, Michael Watkin, and all of the parliamentary attendants and security officers; the Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel, led by Theresa Johnson; the Manager of Human Resource Services, Peter Morris; the Manager of Financial and Administrative Services, Craig Atkinson; the Manager of Information Technology Services, Mike Coburn; and all of their respective officers, including the executive support services staff. I would also like to thank the Catering Services team, led by Jaakko Ponsi, for keeping us all well fed, and the food in the parliament is certainly wonderful. They do a tremendous job. They are wonderful, wonderful people.

Madam Speaker, as you well appreciate, the parliament is a diverse operation and the Parliamentary Service is made up of a wide variety of dedicated officers with many skills who ensure that the parliament runs smoothly. I want everyone in the Parliamentary Service to know that their efforts are fully, totally and unequivocally appreciated by all members of the House.

Before I conclude, I would like to say a few words about the great electorate of Ashgrove. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in the electorate as the local member and I have got to know so many more constituents and learn about their needs and issues. I have enjoyed celebrating special milestones and occasions with the community. I have especially enjoyed meeting with my constituents who have taken the time to share their personal stories and concerns with me. Indeed, a lot of the conversations I have had have motivated me even further to drive change for the better, and in some cases they have inspired me to look at issues in a different way.

I have also had many one-on-one meetings. Indeed, I have met with every single principal in a formal way in all 18 schools in the electorate and I have met with many school community representatives, and I thank them all for being so very welcoming. I have invited sporting groups, small businesses and church leaders to my office to share their feedback and network with each other on Friday afternoons. This has been a great opportunity to hear more about how we can work together.

Finally, I want to thank the cabinet team, the assistant ministry and, of course, all the LNP members for their hard work this year. I would like to conclude by wishing everyone in this place a safe and joyful Christmas and a happy new year. I know we all look forward to continuing to serve Queenslanders and deliver for Queensland—a great state with great opportunity—in 2013.

## MOTIONS

### Suspension of Sessional Orders

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (11.19 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That, notwithstanding anything contained in sessional orders, for this day's sitting the order of business from 2.30 pm will be:

- 2.30 pm to 3 pm Private Members' Bills and Private Members' Statements; and
- 3 pm until special adjournment moved, Government Business.

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (11.20 am): I wish to support the motion moved by the Leader of the House. I thank him for discussing the matter with me today. It is important that members are able to have the opportunity to speak during the private members' statements session this week. This is being done in an effort to ensure that, in a bipartisan way, we are able to provide an earlier finishing time today to ensure that we can all have a good and reasonable amount of time with parliamentary staff. Of course, it is also another example of where we can achieve a smooth and efficient operation of the parliament.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

### Amendments to Standing Orders

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (11.21 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly be amended by replacing standing orders 24, 26, 166 and 168 as circulated in my name and that such amendments become effective from 1 January 2013.

In explanation of that motion, the Committee of the Legislative Assembly has adopted a formal, less paper parliament strategy whereby there is a phased approach to reducing hard copy distribution of tabled documents commencing with annual reports. Under the strategy, a single hard copy document and an electronic copy of the document will continue to be required. However, members will be encouraged to access tabled documents electronically to reduce the usage and wastage of paper and reduce the costs associated with hard copy production. The Parliamentary Service, especially chamber services, has been instructed not to provide hard copy distribution or print hard copies of documents that have been phased out of hard copy distribution. The proposed amendments to standing orders will be effective from the first day of January 2013 to facilitate the strategy.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

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#### AMENDMENT OF STANDING RULES AND ORDERS

##### 1. Omit Standing Order 24, insert new Standing Order 24:

###### **'24. Hard Copy and Electronic Copies of Documents**

(1) The Committee of the Legislative Assembly shall determine and publish the number of hard copies of documents tabled by the Speaker, Ministers and Members required to be supplied to the Clerk.

(2) The Speaker, Ministers and Members must provide to the Clerk:

- (a) a single hard copy of all reports and other documents required to be tabled by them by statute or these Standing Orders;
- (b) an electronic copy in a form suitable for the Tabled Paper Database of all reports and documents required to be tabled by them by statute or these Standing Orders; and
- (c) copies of all reports and documents required to be tabled by them by statute or these Standing Orders in the quantities decided and published by the Committee of the Legislative Assembly in accordance with (1).

(3) The Clerk and parliamentary officers are not required to supply Members hard copies of reports and documents once the copies supplied in accordance with (2)(c) have been distributed.'

##### 2. Omit Standing Order 26, insert new Standing Order 26:

###### **'26. Tabled Paper Database (e-papers)**

(1) The Clerk shall maintain an electronic database upon which the Clerk shall cause to be published electronic copies of tabled documents, as far as is practicable or convenient.

(2) The Clerk shall not publish on the electronic database any report or other tabled paper where:

- (a) publication of the tabled document would offend another Standing Order;
- (b) publication of the tabled document has been restricted by an order of the House; or
- (c) publication of the tabled document would jeopardise the tabled paper database due to its size, content or some other matter.'

##### 3. Omit Standing Order 166, insert new Standing Order 166:

###### **'166. Two copies of Bill to be provided to and certified by the Clerk**

(1) When a Bill has passed the House, the Minister or Member responsible for the Bill shall ensure that two fair prints of the Bill are provided to the Clerk.

(2) The Clerk shall authenticate and certify the two fair prints of the Bill.'

##### 4. Omit Standing Order 168, insert new Standing Order 168:

###### **'168. Deposit of original Bills**

When the Governor has assented to any Bill, the Clerk shall:

- (a) deposit one copy in the Registry of Titles;
- (b) retain one copy in the records of the Parliament; and
- (c) ensure a digital copy of a print of the Bill is kept.'

## LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

### Report, Motion to Take Note

**Madam SPEAKER:** In accordance with standing order 71, the notice of motion has lapsed.

## CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL (NO. 2)

### Introduction

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (11.23 am): I present a bill for an act to amend the Bail Act 1980, the Corrective Services Act 2006, the Criminal Code, the Drug Court Act 2000, the Drugs Misuse Act 1986, the Justices Act 1886, the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992, the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008, the Summary Offences Act 2005, the Victims of Crime Assistance Act 2009 and the Youth Justice Act 1992 for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee to consider the bill.

*Tabled paper:* Criminal Law Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2012 [[1786](#)].

*Tabled paper:* Criminal Law Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2012, explanatory notes [[1787](#)].

I am pleased to introduce the Criminal Law Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2012. The bill fulfils the Queensland government's pre-election pledge: to ensure drug traffickers serve at least 80 per cent of their sentence before parole eligibility; to toughen the sentencing laws for drug traffickers who target children; to ensure that victim impact statements be read out in court if the victim wishes; and to ensure all graffiti offenders remove graffiti and to strengthen the maximum penalty for graffiti crime. The bill also contains amendments to end Queensland's Drug Court by 30 June 2013, including transitional arrangements for offenders already subject to orders under the Drug Court Act 2000. These amendments follow the announcement of the state budget on 11 September 2012 that funding will cease for the Drug Court. In terms of drug offenders, the bill adopts a tough new approach to the sentencing of drug traffickers. The reforms ensure that all convicted drug traffickers sentenced to immediate full-time imprisonment serve a minimum of 80 per cent of their sentence before being eligible to apply for parole release. Drug trafficking has the potential to cause considerable individual suffering but also significant broader social detriment and harm.

The bill also targets adults who supply dangerous drugs to young children by inserting a new category into the offence of 'aggravated supply' under section 6 of the Drugs Misuse Act 1986 to deal with the situation where an adult supplies a dangerous drug to a child under 16 years of age. Children, because of their youth, are particularly vulnerable to adults who seek to expose them to the dangers of drugs and to the illegal drug culture. The Drugs Misuse Act already recognises that an adult who supplies a dangerous drug to a person under 18 years should be subject to higher maximum penalties than if they had supplied the drug to an adult. The bill bolsters the position by providing that, where the child was under 16 years, the maximum penalty increases to life imprisonment where the drug supplied was a schedule 1 drug such as heroin or amphetamines and to 25 years imprisonment for a schedule 2 drug such as cannabis. These reforms are consistent with the approach in Queensland to specifically protect children under 16 from criminal activity through the creation of offences and higher maximum penalties.

The bill also delivers on the government's commitment to crack down on graffiti crime in Queensland. Graffiti costs the community significant resources annually for it to be cleaned up and demonstrates a complete disregard for property. The bill increases the maximum penalty for graffiti crime under the Criminal Code from five years to seven years imprisonment and inserts a new mandatory community based sentencing order, called a graffiti removal order—or a GRO—into the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992 and the Youth Justice Act 1992. This new order ensures that graffiti offenders, whether adult or juvenile, remove graffiti or undertake related work that contributes to graffiti removal or the clean-up of public places in the communities.

In the case of adult offenders, the bill also provides that, where the court is satisfied that a thing such as a mobile phone or camera owned or possessed by the person has been used to record, or to disseminate to others, images of the commission of the offence or the graffiti itself, the court may order the thing be forfeited to the state. These reforms reinforce graffiti as an act of vandalism and go to the heart of the graffiti gang culture. These reforms are an important part of this government's efforts to eliminate graffiti crime in Queensland.

The amendment relating to victim impact statements is an important means by which to empower victims as they traverse the criminal justice system. The bill ensures that a victim, who so wishes, can read aloud their victim impact statement before the sentencing court unless, having regard to all of the circumstances, it would be inappropriate to do so. Provisions to support the victim, where necessary, in reading aloud their victim impact statement are included in the bill.

The bill also provides for the cessation of the Drug Court by 30 June 2013. A gradual approach to the termination of the Drug Court has been adopted to allow offenders, currently subject to an intensive drug rehabilitation order under the Drug Court Act, time to sufficiently complete their order so that a fair, final sentence can be imposed upon them.

Further, the bill amends the Bail Act to clarify that the Magistrates Court may impose a condition of bail requiring the defendant to participate in a rehabilitative, treatment or other intervention program and omits the statutory requirement for such program to be prescribed. This amendment will give greater flexibility to magistrates to refer defendants to any suitable rehabilitative program without the red tape involved in prescribing the program. The bill also amends the Bail Act to omit section 29(2)(c) so that an adult defendant's failure to comply with a condition of bail relating to participation in a rehabilitation program constitutes an offence for the purpose of section 29(1) of the act. This amendment is consistent with the LNP government's commitment to be tough on crime, including breaches of bail conditions. I commend the bill to the House.

### First Reading

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (11.29 am): 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 Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee

**Madam SPEAKER:** In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee.

## CRIMINAL LAW (CHILD EXPLOITATION AND DANGEROUS DRUGS) AMENDMENT BILL

### Introduction

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (11.30 am): I present a bill for an act to amend the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000, the Criminal Code, the Disability Services Act 2006, the Drugs Misuse Act 1986, the Drugs Misuse Regulation 1987 and the Evidence Act 1977, and to make minor and consequential amendments of other acts as stated in the schedule, for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee to consider the bill.

*Tabled paper:* Criminal Law (Child Exploitation and Dangerous Drugs) Amendment Bill 2012 [[1788](#)].

*Tabled paper:* Criminal Law (Child Exploitation and Dangerous Drugs) Amendment Bill 2012, explanatory notes [[1789](#)].

The Criminal Law (Child Exploitation and Dangerous Drugs) Amendment Bill 2012 fulfils the government's commitment as part of its six-month action plan to amend laws to address synthetic drugs, penalties for child pornography and some child sex offences including a new child-grooming offence.

The bill significantly strengthens the penalties for the child exploitation material offences in the Criminal Code. These types of offences are abhorrent and should not be considered as victimless crimes. Demand for the possession of these types of images creates a market for those who are actively involved in the making and the supply of such material. The making of child exploitation images results in children suffering at the hands of the depraved individuals who engage in the sexual activities which are often depicted in these images. It is therefore vital that this market is targeted by introducing tough new penalties.

The maximum penalty for the offence of possessing child exploitation material is increased from five years to 14 years imprisonment and the maximum penalties for the offences of involving a child in the making of child exploitation material, making child exploitation material and distributing child exploitation material are increased from 10 years to 14 years imprisonment.

By increasing all the maximum penalties to 14 years imprisonment, the current distinction in penalties between possessing the material and making and supplying the material is excluded. While the criminal law often treats the possession of contraband less seriously than its production or distribution, such an approach should not be taken for child exploitation material offences, where the market demand directly results in the physical and sexual abuse of children.

The bill amends the definition of 'child exploitation material' to ensure the phrase is interpreted to apply to animated or fictitious images of children and to allow for the joinder of multiple child exploitation material offences in one charge on an indictment.

The bill affords further protection to children by inserting a new circumstance of aggravation into the offences of sodomy, unlawful carnal knowledge and indecent treatment of children. Higher maximum penalties will apply when the child victim is a child with an impairment of the mind, in recognition of their increased susceptibility to the predations of paedophiles.

A new offence of 'grooming' a child to engage in sexual activity will be introduced and will carry a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment, or 10 years if the child is under 12 years. The new grooming offence is designed to capture adults who engage in conduct with a child with the intention to facilitate the later procurement of the child for sexual activity. The offence will potentially allow police to intervene before a sexual act or sex related activity takes place.

In order to strengthen the offence of using the internet to procure children under 16 to engage in a sexual act and to accommodate the new offence of grooming, the bill increases the penalties for procuring from five to 10 years imprisonment. The maximum penalty for the aggravated offence is raised to 14 years from 10 years. Further, the bill creates a new circumstance of aggravation where the procuring conduct involves the adult meeting the child or travelling to meet the child.

The bill also removes a loophole in the offence of incest in cases where an adult engages in consensual sex with their de facto partner's child who is over the age of consent—aged 16 or 17 years—but not yet an adult of 18 years. The offence of incest in the Criminal Code includes a complete defence where the parties were lawfully married at the time sexual intercourse took place or if the parties were entitled to be lawfully married. In a recent case, the Queensland Court of Appeal set aside the convictions for six counts of incest on the basis that the offender was lawfully entitled to be married to his long-term de facto wife's 17-year-old daughter when he commenced a sexual relationship with her. The bill amends the offence of incest to ensure the defence is only available if the parties are actually married or, if not married, both parties are adults and entitled to be lawfully married—therefore, over 18.

The bill makes a number of amendments to the Drugs Misuse Act 1986 and the Drugs Misuse Regulation 1987, but I particularly wish to mention two. The first is the creation of a new offence of trafficking in precursors. Precursors are those substances that are used to manufacture dangerous drugs. Often very large quantities of precursor chemicals are supplied, and the current offences of unlawful supply, possession or production do not truly reflect the criminality involved. The new offence of trafficking in precursors will carry a maximum penalty of 20 years imprisonment.

The second amendment is to the definition of 'dangerous drug'. The definition of 'dangerous drug' in the Drugs Misuse Act encompasses analogues of the dangerous drugs listed in the schedules in the regulation. However, in order to prove a substance is an analogue of a listed dangerous drug the prosecution must prove the substance has a substantially similar chemical structure to the scheduled dangerous drug and that it has a substantially similar pharmacological effect. Proving this second limb can be problematic, because often there is no research undertaken on the new drugs to evidence that the substance has a substantially similar pharmacological effect. The bill addresses this issue by removing the requirement to prove both limbs. This will mean that the prosecution will only need to prove that the substance either has a substantially similar chemical structure as a dangerous drug or has a substantially similar pharmacological effect as a dangerous drug and it has the intention to have a substantially similar pharmacological effect as a dangerous drug. The amendment will ensure that we can stay ahead of underground chemists who are producing illegal drugs that are currently not prescribed. To be clear, of the two limbs we currently have the second limb will be changed to encompass the intention to cause the same pharmacological effect. Rather than the prosecution having to prove both limbs, it will have to prove only one or the other of the limbs.

The bill also amends the Drugs Misuse Act to clarify that the District Court has the power to make forfeiture orders in relation to drugs, precursor chemicals, drug paraphernalia and proceeds derived from drug offences.

Other amendments include an amendment to section 54 of the Evidence Act 1977 to modernise the section and provide a rebuttable presumption as to a previous conviction where an expert opines to the identity of the offender.

Consequential amendments are made to the offence schedules relevant to the blue card system in the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 to reflect changes made to relevant Commonwealth child sex related offences and to reflect the amendments in the bill. Corresponding amendments are also made to the offence schedules for the yellow card system in the Disability Services Act 2006. The consequential amendments will help ensure the effective operation of the blue and yellow card systems to protect children, young people and people with a disability.

This government wants Queensland to be the safest place in Australia to raise a child. The bill introduces tough new laws that address child exploitation offences and amends our drug laws to keep up with emerging criminal conduct. I commend the bill to the House.

### First Reading



**Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (11.39 am): 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 Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Dr Robinson): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee.

## TOURISM AND EVENTS QUEENSLAND BILL

Resumed from 1 November (see p. 2387).

### Second Reading



**Hon. JA STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games) (11.40 am): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I thank the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee for its expeditious consideration of the Tourism and Events Queensland Bill 2012—a bill that will facilitate the merger of Tourism Queensland and Events Queensland and repeal the Tourism Queensland Act 1979. I note that the committee tabled its report on 22 November 2012 and that the committee has made one recommendation—that is, that the bill be passed. The government accepts this recommendation and appreciates the committee's support in this regard. The committee has also drawn two issues to my attention which I want to briefly address. The first relates to the ability for the Governor in Council to remove the CEO of Tourism and Events Queensland from office at any time for any reason or none. As the committee notes in its report, provisions that allow the Governor in Council to remove a statutory body's corporate CEO or board members 'for any reason or none' are not uncommon. Within my portfolio legislation, a similar provision exists for the CEO of the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games Corporation. CEO and senior executive officer contracts within government also include standard provisions which allow removal from office for no reason.

The second issue raised by the committee is that proposed subclause 38(4) operates as a Henry VIII clause because it allows the statutory set flexibility to decide employment terms under proposed subsection 38(3) to be able to be displaced by a contrary provision in an industrial instrument such as an industrial award, certified agreement, code of practice and so on. The clause is necessary to continue the employment conditions for employees of Tourism Queensland and Events Queensland who are transitioned to the new entity. This will keep employees in the state industrial relations system. Abolishing it at this time would see employees fall under the federal system.

As I said in this House on 1 November this year when I moved the motion referring the bill to the committee for consideration, the current legislation limits the number of members that can be appointed to the Corporation of Tourism Queensland to nine. Because of this limit, we have been unable to appoint additional members to the corporation or set up a new board with the overarching responsibility for tourism and events. The corporation and the board of Events Queensland have, however, continued to meet separately as there has been so much activity in these sectors, and I am sure honourable members would agree that there has been plenty of activity in tourism and events. The new board members include experienced and highly respected industry representatives who will bring a new focus and a wealth of knowledge to the new entity. These appointments allow us to expand the membership of the new board of Tourism and Events Queensland so that it has the right mix of skills to refocus and reshape the state's approach to tourism and events, and that is to reposition Queensland as Australia's premier destination. The changes in strategic leadership of the organisation will give it the fresh start and renewed energy it needs to drive the government's tourism agenda and DestinationQ strategy.

Events Queensland was established as a proprietary limited company in 1989 to support and develop events that are capable of generating sustainable economic activity by attracting visitors from interstate and overseas. I am pleased to say that it has been very successful and has grown the calendar from 21 major events in 2010 to 39 in 2012, and I want to place on record our appreciation to all those involved in growing Queensland events. There is a clear synergy between Events Queensland's role and the role of Tourism Queensland to achieving a more integrated approach to enticing visitors to Queensland—whether they come for holidays, events, visiting family and friends,

conventions, festivals and many more opportunities. Events in Queensland provided an estimated economic impact in 2011-12 of almost \$240 million. These events, supported by Events Queensland, attracted an estimated 1.1 million attendees, more than 500,000 visitors and over one million visitor nights. On top of this, the convention market is estimated to be worth almost \$700 million to the Queensland economy. This is the major reason we want to bring the entities together—to maximise our great state's efforts in attracting visitors to Queensland and provide greater coordination and planning around tourism and events.

The new chairman of Tourism Queensland, Mr Stephen Gregg, said that the new organisation would bring new opportunities and that the future was all about realising and creating these opportunities. Mr Gregg made the point that, without events, tourism in this state would be in real trouble, as events are a major player in tourism. I am confident our chairman, with his vast experience across the tourism industry, will provide the leadership and direction required to make this a smooth transition and to boost visitation significantly.

This bill will facilitate the merger. It will continue Tourism Queensland in existence as Tourism and Events Queensland and transfer the assets and liabilities of Events Queensland to the entity. The functions of Tourism Queensland and Events Queensland will continue under the entity and events will continue to remain a major focus for the Newman government. It is expected that the merger will provide significant benefits to both organisations, and these include better shared information about events and tourism trends and issues, a shared budget and the efficiencies that go with it, and continuing acknowledgement of the previously close working relationship between Tourism Queensland and Events Queensland. It will also give us synergies between promotion of events and their ability to drive visitor demand.

The bill predominantly addresses the governance and structure of Tourism and Events Queensland. It covers the functions and powers of the entity, appointment of the chief executive officer, establishment of the board and its committees, and the proceedings and business of the board. The bill continues the Tourism Queensland Employing Office in existence as the Tourism and Events Queensland Employing Office. Employees of Tourism Queensland will continue to be employed by the renamed employing office. Importantly, the bill includes provisions around planning and accountability to ensure Tourism and Events Queensland is performing and achieving the best value for money for Queensland taxpayers. This was not always evident under the previous government.

These provisions are particularly relevant to the issues raised by the Auditor-General in his review of tourism agencies of government tabled in this House on 27 November. The Auditor-General's report highlighted concerns with the governance framework in which Events Queensland and Tourism Queensland have operated, the unclear link to the previous government's priorities and the limited assessment of their performance. Significantly, some of the recommendations from the Auditor-General's report will be addressed through the merger and accountability measures that we have included in this bill, and a number of the issues raised by the Auditor-General were already being taken care of through our comprehensive tourism policy, DestinationQ strategy and a signed partnership agreement with recognised leading industry body, QTIC. Tourism and Events Queensland will be subject to the highest accountability standards outlined in the Financial Accountability Act 2009, the Financial and Performance Management Standard 2009 and the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982.

The bill will also allow the minister to give the entity a statement of expectations. The statement is an important part of increasing accountability measures, as it will provide a clear direction of the minister's expectations of the corporation in performing its functions and may also provide for the reporting to the minister about the corporation's activities. As a key agency in the delivery of the Queensland government's tourism industry goals, it is important that Tourism and Events Queensland remains conscious of, and responsive to, the policy goals of the government of the day. The statement will provide greater clarity about what the government expects. It will ensure the entity's functions are aligned with the government's broader policy agenda and meet community expectations in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and transparency. The statement of expectations will also assist in providing greater role clarity with the department.

Finally, the bill includes a range of transitional provisions, including continuing particular appointments, transferring ownership of Events Queensland subsidiary companies—these being Asia Pacific Screen Awards Ltd, Gold Coast Events Management Ltd and the Gold Coast Events Co. Pty Ltd—to Tourism and Events Queensland, and recognising length of service and accrued leave entitlements of Events Queensland staff who transfer to the new entity.

There is no doubt that we need to get Queensland back to its rightful position as Australia's No. 1 tourist destination and we cannot afford to waste any more time. We now have a government in Queensland that is totally committed to growing tourism as one of the four pillars of the economy. The people of Queensland put their trust in us in a very convincing manner and now we are following through on our pledge that tourism is one of the four pillars of this great state's economy and to get our neglected industry back on top after so many years of being taken for granted. We bring a whole new

approach and a new attitude to tourism—a whole-of-government approach that is inclusive and consultative. We are a government that understands the huge potential of our tourism industry, a government that gets tourism and a government that will give the industry the support and attention it needs to lead once again.

Within our first 100 days in government we achieved the creation of a new department, with key responsibility for tourism; we established a tourism cabinet committee; we organised and held the inaugural DestinationQ forum in Cairns; and we established both a specialised tourism investment attraction unit and the Attracting Aviation Investment Fund. The government has also provided additional funding of \$20 million in the 2012-13 budget to implement a tourism investment strategy, focusing on destination marketing. These funds will assist Tourism and Events Queensland to support destination marketing and to deliver on the action plan. On top of the \$20 million, the \$49.6 million Events budget committed in this year's budget will ensure that we maintain and grow an exciting calendar of major business and regional events that will deliver significant economic benefits for Queensland and go a long way to ensuring that we meet 2020 growth targets.

This bill will provide a streamlined approach to tourism and events in Queensland. It represents a significant step in returning Queensland tourism to No. 1 and delivering on the Newman government's goal of increasing overnight visitor expenditure to \$30 billion per annum by 2020. I am very proud to commend this bill to the House.

 **Mrs MILLER** (Bundamba—ALP) (11.52 am): I rise today to contribute to the debate on the Tourism and Events Queensland Bill 2012. I state at the outset that the opposition substantially supports this bill. We do not oppose the decision to amalgamate the existing bodies of Tourism Queensland and Events Queensland. However, there are several matters that I would like the minister to clarify during this debate.

The bill repeals the Tourism Queensland Act 1979 and continues the body as Tourism and Events Queensland. The bill sets out that Tourism and Events Queensland is a statutory body under the Financial Accountability Act 2009 and the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982. The bill lists the functions of the new organisation, including attracting international and domestic tourists, promoting and marketing Queensland and attracting major events to the state. It allows the minister to issue the body with a written statement of expectations. It provides for the appointment of a CEO. It establishes a board to oversee the organisation to consist of the director-general of the relevant department and at least eight other members. It provides that a member of the board is appointed to a maximum three-year term and cannot serve more than two consecutive terms. It sets out the process on how board members are to deal with conflicts of interest. It continues the Tourism Queensland employing office as the Tourism and Events Queensland employing office and allows for transitional provisions such as the transfer of Events Queensland assets to the new body and for existing CEOs and board members to continue in their roles under the new body.

I agree with the minister that there is some overlap between the activities of Tourism Queensland and Events Queensland that will be better addressed under one organisation than two. There is a growing recognition within the tourism industry that attracting major events to the state is one of the most effective methods of increasing tourism. Although I believe that merging the two organisations is a positive step, I also believe that both organisations have, in fact, been remarkably successful in their own right.

The evidence for Events Queensland is clear: every dollar invested in the organisation by the Queensland government delivers a return on \$10 for the Queensland economy. For example, last year's Gold Coast Airport Marathon contributed more than \$43 million to the Queensland economy. More than 24,000 people visited the Gold Coast because of it and stayed for more than 46,000 visitor nights. That is just one example of major events helping to boost the tourism industry in this state.

However, I must say that it strikes me as something more than a little strange that a government that professes to be supportive of attracting major events to Queensland has indeed given up the chance to host a second State of Origin game in 2013. The Premier let a golden chance slip through his fingers, perhaps because he is a migrant to Queensland. Obviously, being a Tasmanian he does not understand the importance of State of Origin to Queensland. So I would like to give a hot tip to the Premier: when Wally Lewis is criticising his decisions, the Premier has done something massively wrong. Wally Lewis stated—

... anybody that doesn't fight hard to maintain a bit of loyalty and support for Queensland, I don't believe they're real Queenslanders.

That is what Wally said, and good on Wally. I table that quote for the benefit of the House.

*Tabled paper:* Extract from foxsports.com.au website regarding the State of Origin [\[1790\]](#).

Also, Gorden Tallis said—

I understand that the game is a business now but every state is bidding for it except the state where it started.

He went on to state—

If I'm looking to point the finger and blame someone, I'm blaming Campbell Newman and his sports minister.

Here we have Wally Lewis and Gorden Tallis criticising the government of Queensland along with the *Courier-Mail* and all the other media outlets across Queensland. Wally Lewis is an opinion leader and where he goes so do a lot of Queenslanders.

I would like to ask the minister to provide an indication as to when an announcement will be made concerning continued funding for the Townsville V8 races. This is a crucial event for the Townsville community. It is extremely concerning that Townsville has been left in limbo with funding for the event not guaranteed for the next year. Shame on the members who represent the area of Townsville. One of those members is actually in cabinet. He must be asleep. What is he doing to promote the V8 races in Townsville? Obviously, nothing.

There are similar concerns with the Gold Coast V8 races. I understand that funding for that race is guaranteed for 2013, but not beyond 2013. What is going to happen after 2013? The lazy members who represent the Gold Coast are doing nothing about that.

The previous Labor government understood events tourism and its 2011-12 budget provided Events Queensland with additional funding of \$85.8 million over five years. That funding substantially increased Queensland's capacity to secure major events and the tourists they attract. This money effectively doubled the amount of funding available to Events Queensland from this financial year. I note that this is one of the few areas that has been quarantined from the Newman government's savage and ill-considered cuts in this budget. It is clear that even though the minister refuses to acknowledge the substantial efforts of the previous government, her portfolio is benefiting significantly from the previous government's far-sighted funding. Tourism Queensland has also had more than its fair share of successes. Who can forget the incredibly successful Best Job in the World campaign? It was simply brilliant. The minister also confirmed during the recent budget estimates hearings that Tourism Queensland's excellence has been recognised by a number of national and international bodies. In fact, they received nine national and international awards last financial year. On behalf of the Labor opposition I would like to congratulate them on their awards. It is clear that tourism was not left to languish under the previous government despite this minister's protestations to the contrary.

Tourism Queensland and Events Queensland are both highly successful organisations. I hope this successful performance continues under the new structure. Having said that, there is a small possibility that instead of acting in concert, the much smaller events structure could potentially be subsumed and ignored in the larger tourism organisation. Effective organisational arrangements would significantly ameliorate any potential for this to occur. Having a high-ranking executive who deals solely with the events side of the organisation and who answers directly to the CEO would be the easiest and most logical way to ensure the events business is properly represented. As such, I would like the minister to give just some sort of insight into the structure of the merged entity. In particular, I ask the minister: how high ranking will the most senior staff member dealing solely with the events side of the business be? I ask the minister: would she please advise the House, through the Deputy Speaker, what is the equivalent Public Service classification level of this person who is going to be in charge of this side of the business? As a former public servant I really would like to know this information.

Whilst I understand the intent of this legislation, I do have reservations that, given this government's desire to sack as many public servants as possible, it will be used to justify even further redundancies. Somehow this government does not understand the difference. Both Tourism Queensland and Events Queensland have already been subjected to the Treasurer's ruthless and callous budget razor. Events Queensland is already losing five full-time equivalent positions. To the members over there that probably does not sound too much, but it is over 20 per cent of the workforce. Again the LNP government has wrecked the lives of five families. Tourism Queensland is already losing 26 full-time equivalent positions, which is approximately 17 per cent of its workforce, again ruining the lives of 26 public servants and their families. Those opposite have no idea of the trauma they are causing these people and their families. During the committee hearing on this bill, under questioning from the member for Sandgate, the director-general suggested there may be further redundancies as a result of this measure, primarily in administrative positions. This merger has clearly been in the pipeline for some time. The minister most likely received authority to prepare the legislation from cabinet before, or at the very least not long after, the budget was released. In the spirit of open and accountable government, the minister might like to advise the House in relation to that. Given the timing, I would have assumed that any redundancies from the two organisations were coordinated to ensure that no more would be required. Knowing how poorly considered the entire Public Service hatchet job has been on the tens of thousands of public servants who this LNP government does not care about, I am not surprised that further redundancies are indeed possible. I request that the minister give a clear guarantee that no more public servants will lose their jobs as a consequence of this legislation.

I also seek some clarification from the minister on the establishment of the board for Tourism and Events Queensland. On my reading of the bill, Tourism Queensland board members will continue on as board members of the new Tourism and Events Queensland. It is not, however, apparent that current board members of Events Queensland will continue to serve on the board of the new organisation. In fact, it appears that maybe they will not. I would appreciate it if the minister could confirm if my reading of the legislation is correct and, if so, what will happen to the current members of the Events

Queensland Board. Will the minister undertake to make special appointments to allow them to continue as board members? Further on the issue of the board, I harbour some reservations about the language used in the bill. I was surprised to read that, in addition to the chief executive of the department, the board will consist of—and this is what it says—‘at least 8 other members’. Minister, in relation to your previous interjection in relation to reading of the tea leaves, what tea leaves were you reading at the time?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Dr Robinson): Order! The member will speak through the chair and not directly to the other member.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you for your advice, Mr Deputy Speaker. My concerns relate specifically to the use of the words ‘at least’. In my experience, most legislation considered and passed by this House establishing boards or similar entities prescribe either a set membership or maximum board membership. For instance, the Tourism Queensland Act 1979, which this bill repeals, limits membership of the Tourism Queensland Board to 10 members inclusive of the chief executive. The Gold Coast Waterways Authority Bill considered by the parliament in this sitting, in fact, limits the board to only seven members. Essentially, this bill would allow an unlimited number of board members. I can understand that the minister may want to ensure that members of the current boards are able to serve on the board of the merged entity. However, this could have been addressed in a transition provision of the bill. I am concerned that the government can appoint unlimited and maybe even unnecessary board members under this legislation. It is potentially an avenue to dole out political patronage to the LNP mates of this government. But let me assure members that hardly anybody is admitting to voting for the LNP these days. I would like the minister to explain to the House why this legislation sets a minimum number of board members but not a maximum as is standard practice. Is this the real ort?

I thank the members of the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee for their consideration of this bill. In particular, I thank the former chair of the committee, the member for Mirani, for his work before his promotion. I also thank the hardworking staff of the committee for their work in developing the report. I appreciate the efforts of staff in the Department of Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games in developing this bill. In particular, I place on record my gratitude to departmental staff who briefed the relevant committee, for their time and assistance. Whilst I am on my feet, I also thank the sacked members of the department, because our Labor opposition appreciates all the work that they did in their department, as we appreciate the work of public servants generally across Queensland.

 **Mr DRISCOLL** (Redcliffe—LNP) (12.11 pm): I take great pleasure in rising in support of the Tourism and Events Queensland Bill 2012. As the minister has outlined, this is about merging Events Queensland and Tourism Queensland into a single entity. This bill is very timely for my electorate of Redcliffe, which prides itself on its proud status as one of one of the first seaside villages to be frequented by the people of Brisbane, going back many years. I inform the House that I believe the area is about to re-emerge as a leading light. Certainly that is my hope and it is what I am working towards as the member for Redcliffe.

This sort of legislation will bring about efficiencies in the tourism and events sector in this state and that is a great thing. However, this morning it was disturbing to hear Labor already criticising something that will further generate opportunity for tourism and events to flourish in Queensland. It was disturbing to hear the jobs and the prosperity that will follow for Queenslanders being knocked by the Labor opposition. That is a sad situation that is not in the interests of the people of my electorate of Redcliffe. Certainly it is not in the interests of potential jobs, future growth and tourism development in my electorate of Redcliffe. Thank goodness that the current minister, LNP Minister Stuckey, is in charge of this bill and not the Labor Party, because now we will see the sort of progress in my electorate that we so desperately need.

This morning I will not address the bill at great length, because it is self-explanatory and it is common sense. I was a member of the reviewing committee and I know that the bill was very widely understood and supported. I find it amazing that Labor members would come into this place and try to politically grandstand on an attempt to generate jobs in this state, to boost the tourism sector, to bring about efficiencies and to create an economy that will have a trickle-down effect that will benefit all Queensland through one of the four pillars of the economy under the LNP government. I commend this bill to the House. I thank the minister.

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (12.13 pm): I rise to support the Tourism and Events Queensland Bill 2012, which was introduced by my good friend the member for Currumbin in her role as Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games. It is interesting to note that the LNP Newman team came into government promoting a four-pillar economy, those pillars being construction, agriculture, resources and, of course, tourism.

**Mr Ruthenberg:** Not much tourism on the Gold Coast, is there?

**Mr HART:** I will cover that in a minute. This is quite a simple bill. It merges Queensland Tourism and Events Queensland into one entity to be called Tourism and Events Queensland. It was interesting to note that the member for Bundamba stood in this place, mentioned the previous efforts of the Labor government and tried to praise those efforts. I really cannot support her praise of the efforts of the former Labor government as those efforts led us into a debt regime that has cost the state around \$65 billion, increasing to \$85 billion over the next few years. The effort of the former Labor Party led to a \$1.2 billion rusting desalination plant on the Gold Coast. The effort of the former Labor government led to a \$9 billion water grid in South-East Queensland that we do not use. We have dams with no pipes and we have pipes with no dams. Those are the sorts of things that have resulted from the effort of the former Labor government. There is no doubt that it was addicted to debt.

I am glad to see that the member for Woodridge is in the House. During the debate on the Appropriation Bill, she was asked where the money for the NDIS might come from. Her response was that it does not matter where the money comes from because it is federal money. I have to tell the member that it does matter where the money comes from, because it is not the Labor Party's money; it is the money of the people of Queensland and the people of Australia and we cannot waste it as the former Labor government did. You cannot claim that you are generating work simply because you have built up a Public Service of 214,000 people. That does not work.

The merger of Events Queensland and Tourism Queensland will lead to cost savings. There will be one leased facility instead of two; there will be lower phone bills, fax bills, printing bills and so on. There will be a lot of cost savings of that nature. The member for Chatsworth uses a certain word in these instances in this place and that word is 'genius'. This is genius. I commend the member for Currumbin for bringing this legislation to the House and I condemn the Labor Party for the debt that it left this state with.

 **Mr HOLSWICH** (Pine Rivers—LNP) (12.17 pm): I rise to provide a brief contribution to the Tourism and Events Queensland Bill. I commend the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games for presenting the bill to the House. Once again, it is a common sense bill that will reduce red tape, provide greater operational efficiencies and help boost the capacity of Queensland's tourism and events industry. I am pleased to say that that industry is finally starting to experience significant growth. Under the Newman government it is an industry that is turning the corner and is contributing more to our state's economy than we have seen for many years.

Tourism is a key pillar of Queensland's four-pillar economy. As the policy objectives of the bill outline, the bill will help to provide a more coordinated and strategic approach to attracting visitors to Queensland. As a member of the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee, I know that the bill was a fairly straightforward one to review. I think it is pretty fair to say that the reason there was no need for public hearings and that there were no submissions on the bill is because it is a plain old common sense bill. It makes sense to see Tourism Queensland and Events Queensland merged into one entity. That change will see the operations of the two entities streamlined, meaning, as I said earlier, less red tape and greater operational efficiencies and, most importantly, it will help to empower Queensland's tourism and events sector and provide opportunities for better coordinated and organised tourism events in the years ahead. Tourism is a large contributor to our state's economy. As the minister pointed out in her explanatory speech to the bill, the industry directly and indirectly employs more than 120,000 Queenslanders. I look forward to the minister standing in this House in years to come and quoting much greater numbers that the industry will employ in the state.

The Minister for Tourism is well aware that I am a massive supporter of Queensland's tourism industry. I am working closely with tourism operators in the Pine Rivers electorate to develop a stronger tourism economy in our local region. I am working with operators such as the Ocean View Estates Winery and Vineyard, which last week took out a coveted Queensland Tourism award for best tourism winery, distillery or boutique brewery. This is the second year in a row that Ocean View Estates has taken out that award.

I might point out to the members for Burnett and Bundaberg that Ocean View Estates took out this award ahead of the Bundaberg Rum distillery. While these honourable members might rightfully trumpet the merits of the Bundaberg region, on this occasion they have been trumped by the mighty Pine Rivers region. It is a region that in years to come will be a great drawcard for tourists in the south-east corner of this state.

It is for the ultimate benefit of tourism operators like the Ocean View Estates winery and all the other tourism operators in my electorate that our government is passing legislation like this important bill. This bill is just a small part of a suite of reforms being undertaken by our government, all designed to kick-start our tourism industry and return Queensland to its rightful place as our nation's premier tourism destination.

I again put on the record my thanks to the minister for the way in which she is demonstrating our government's commitment to Queensland's tourism industry and for the leadership that she is showing in this area. I certainly look forward to hosting the minister in Dayboro at some stage in 2013 to show off the fantastic tourism opportunities in the Dayboro and the Moreton Bay hinterland region. This is a common-sense, important bill. I am pleased to commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr YOUNG** (Keppel—LNP) (12.20 pm): I rise to support the Tourism and Events Queensland Bill 2012. The objective of this bill is to provide for the establishment of Tourism and Events Queensland and to achieve economic and social benefits for the state through marketing and promoting tourism in Queensland, grow tourism experience and destination development and secure major events to be held in Queensland. In deciding to merge Events Queensland with Tourism Queensland, the government considered various governance models, including those established in other jurisdictions. The statutory body model was considered the most suitable structure as it ensures a balance between accountability and autonomy.

Tourism is one of the four pillars of this government and my electorate of Keppel relies heavily on the tourist dollar. The closure of Great Keppel Island Resort has impacted on the service and supply industries in Yeppoon. This bill will appoint a board to oversee Tourism and Events Queensland and ensure it performs in an effective and efficient manner with the goal to rebuild tourism and visitor numbers, whether they come for holidays, events, business events or conventions. In Keppel, and indeed in all of Queensland, tourism is one of the largest contributors to the state's economy.

As I stated, I look forward to working closely with the board to work on the redevelopment of Great Keppel Island. At this point in time, the Great Keppel Island development has been referred to the federal government under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Act and sits with the state Coordinator-General for the EIS. I am hopeful that this decision will be made early next year.

The single entity called Tourism and Events Queensland is a natural fit to manage the many tourism and major events on the Capricorn Coast, whether it is the village arts festival, the various triathlon events or sailing events. I look forward to working with the minister and the board. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Ms MILLARD** (Sandgate—LNP) (12.22 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Tourism and Events Queensland Bill 2012. I thank the Minister for Tourism for her work in developing legislation that will drive a more coordinated and focused response to building the tourism industry in our beautiful state. Let us also not forget that tourism is one of the four pillars of the Newman LNP government's economy rebuild.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution provided by the committee chair—the member for Mirani, Mr Ted Malone MP—the committee secretariat and the parliamentary committee members. I make special mention of Mr Ted Malone and thank him for his guidance whilst he was the committee chair. I congratulate him on his new position.

I note the ministers words: 'We are blessed with a suite of highly desirable attractions and an enviable climate.' On this point, I am going to draw attention to my electorate. The bayside suburbs I represent are the epitome of beautiful wide open spaces and sea breezes. We are a unique part of Brisbane, yet we have struggled to thrive commercially or to bring tourists, who are flocking in to other areas, to our area outside of the peak festival season. This just does not make sense, except when we consider the lacklustre policies of the previous state government which did little to focus on building the tourism sector in our state.

Do not get me wrong, we do okay down at these bayside suburbs, especially in the hotter months. But this is such a beautiful part of Brisbane and I really want to showcase it and show it off to everybody. Attracting more tourists will also help small business thrive, especially during the colder months. We have restaurants, fish and chip shops, service stations, B&Bs, gift shops, and the list goes on. We really need to give those small businesses that extra boost.

I am going to give members a bit of a history lesson. This is more for the benefit of the member for Redcliffe because we always engage in a bit of banter about who has the best electorate. An older fellow I used to know—if he were alive now he would be well into his 80s—mentioned to me that when he was a young fellow his family lived on the other side of Ipswich. They used to travel on the train to the historic station at Shorncliffe. The family of seven to 10 kids used to come and stay in the old boarding houses for a one-week holiday every year. The history of the area goes back a long time and we need to make sure that we continue to build on that history of early tourism. So enough with the history lesson.

This bill will repeal the Tourism Queensland Act 1979 and transfer the assets and liabilities of Events Queensland to a new entity—Tourism and Events Queensland. I commend this move, recognising the importance of key events such as those in my electorate—Music by the Sea, Einbunpin and the annual Brisbane to Gladstone yacht race. These events showcase what we have to offer tourists. By prioritising and funding events within the overall context of targeted tourism planning, hopefully visitors will find a reason to stay well beyond the end of an event.

I commend the processes assisting the administration of this bill, including the appointment of a new CEO and a streamlined board of eight members and a new employing office for staff. I note for the record that the CEO roles of Events Queensland and Tourism Queensland will no longer be. There will be only one CEO.

I support the passage of the Tourism and Events Queensland Bill 2012. I welcome the opportunity to work with the new body in seeing not only Queensland prosper but my electorate better reach its potential over the coming years of our government.

 **Mr COSTIGAN** (Whitsunday—LNP) (12.26 pm): I rise in the House in support of the Tourism and Events Queensland Bill 2012, noting the importance of tourism to our regional communities, especially that piece of paradise that I represent, the Whitsundays. This bill ensures that the traditional functions of Tourism Queensland and Events Queensland will still be carried out, except they will happen under the one banner. A new entity will be formed to help re-energise tourism in Queensland. Where the industry was once envied by other states, they have since gazumped us.

In the Whitsundays, the most tourism dependent region on the eastern seaboard, events are crucial to the tourism industry. On that note, I was absolutely delighted to announce recently funding again being provided by Events Queensland in support of next year's Airlie Beach race week. Race week brings in people from around the state, around the nation, around the world every year. It was terrific to be alongside the Premier and members of the cabinet when the community cabinet came to the Abel Point Marina, Airlie Beach, in my electorate in early August—before the start of this year's race week, which, I can report, was a raging success.

**Dr Flegg:** It was beautiful up there, too.

**Mr COSTIGAN:** It certainly was. I will take the interjection from the member for Moggill. My predecessor was the minister for tourism before the 24 March election. It was on her watch that Labor continued its sheer neglect of this once mighty industry. I have no doubt that, with tourism being put back on a pedestal as one of the four pillars of the state's economy under the Newman LNP government, this industry will see good times again. That was certainly the vibe I got when attending the Whitsunday tourism awards on Hamilton Island last month.

I have a vision for tourism in Queensland, in particular regional Queensland—a vision of bringing in unprecedented numbers of tourists from places like India, China and the gulf states, in keeping with our pre-election commitments. Further evidence of the Newman LNP government sticking to its commitment is the fact that the Premier, as honourable members would be aware, is now preparing to fly to India to head an important trade mission. I wish him well.

In the seventies and eighties tourism was one of the great growth industries in Queensland, from Cairns to Coolangatta. It was supported by the Bjelke-Petersen government. Yes, it was Joh and co. who helped make it happen. As a child I remember Hayles Cruises taking tourists out to the islands off Cairns and Townsville and our iconic Great Barrier Reef. In Mackay, my home town, it was the legend himself, the late Captain Tom McLean, the owner operator of Roylen Cruises, who took tourists from around the world and around the nation to Brampton Island and other islands throughout the Whitsundays as well as to the reef.

In Central Queensland locals will fondly recall the glory days of Great Keppel Island, off the Capricorn Coast. Mr Deputy Speaker, do you remember the 'get wrecked' slogan? I am sure the member for Keppel remembers it. Today around CQ people want to see GKI redeveloped, but what does federal Labor and the federal minister for environment have to say? 'Get nicked'. That is what he says.

I also remember reading about an island that was once full of goats in the heart of my electorate until a certain bloke came along and gave us Hamilton Island, as we all know it today—that bloke being the late Keith Williams, a bloke whose legacy lives on thanks to the investment of people like Bob Oatley, whose commitment to tourism is underlined by his opening of the Robert Oatley College, churning out graduates in tourism and hospitality.

**Mr Hart:** And bottles of wine.

**Mr COSTIGAN:** And bottles of wine, indeed. I truly believe better days are coming for tourism in Queensland on the back of DestinationQ in Cairns in June this year and the government's aim of doubling overnight visitor expenditure to \$30 billion a year by 2020. It is wonderful to now see more international flights coming into Queensland, and I believe that regional airports, such as at Mackay and the Whitsunday Coast, could well be catering for international flights into the future, given the appeal of our 74 islands and, of course, the Great Barrier Reef.

In closing, I applaud the minister for what she is doing to get our industry back on track. It is the Newman LNP government that is providing the framework for a much awaited renaissance in the tourism sector in the great state of Queensland. It goes without saying that I commend the bill to the House.

 **Hon. JA STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games) (12.31 pm), in reply: I was enjoying the comments in the debate, particularly listening to the government members speak so passionately about tourism and also, of course, their own electorates and what it means to them to have a government that really does support and promote tourism.

At the outset I would like to begin by thanking all members for their contributions to the debate. As I informed the House when I introduced the bill, bringing Tourism Queensland and Events Queensland together into one entity will provide a more coordinated and strategic approach to attracting visitors to our great state—whether they come here on a holiday, whether they come here to run in our marathon, whether they come here to celebrate a festival, whether they visit any of our fantastic regions and towns and enjoy the hospitality that is extended to them, or whether they are just visiting family and friends.

Our tourism industry directly contributes \$8.376 billion annually. Major events developed by Events Queensland delivered an estimated \$237 million in 2011-12 alone. The business events market was estimated to be worth \$697 million in 2010-11. The business events market is one which I know in particular Brisbane marketing and other bodies here in our capital city are focusing on heavily.

This bill will transfer the assets and liabilities of Events Queensland to Tourism Queensland. Tourism Queensland will continue in existence as Tourism and Events Queensland. The functions of Tourism and Events Queensland will include attracting international and domestic travellers to travel to and within Queensland and identifying, attracting, developing and promoting major events for the state.

The bill covers the appointment of the chief executive officer, the establishment of a board and members' duties, the appointment of committees, board proceedings and the continuance of the Tourism Queensland Employing Office as the Tourism and Events Queensland Employing Office. Importantly, the bill establishes accountability mechanisms such as a ministerial statement of expectations to be given to the entity. The entity will be required to respond to the minister on how the expectations will be achieved. I am very happy to say that, due to the very close relationship that we have established across the department and with all of our entities, this statement of expectations is going to be written in consultation with all of those entities.

The accountability measures will go a long way to ensure that the entity's performance is managed effectively into the future. Also, importantly, the entity will be required to respond to the minister on how the expectations will be achieved. Finally, the bill includes transitional provisions to ensure a smooth transition of certain appointments and subsidiary companies to the entity.

I will now address some of the comments made by members during the debate. Before I address those made by the honourable member for Bundamba, I would really like to acknowledge and congratulate individually the government members for Redcliffe, Burleigh, Pine Rivers, Keppel, Sandgate and Whitsunday. As I said before, they are doing an outstanding job in their electorates. I have visited many of them if not once then several times and I am really impressed by how hard they are working in their electorates not just to support tourism but to support small business, communities and, of course, the families and other people who live therein.

They understand the need to merge these two entities and they also understand the great benefit that that is going to have. I would like to thank the opposition members, particularly the member for Bundamba for giving support—I presume that was support—for the bill. I did not hear it was conditional. I think perhaps they had a couple of issues. I would like to thank them though. I understand that they will be supporting the intent of this bill, which has been a long time coming—it really has.

But the member for Bundamba actually did ask quite a few questions. It is a pity she has not bothered to hang around to listen to my reply to her. But I guess that is pretty typical of Labor when it comes to tourism, isn't it? They do not turn up. The member for Bundamba made it really clear that she had not prepared properly for the bill. She really had not given it very much time at all or attention. I guess that is why some of these questions are perhaps overlapping a bit.

We are very much in a transition stage. I think it is important to recognise that this bill was actually drafted in very close discussion and consultation with the key stakeholders—and that is of course Tourism Queensland, Events Queensland, the outgoing board and of course our new board. I do not think a bill could have perhaps been more wanted. It certainly was highly desired by many people as they recognised that this government was serious about tourism and events and to take us forward at the rate that we need to.

But I really want to tell the House what I heard when I travelled around the state. The member for Bundamba was pretty keen on saying how wonderful Labor was with tourism. I do not even dare want to go to small business. We know on this side of the House that tourism and small business are pretty

much one and the same. You say them in the same sentence. There are 412,000 small businesses here in Queensland. We understand that which is why we took to the election a very comprehensive tourism strategy that was written hand in hand with the industry, and that is why it was so well received. We also took a very comprehensive economic blueprint for small business to the election, and we are working hard at cutting that onerous red tape.

What did they take to the election, honourable members? I can tell you what they took to the election. They took nothing for small business. They did not have a single policy. Do you know why? Because Labor do not like small business. They never have. Their way of dealing with small business is to choke them and strangle them under 92,000 pages of red tape—choke, choke, choke, choke; chop, chop, chop, chop. And it is the same for tourism. What did they do to the tourism industry? What did they do while 400 tourism operators were dying in Cairns? What did they do in the Whitsundays while they were shutting doors? They had a minister for tourism who lived in the Whitsundays. When the carbon tax was facing the tourism industry, what did the tourism minister, the then member for Whitsunday, say? 'You'll just have to wait and see.' That was their attitude to tourism and small business.

**Opposition members** interjected.

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

**Mrs STUCKEY:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I can tell that they are very sensitive about this.

Let us look further into their interest in tourism. We know they did not take anything serious to the election. We know they did not even have a department; they had a management unit in DEEDI. That is what they called tourism. I have been travelling around the state quite a lot. Before the election I talked to many operators who all told me how they felt totally and utterly neglected by this government, whose only contact with them was political interference. I made a point of making sure that we recognise the people in this great industry, the passion that they have and their dedication, despite years of Labor neglect and harshness. So I have been going to their awards nights. But the most important awards night of all for the tourism industry was last Friday evening. It was held here in Brisbane where all the wonderful operators from the region had come to be recognised amongst their peers for the superior service they were giving to their customers. As I glanced around that ballroom, there was not one Labor member to be seen at the tourism awards.

**Mr Costigan:** That says it all.

**Mrs STUCKEY:** They declined the invitation, but not just state Labor—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the minister of the protocol that absence at events is normally not used in a pejorative manner.

**Mrs STUCKEY:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I do not believe that mentioning no federal members were present is not allowed in this House. There were no federal Labor members attending the annual awards either.

It was a wonderful night. On that night it was really interesting to hear Daniel Gschwind, the head of QTIC; Stephen Gregg, the Chairman of Tourism Queensland and Events Queensland as we go into this merger; Dennis Chant, from Queensland Airports Ltd; and Shane O'Reilly, who is the new chairman of QTIC, one after the other get up on stage and commend this government for its approach to tourism. In fact, they said that this government has done more in the past seven months than any other in the past decade, if not any government ever before. I think that tells us a lot about how this industry is viewing this government's approach, including tourism being one of the four pillars of the economy.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mrs STUCKEY:** Thank you very much. I am blushing. I am not used to getting praise. We took so much nonsense for so many years.

**Mr Costigan:** Get used to it, Minister.

**Mrs STUCKEY:** Let me answer some of the questions that I have been asked. I think there was a question regarding funding for the Townsville V8s and what is happening after 2013. I think we have all acknowledged, including Labor, the importance of events to Queensland and the fact that we are doing really well there. V8 funding is already confirmed for 2013. If we are looking at how we support events, it has to be a really good bang for your buck and for taxpayers' money. What we will be doing as we go into 2014 is following the criteria that Events has used as such a successful formula to grow major events over the years. What Events will be doing is assessing each event—and the V8s are no different—based on its ability to generate economic, tourism, marketing and media benefits to Queensland. That is a key criteria for investment. We would hope that it would because we are talking some fairly big dollars here.

Events Queensland assesses every event proposal against the following categories: a full commercial assessment including longer-term viability, budget analysis, ownership structure and governance, and track record for delivery. It also looks at the financial modelling including the number of

participants and spectators, the visitor nights and estimated expenditure per person. It looks at the new visitation outcomes and what that does, and it also consults with regional tourism organisations, Tourism Queensland, local council and other stakeholders. Events Queensland also supports events through market activation investment, which is designed to promote the benefits of Queensland locations as event destinations to national and international audiences. Honourable members can feel quite confident that Events Queensland knows what it is doing when it comes to events and that, as contracts are up for renewal, a very fair set of criteria is applied to each one of those. I hope that satisfies the question of the member for Bundamba when she reads the *Hansard*.

The member for Bundamba also wanted to know why we have given up the opportunity to host the second Origin game in 2013. I think she asked the wrong minister that question because that really does fall under Sport, and I think the Premier has made it very clear in the past exactly what the correct story is regarding that.

The member also asked what the Public Service equivalent classification is for the events GM. Again, I think the member was a little confused. What will be happening as we merge these two entities is that we are literally merging Events across into Tourism Queensland, and there will be a CEO of the major entity and there will be a general manager charged with looking after events. The process of applying and recognising both of those positions is underway. We have engaged KPMG, as is the normal practice, to undergo a very detailed recruitment process which, of course, is at arms length from anything to do with government. I understand that there are short lists. Hopefully we can have some announcements well before Christmas as to who will be heading this wonderful new entity of Tourism and Events Queensland.

In specific reply to the honourable member's question about the Public Service equivalent classification, the general manager position is not specified by legislation. Unlike Labor, we will be looking at the calibre of the individuals to make sure they have solid, sound experience and are right for the job. That therefore raises the question of what happens to the Events board members. On the one hand, the member was really concerned that we put a minimum number of people on a board and was saying that there would usually be a maximum. Tourism is one of the four pillars of our economy. This government realises that it needs to be able to grow and prosper. What we have done is establish a new board of Tourism Queensland under that old legislation. In the meantime there have been a number of new appointments to the Events Queensland board. Those people will transition across and I think there will be something like 14 members who will make up the new board. I think honourable members would agree that we need that so we can have subcommittees of Events so we cannot be accused of subsuming Events into Tourism, because that will certainly not be the case. In fact, the reason for the big board, especially during the transition phase, is so that Events will still have the horsepower or people power they have had in the past to continue their outstanding record.

It is important to know that, while Events used to hook the events, they always relied on the fantastic events in Tourism Queensland to be able to market it and maximise it for us. What we are doing by merging the two is empowering and maximising the benefit for that. Those Events board members are all secure and will be coming over once this bill is given its royal assent. I think that covers most of that. I think the only other thing was to do with guaranteeing jobs. It is important to note that, after the recent administrative efficiency process, Tourism Queensland staff were reduced from 156 to 130 and Events Queensland went from 23 to 18. That was publicly disclosed.

The redundancies that were mentioned by the honourable member were certainly not a direct result of this legislation, and it is a really long bow to even draw that. What we are doing is deploying our staff to front-facing roles throughout the new entity, and obviously we need some considerable admin staff as well. We believe now that EQ and TQ have achieved the right-sized staffing levels for their respective businesses and any changes to staffing with the new entity will be determined by the new CEO when they take up their role, as that is their job, not ours. I hope I have covered all of the questions. If I have not, perhaps the members opposite could let me know as we move on.

I would like to place on record my gratitude to my ministerial staff, my departmental staff and the parliamentary counsel for drafting this legislation. This bill paves the way for tourism and events to develop and prosper within a government that acknowledges tourism as one of the four pillars of the economy. TQ and EQ staff are to be congratulated for wanting to progress on this journey with us and for doing so in such a fantastic manner. Having met with virtually all of the staff now, I know they are a great team who are really wanting to reposition Queensland as No. 1 and they are passionate about this industry.

I particularly acknowledge our acting CEOs. From TQ we have Leanne Coddington, and what an amazing job she has done through some months where we have had great change. Kirsten Herring from Events Queensland has also managed to steer Events in a very commendable manner. I also thank Daniel Gschwind from QTIC and all of our RTOs. After all, we are in this together. We have written our policy together and we will continue to deliver on all of our agreed actions together to the time lines that have been set and signed in agreement.

I want to thank the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee for its very prompt consideration of this important bill. It was disappointing that the opposition did not consider the Tourism and Events Queensland Bill worthy of consideration, as they did not take part in the discussion that was offered to them by the committee. I should not be surprised at their lack of interest because, as all of us in the government know, tourism is a very low priority for Labor, and it always has been. This fact has been evidenced very strongly in this parliament, where we have had 31 question times and 240 or so questions from the opposition, but guess how many questions they have asked me on tourism? They have not asked me a single question on tourism or small business. That probably sums up the Labor attitude to tourism and small business.

We on this side of the House have set some ambitious targets. Our goal is to double overnight visitor expenditure to \$30 billion per year by 2020. This merger is one of the key steps to revitalising tourism in Queensland and making Queensland Australia's No. 1 tourism destination. The Tourism and Events Queensland Bill means we will be better able to achieve the economic benefits that tourism and events can provide for Queensland. Today is a great day for tourism and events in Queensland. 'It is a milestone for our industry,' said one seasoned operator, who, like many, is enthused and excited about Queensland's future under an LNP government.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

### Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 52 as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

### Third Reading

 **Hon. JA STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games) (12.55 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a third time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

### Long Title

 **Hon. JA STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games) (12.56 pm): I move—

That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

Question put—That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

## DEPUTY SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

### Apology

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Miss Barton): Honourable members, having reviewed the *Record of Proceedings* from yesterday evening, I have come to the conclusion that the occasion in which I named the member for South Brisbane under 253A, found on page 2892 of *Hansard*, was unfitting to the member's behaviour immediately prior to my ruling. I therefore wish to extend my apology to the member for South Brisbane.

Sitting suspended from 12.56 pm to 2.30 pm.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Newman Government, Performance

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.30 pm): As we prepare to leave this House for the last time this year I think it is valuable to reflect on the year that was, a year that will go down in history as one of the state's most disastrous for ordinary Queenslanders and their families. The Premier and his ministers can talk all they like about their apparent efforts to lower the cost of living

and make things easier for families. But what they are blindly denying is one key honest fact: that 2012 was the year that a new government came to power by making outlandish promises with regard to job security and then promptly set about coldly, clinically and methodically taking away those jobs. As those opposite leave this place tonight to enjoy their Christmas break, I would ask them to take a moment to truly reflect on the consequences of their actions for more than 14,000 former public sector workers, their husbands, their wives, their partners, their children and their extended families. I trust that those opposite, in reflection, may also come to realise what a miserable Christmas and holiday period it will be for some of those families. I trust they come to understand that those families will not be enjoying vacations. In fact, they will probably be pounding the pavement searching for the most fundamental of basic human rights, a job. They will be hoping they can hold their heads high once again and look their children in the eye. They will be hoping to rebuild their lives.

I am going to put what hundreds of thousands of Queenslanders are feeling right now in the simplest possible terms. The government has betrayed Queenslanders and brought the entire parliamentary process into disrepute. Queenslanders thought they voted for good government. What they get in return is a government lurching from crisis to crisis and providing the state with a daily dose of its soap opera. It is a government that sees numbers on a page as it axes its way through the state's workforce refusing to see the human toll behind those numbers. It is a government that has revealed its true colours this week. It is a government that is more focused on petty squabbling, infighting and backstabbing than on providing good, stable government for this state.

We await what will come in 2013. I know that all Queenslanders will be watching very, very closely.

### Beaudesert Electorate

 **Mr KRAUSE** (Beaudesert—LNP) (2.32 pm): I would like to reflect on some of the achievements I have delivered for the Beaudesert electorate this year as part of a strong LNP government. Firstly, we have made it quite clear that CSG production will not proceed in the Scenic Rim. Arrow Energy knows the government's position and has relinquished much of its exploration tenure. The LNP government—and might I say, the Premier has been very supportive of me in this—made a commitment to the Scenic Rim in relation to CSG and we are delivering on our commitment.

Secondly, the planning for the Bromelton state development area has been finalised, and work on essential infrastructure is now being planned. This development has the potential to generate thousands of jobs, and this government has moved quickly to get this project going. Queensland is a great state with great opportunity and, working within this government, I am determined to see those opportunities developed in the Beaudesert electorate. Thirdly, through my strong advocacy for the electorate we are investing in essential works like the Boonah-Kalbar water treatment plant and water pipeline, the \$41 million Cunningham Highway repairs and \$25 million repairs to the Mount Lindesay Highway, and \$1.8 million for a fire station on Tamborine Mountain and nearly \$5 million for a new roundabout at Tamborine Village to deal with growth in those areas. We are working to deliver better bus services for Jimboomba and Beaudesert, and we have injected over \$1.5 million into local state schools to fix their maintenance backlogs. A wild dog destruction officer, based in Beaudesert, will help fix the wild dog problem in the region. Literacy and numeracy funding will help to get the basics right in the early years at school. We are investing in the tourism sector to boost overnight spending. All of these things have been delivered for the Beaudesert electorate by this LNP government. I am working hard with all of my colleagues to continue that delivery. I acknowledge the tough decisions made by the government and the cabinet to get Queensland firing again to realise its opportunity.

I thank everybody in the electorate for their support. In particular, I thank all of the LNP members and supporters for their unreserved support in getting Queensland back on track. Rest assured I will continue to work hard to deal with the issues facing the region. I will not run away from the hard issues, but face them and work with the government to fix them. It is only too easy to run away and play your own game. The Beaudesert electorate has seen that before—in the last parliament—when the then member for Beaudesert betrayed his electorate to selfishly pursue his own personal ambition. I am disgusted that the member for Condamine has followed suit, chasing the title of party leader in this place, with a bigger salary, a driver and a car. He has abandoned the people who put him in this place to do a job—a job which is tough, which requires making tough choices, which requires people to persevere and work with others. The member for Condamine knows that, but he has chosen the easy route, the soft option, of throwing stones from the outside instead of working as a team to achieve for his electorate. Thirty pieces of silver is all it took. The people of Condamine know that he has walked away from them and they will not forget, just like the people of my electorate will not forget what the former member for Beaudesert did to them.

### **Wet Tropics Water Resource Plan; Atherton Tablelands, Methadone Clinic**

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (2.35 pm): This morning I asked the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines to stop the rollout of the Wet Tropics Water Resource Plan and bring the planned review of the Water Act 2001 forward before deficiencies in the legislative framework threaten the viability of primary production in the Wet Tropics. The rush through is only that, ending the viability of water users as these water resource plans are based on the Water Act 2001, which is flawed. I believe the minister has put the cart before the horse in promising an overhaul of the water legislation but only after farmers have been stuck with the outcome of the old legislation. Continuing on with the water management plans was supporting the former Labor government's water management legislation forcing irrigators to struggle with inadequate water allocations and restrictive water management plans. We need to get this right as the viability and sustainability of our farmers is too important to implement a framework that is completely flawed. It is common sense to hold off and immediately review the act.

The other issue is the restrictive moratorium, which is counterproductive and is unnecessarily hampering farmers trying to expand or diversify operations. A blanket moratorium requires the bureaucrats to develop management plans that have little to no understanding of local water issues. I call on the government to listen to producers who have the experience and knowledge to develop workable water management plans. At the moment government departments are making determinations on water management with the community in an advisory role. That model has failed and the communities need to be put back in the driver's seat.

Yesterday I tabled a petition signed by 312 residents of the Atherton Tablelands requesting a review of the methadone clinic in Malanda and Atherton. The residents of Malanda and surrounding districts draw to the attention of the House the existence of two methadone providers in these small rural communities, which are located just 18 kilometres apart. Malanda is a family oriented farming community and the methadone program is attracting drug users into the town, which does not have the resources or the facilities other than the methadone clinic to support the rehabilitation of drug users. The availability of methadone in small rural communities such as Malanda has a devastating effect on the residents and has caused much grief to families in the small, close-knit community. There has been a notable increase in the number of used syringes found by council workers, and a seven-year-old girl was injured by a discarded contaminated needle and faces an agonising three months of testing for blood transmittable diseases such as HIV, hepatitis and hepatitis C.

We ask that the methadone program is removed from Malanda and protective measures are taken to prevent injury to children, families and visitors utilising the public facility in the town from discarded drug utensils. We ask for the installation of used syringe disposal units, soft fall in the playgrounds, blue lighting in the public toilets and funding for council workers to rake and clear the public sandpit.

*(Time expired)*

### **Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology**

 **Mr SHUTTLEWORTH** (Ferny Grove—LNP) (2.38 pm): I rise in the House this afternoon to speak of an event at which I represented the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts last week. It was the Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology's Industrial Affiliates Program evening promoting the benefits of collaboration between industry players and Australian universities, in particular the University of Queensland. Professor Peter Gray, who heads up the AIBN, and Professor Peter Hoj drove the evening through a range of presentations which were followed up by Professor Darren Martin.

Professor Darren Martin kicked off a company that was headed out of the AIBN called TenasiTech, which received \$925,000 of government support for the establishment of this spin-off business. Through the affiliates program the AIBN is trying to ensure that the scientists and engineers of very high calibre that we produce through our university programs in Queensland can find employment opportunities within the state such that we are able to grow and nurture our industries going forward.

TenasiTech has linked up with another well-known Brisbane company, ERG Group, which operates within about 180 markets throughout the world and employs over 1,000 people. They have approached Professor Martin to develop products for them using nanotechnology to produce new polymer technologies that will increase the tensile strength, malleability, scratch resistance and so forth of ERG products such as golf balls, splashbacks and so on. I did actually inquire as to whether the golf balls went any straighter than the ones I use, but unfortunately that is not one of the criteria.

DSM, another very good company that is establishing a business in Brisbane, is a global operation employing many thousands of people throughout the world. In Queensland they are setting up an operation at the Princess Alexandra Hospital and will be employing 500 Brisbane people. They are a

manufacturing operation that manufactures medical and scientific products. Largely, they were there on the evening to discuss with the affiliates program how increased bioengineering and nanotechnology products being developed through the AIBN can be incorporated into their products. It was an outstanding evening, and I commend AIBN on their efforts.

*(Time expired)*

### **Member for Yeerongpilly, Resignation from Liberal National Party**



**Mr JUDGE** (Yeerongpilly—LNP) (2.41 pm): Today I rise with a heavy heart to resign from the LNP.

**A government member:** Good.

**Government members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr JUDGE:** I supported the LNP's policies in the lead-up to the election on 24 March this year. I worked hard campaigning since 2010. I acknowledge and respect—I always will truly respect—all of the volunteers who helped me on the journey to get here, especially my family.

It is my responsibility to represent my electorate and, sadly, I do not believe that this government is fulfilling its election promises.

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mrs Cunningham): Order!

**Mr JUDGE:** Undertaking to act with humility, grace and respect is an important undertaking. In my belief, that has not occurred. The Public Service were informed that they had nothing to fear. We all know today that that was not true. These two basic pledges have been brought into question time and time again in this parliament.

Queensland's state debt needs to be addressed—there is no doubt about that—but controlling debt needs to be done in a way that is respectful to the people. There are plenty of young people and young families with mortgages who are being placed in turmoil and under great stress as a consequence of the approach taken by the current government. I simply cannot continue to serve this government and I simply cannot serve with people who lack respect, who want to yell abuse across the chamber and who will not allow mature debate to take place. I will not be a part of that team.

Governments must remain true to their pre-election promises, and I will not be a part of a government that does not do that. When a government says that the Public Service and others have nothing to fear, it needs to hold true to that promise. If 'there will be no carbon tax under a government I lead', hold true to that promise. And if 'there will be no asset sales', hold true to that promise. As a consequence of that approach to government, I simply cannot continue under the current government. I say that with great sadness because there are many members in this parliament whom I respect greatly—on the opposite side, on this side and up the back with the Independents and the Katter party. I respect them immensely, but I will not continue to mislead the public. When we are elected and make promises, we must maintain them.

**Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (2.45 pm): I move—

That the member be further heard.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion not agreed to.

### **Cape York Welfare Reform Trial**



**Hon. GW ELMES** (Noosa—LNP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs and Minister Assisting the Premier) (2.45 pm): The Cape York welfare reform trial has been a very expensive exercise. The Queensland and Australian governments have contributed almost \$90 million over the past four years to the trial in just four communities—Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge—with a combined population of just 2,688 people.

An integral part of any trial is that it be evaluated to see whether it has actually achieved what it set out to do. That is true for the Cape York welfare reform trial—particularly so—given that such a substantial amount of public funding has been provided for such relatively limited locations and, indeed, population. The Queensland and federal governments each committed \$850,000 for an evaluation report of the trial to be completed by the end of last year. The evaluation was meant to be an important tool in assessing whether the millions of dollars for the trial have been well spent and for identifying improvements for service delivery for all Indigenous communities.

But there is a problem. We are still waiting for the evaluation, which is being managed by the federal government. As I mentioned, it was originally meant to be completed 12 months ago. Then it was promised for the middle of this year, then for September, and now the latest promised delivery date is the end of this month. I am pretty sure we can kiss that deadline goodbye as well.

From what I have seen so far, Queensland does not appear to be getting value for its \$850,000 contribution to the evaluation. The quality of the early draft material my department has seen is ordinary and does not do justice to the ambitious nature of and significant financial contribution to the trial. While the quality of the content of the final report might limit its usefulness, a more limiting factor will be the extreme delay in its delivery.

The Newman government recently allocated an additional \$5.6 million for a further 12-month extension of the trial. Unfortunately, we had to do that more in hope than in certainty that the trial has produced beneficial results. While we did not have the data to make a fully informed decision because the federal government had not provided the evaluation report it first promised 12 months ago, I will be looking very closely at the evaluation when we finally get it. We will also need to discuss the evaluation with the federal government to agree on how we can move forward from the trial in just these four communities to develop better services which benefit all Indigenous communities. I do not want to see the trial end at the end of 2013 and lose the legacy of what has been achieved. I hope that the significant investment will result in better targeted and more effective services for Indigenous communities in the long term.

### Mining Industry, Accommodation

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (2.48 pm): I rise in the House to speak on the issue of accommodation, specifically in the fast-growing areas associated with growth in the resources industry. The dynamic and often fluctuating nature of the resources industry brings with it many challenges in terms of infrastructure development and housing. This is more relevant when the entire industry is based on one commodity, such as coal or gas. The north-west minerals province area, however, is in the enviable position of being one of the top five most significant resource regions on the planet. This means that there is a strong variety of high-value base metals that diversify the market risk and therefore make infrastructure development less risky over the long term. Copper in particular is a safe commodity for which there are no known replacements on the horizon. The north-west minerals province is rich in copper. Therefore, it is a safe place to put in place long-term strategies. Longer-term strategies mean dealing with infrastructure and housing. I am here to talk about housing, in particular the first home buyers grant.

I recently had a meeting with local bank lenders in Mount Isa and found that not one person had put in for the first home buyers grant. A new house and land package in Mount Isa cannot be bought for any cheaper than \$500,000 whilst a similar package in metropolitan areas can be delivered for \$300,000 to \$350,000. And therein lies the problem—that is, the first home buyers grant as it stands now locks people out of the market in Mount Isa and presumably in other high-cost regional areas. Therefore, I call on the Treasurer to consider this problem and offer a program that relates more to regional areas and is adjusted for regional postcodes and allows this grant to be used for older housing. Otherwise it may as well not be rolled out for those regional areas because it will never be used and is completely ineffectual.

I turn now to other forms of accommodation such as FIFO camps. There is currently an application for a 960-man camp in Mount Isa. About 2,000 people in town work at the mine, so this can only mean that there will be a huge influx of FIFO employees. Everyone who lives in one of these cities knows that it will erode the community, diminish the demand for resources and compete with investment in the long-term in more permanent style accommodation, which we are desperately chasing and trying to promote in the new housing estate in Mount Isa. We very aggressively oppose that sort of development. We want a more permanent, long-term vision from the government and we ask it to support us in our opposition to this onslaught of FIFO accommodation in our mining towns. We want families and residents moving permanently into these towns. This is a last option. The first option should be permanent homes and residents. I look forward to the government's support in opposing these big mining camps.

### Yungaburra, Avenue of Honour

 **Mr TROUT** (Barron River—LNP) (2.51 pm): I consider myself extremely privileged to be involved in the establishment of what will become recognised as a pilgrimage destination for people from all over Australia wishing to pay their respects to our fallen soldiers who have lost their lives in Afghanistan. Tablelands Regional Council is to build an Avenue of Honour next to the beautiful Tinaroo Lake near the picturesque village of Yungaburra in the Atherton Tablelands. Using state government funding announced last week, the avenue will serve as a permanent memorial to one of the township's own lads who lost his life in Afghanistan. Ben Chuck lived life to the full and was no stranger to danger. Before joining the armed forces, he worked as a crocodile handler. He was well loved by everyone who knew

him and was too young and vibrant to die. Ben, a Special Forces soldier aged just 27, died on 21 June 2010 when his chopper crashed in southern Kandahar province in Afghanistan. Two other soldiers were killed in this incident, bringing the loss of life in that war zone since 2001 to 16, with two Australian Army engineers having been killed in a roadside bomb blast just two weeks prior.

Ben's father, Gordon Chuck, submitted an application for a 250-metre promenade flanked by native flame trees on the shores of the lake running parallel to a route used by the gun carriage carrying Private Chuck's remains for a ceremony in 2010. Names of Australian soldiers who have died will be engraved on plaques and placed near each tree. Minister Crisafulli visited the Far North recently and Gordon Chuck said that he was absolutely delighted and grateful that the state government had chosen to recognise the importance of the Avenue of Honour and that the avenue had touched a nerve deep within the Australian people. He said it was resounding through the nation the importance of us putting something in place that will be forever there to remind people of the commitment and sacrifice that is made by so few for so many. He has asked me to convey to the minister the gratitude of all North Queenslanders, 'particularly those of us in this region who relate so closely to the events which have led to this initiative'. He said there was such an amazing groundswell of support for this project, as if everyone had galvanised around the positive vibes being radiated from its concept and they were determined that this memorial would be one which would forever demonstrate the pride and debt they would always hold in their memory.

I thank the Tablelands Regional Council for its significant contribution to this very worthy project. Above all, I commend the Chuck family for their brave gesture in turning this tragic loss into an opportunity for Australians to remember those who have given their lives selflessly as members of our armed forces in Afghanistan. I also acknowledge the subbranch of the RSL which has so generously donated money. I urge fellow Australians to get behind this great and worthy project.

**An honourable member:** Lest we forget.

**Mr TROUT:** Lest we forget.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mrs Cunningham): Hear, hear!

### **Public Housing; Former Minister for Housing and Public Works**

 **Mrs MILLER** (Bundamba—ALP) (2.54 pm): This morning a petition containing more than 2,200 signatures was lodged and tabled in this House calling on the current Minister for Housing and Public Works to stop the sale of the Monte Carlo, Woombye Gardens and Lazy Acres caravan parks. Before I continue, I want to point out that since the commencement of this petition and its tabling today we have seen the downfall of one of the worst property managers in the country—'Landlord Former Minister Now Backbencher' Dr Bruce Flegg.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mrs MILLER:** Under the so-called leadership of Dr Flegg, we saw social housing tenants instilled with fear as they received letters reviewing their occupancy. We saw the defunding—

**Government members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mrs Cunningham): Order!

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you for your protection, Madam Deputy Speaker. We saw the defunding of the peak body that represents residents, the Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service, now thankfully funded by the Labor federal government, and we saw the former minister put on the market three government owned caravan parks—all of this from a government that made no mention of these planned moves before the state election and all of this done without compassion or empathy for the people hardest hit by these cold-hearted decisions! It is not surprising at all that Dr Flegg was forced to resign because of his mismanagement and for misleading the people of Queensland. For the benefit of all Queenslanders, I now have pleasure in tabling the final copy of the ministerial 'Flegg-opoly', which now includes two new sections actually—one that says 'Do not receive your ministerial pay cheque' and the other that says 'Go straight to the back bench'.

*Tabled paper:* Poster referring to 'Flegg-Opoly' [[1792](#)].

The residents of the three government owned caravan parks that are the subject of the tabled petition are in limbo. The government says that they are safe and not being evicted, but if the sales go ahead and the new owners do not want them to remain as caravan parks then over 18 months the residents will ultimately be evicted. I table today—

**Mr DOWLING:** I rise to a point of order. Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like your ruling. I understand that there is a matter before the Ethics Committee that relates to the subject the member is speaking to and I ask for your ruling on it in relation to Dr Flegg and the sale of assets.

**Mrs MILLER:** What's he on about?

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mrs Cunningham): Order! Member for Bundamba, if there is a matter before the Ethics Committee, I would ask you to be very careful and guarded in your comments.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you, and I am. The residents of the three government owned caravan parks that are subject to the tabled petition are in limbo. The government says that they are safe and not getting evicted. I table today more than 50 signed letters from park residents addressed to the former minister which will now be directed to the new Minister for Housing and Public Works, Mr Mander. These letters express the tenants' individual and unique stories of why this government should have a heart and not sell off these caravan parks.

*Tabled paper:* Non-conforming petition regarding the sale of state owned caravan parks [1793].

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Bundamba, order! This matter is before the Ethics Committee so I would ask you to resume your seat.

### Oliver, Dr P

 **Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection) (2.57 pm): It is with a heavy heart that I rise to reflect on the passing of a good friend and inspirational constituent, Dr Peter Oliver. Peter was 54 years old. He was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2010. He was never a smoker. He was husband to Ann, father to Jayne, Katie and Mick and a resident of Maleny. He was adjunct associate professor in the School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Management at the University of Queensland—the same school through which I received my science degree 17 years ago. Peter led the development of International Water Centre education and training products, in particular the Master of Integrated Water Management programs. So not only was he a constituent; we crossed paths regularly in our respective environmental roles. There is a great summary of his career on the IWC website. He worked with good people in wonderful places. He taught secondary maths and science to students in Surat, environmental and outdoor education to students at Maroon Outdoor Education Centre, he taught young folk at Maleny State High School, students at various universities and further afield overseas. He coordinated major ARC projects on Engaged Government and led a number of Waterwatch, landcare and integrated water management workshops not only across this great state but also across the world.

I turn now to Peter's campaign against the disease that claimed his life. As I said, Peter was never a smoker and was reasonably healthy before his diagnosis. He was quoted as saying, 'I won the lottery at the wrong end.' I would also like to read this quote into *Hansard*—

I'd also like to do something about lung cancer, this—

and unfortunately I cannot repeat this word as it is unparliamentary—

... of a thing that has been trying to rule my life. I need to raise awareness about it, raise funds, and advocate for more research funds for early detection and treatment.

That had been Peter's ambition ever since he was diagnosed. He did not want funding to be taken away from other cancer research programs; he just wanted a bigger piece of the pie of the tobacco taxes directed to lung cancer. I thank the Minister for Health, Minister Springborg, for meeting Peter before he passed away.

Our local community valued Peter in his mission. That is why my annual charity cricket match, held in Maleny in October, raised around \$3,000 for the Australian Lung Foundation. It was great that Peter stoically watched the majority of the match.

Peter will be sorely missed in my local community and in the broader environmental sector, but most importantly he will be missed by his family and to them I extend my sincerest sympathies. Vale, Peter Oliver. We will continue your campaign.

## ETHICS COMMITTEE

### Report

 **Mr DOWLING** (Redlands—LNP) (3.00 pm), by leave: I table report No. 126 of the Ethics Committee titled *Report on a right of reply No. 23*.

*Tabled paper:* Ethics Committee: Report No. 126—Report on a right of reply No. 23 [1794].

I also table report No. 127 of the Ethics Committee titled *Matter of privilege referred by the registrar on 15 October 2012 relating to an alleged failure to register an interest in the Register of Members' Interests*.

*Tabled paper:* Ethics Committee: Report No. 127—Matter of privilege referred by the registrar on 15 October 2012 relating to an alleged failure to register an interest in the Register of Members' Interests [1795].

I commend the reports and the committee's recommendations to the House.

## ETHICS COMMITTEE

### Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (3.02 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

- (1) That this House notes report No. 126 of the Ethics Committee and the recommendations of the committee that a right of reply be incorporated into the *Record of Proceedings*; and
- (2) That the House adopt the committee's recommendation and incorporate the right of reply into the *Record of Proceedings*.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

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RESPONSE BY PROFESSOR BOB WALKER AND DR BETTY CON WALKER TO STATEMENTS MADE BY THE TREASURER AND MINISTER FOR TRADE (HON TIM NICHOLLS MP) ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2012 AND 14 SEPTEMBER 2012

On 11 September 2012, the Treasurer made the following statements in the Queensland Parliament:

1. The honourable member for Brisbane Central certainly understands finances more than the so-called specialists, the honorary professor Bob Walker and his wife from Sydney University, from the groves of academia. I think it is always important that we look at the qualifications, the experience and the history of people like Walker and Walker. ...
2. ... there is an endless ability for any government anywhere in the world to continue to go into more and more and more debt.
3. ... they paid these clowns from Sydney to come up with a spurious report.

In relation to statement 1, the Treasurer denigrated our qualifications and asserted that our experience was limited to the 'groves of academia'.

Professor Walker's academic qualifications are BCom (NSW), MEd (Sydney), PhD (Sydney). He is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia, and joined the profession after a period working in public accounting. His publications include books and articles that deal directly with the matters raised in recent analysis of the Interim Report of the Commission of Audit. Before his recent retirement from full-time academic work he served as a professor of accounting for 33 years at the University of NSW and the University of Sydney.

He has provided advice to various Public Accounts Committees and Auditors-General. He served as chairman of the NSW Council on the Cost of Government (reporting to the Premier and to Parliament on government activities, and undertaking reviews of individual agencies) and as chairman of the Superannuation Administration Corporation (NSW), as well as providing expert accounting advice in litigation involving major corporations and the Australian Tax Office.

Dr Con Walker's academic qualifications are BEd (Sydney), PhD (Sydney), DipEd. (Sydney) She has written books and articles dealing with matters of public policy. She has never worked in academia, and has previously worked for CSR Limited, for the NSW Cabinet Office and NSW Treasury working with Premiers and Treasurers from both sides of politics before setting up her own consultancy firm. She has also served on various government bodies.

In relation to statement 2, we have never claimed or suggested that 'there is an endless ability for any government anywhere in the world to continue to go into more and more debt'. No such claim or suggestion appears in our review of the Costello Report or in any of our other writings.

In relation to statement 3, we reject the claim that we provided a spurious report and that it only reflected what our client (the Queensland Council of Unions) wanted us to write regardless of the facts or our own interpretations.

On 14 September 2012, the Treasurer made the following statements in the Queensland Parliament:

1. ... Honorary professor Walker and his wife-collecting a nice earn out of the union movement-say that gross debt is not a measure you should use...
2. This is effectively saying that we should be able to raid superannuation savings to pay down the debt that Labor incurred to support the budget.
3. I have some recollection that even Andrew Fraser said that the Walkers were low rent, provided low-rent advice and had no economic credibility.
4. (a) ... their mates in the union movement have gone down to their tame honorary professor from New South Wales;-  
(b) The Queensland Council of Unions have a tame someone-Walker and Walker.

In relation to statement 1, we have never claimed that measures of public sector 'gross debt' were irrelevant in assessments of a government's financial management. We noted that one of the commonly accepted indicators of a government's financial circumstances is 'gross debt less financial assets', otherwise known as 'net debt'. In short, the concept of 'gross debt' is relevant as a component of the calculation of 'net debt'.

In relation to statement 2, we have never claimed or suggested that the Queensland government 'should be able to raid superannuation savings to pay down the debt that Labor incurred to support the budget', in fact we said the complete opposite. We said that 'if the government wishes to claim that its defined benefit superannuation schemes are fully funded then it should do the right thing, and transfer the assets from QTC to the control of trustees of the relevant public sector superannuation funds'.

In relation to statements 3 and 4 (a) and (b), we reject the claim that we provide 'low rent' advice and that we are 'tame' consultants. We provide consultancy services for what we consider is a reasonable professional fee, having regard to our qualifications and specialist knowledge and experience. As for the claim that we have no 'economic credibility', our qualifications, experience and record as commentators on financial matters speak for themselves.

## MOTION

### Portfolio Committees, Reporting Dates

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (3.02 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That report-back dates be fixed for bills currently being considered by committees in accordance with standing order 136(1) as follows:

- (a) The Criminal Proceeds Confiscation (Unexplained Wealth and Serious Drug Offender Confiscation Order) Amendment Bill 2012, 8 April 2013;
- (b) The Directors' Liability Reform Amendment Bill 2012, 15 March 2013;
- (c) The Mining and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, 12 March 2013;
- (d) The Criminal Law Amendment Bill (No 2) 2012, 8 April 2013;
- (e) The Criminal Law (Child Exploitation and Dangerous Drugs) Amendment Bill, 7 March 2013.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

## SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND WATER (RESTRUCTURING) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 31 October (see p. 2301).

### Second Reading

 **Hon. MF McARDLE** (Caloundra—LNP) (Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (3.03 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Before turning to the bill, I cannot let the comments of the member for Bundamba in this House go unchallenged. The former public works and housing minister, Dr Bruce Flegg, was undertaking incredible work in that portfolio. He had been left with a disaster by the former Labor government and he was working very hard to address the concerns of some 30,000 Queenslanders who did not have a home to go to at night. They were on a public housing waiting list. It is a disgrace that the member should stand in this House and challenge Dr Flegg when his work and his heart was so directed to ensuring that people who needed coverage, who needed a roof, who needed four walls, were going to get one. Dr Flegg put in place innovative ideas and some new concepts. He was absolutely fixated on achieving an outcome for many Queenslanders. I think this House should be proud of the work that he did. He should not be condemned for the great work he was undertaking. I can tell members now that the current housing minister will undertake similar work and achieve equal outcomes for the people of this state.

Turning to the bill, the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 deals with a number of important policy issues and government commitments. The bill has two key components: firstly, the SEQ water reforms, largely the merger of the SEQ bulk water entities, Seqwater, LinkWater and the SEQ Water Grid Manager, together with the abolition of the Queensland Water Commission; and secondly, but equally importantly, amendments to the Water Fluoridation Act 2008.

The new single bulk water authority will commence operations on 1 January 2013—a new beginning for water supply in South-East Queensland, a single accountability for bulk water supply. I would like to acknowledge and thank the Finance and Administration Committee for its detailed review of the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. I believe that is further evidence that the process put in place by the last parliament is indeed working in this parliament.

The committee made a number of recommendations and I now table the government's response to those recommendations.

*Tabled paper:* Finance and Administration Committee: Report No. 23—South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, government response [[1796](#)].

I would like to respond to the committee's two recommendations on the water reform. The committee recommends that the department ensure that the Rural Water Advisory Group be considered as part of the ongoing consultation process. The government supports the committee's recommendation. The department will ensure that the advisory group has a continuing role in enabling

members to be informed and keeping my department informed on emerging issues. The Bulk Water Supply Authority will be represented on the Rural Water Advisory Group. On this point, the committee is absolutely correct. The Bulk Water Supply Authority is not just an urban business; it will provide water to rural users and must be aware of the needs of its rural customers.

With regard to the proposed amendment to the Water Fluoridation Act 2008, I intend to move amendments during the consideration in detail that will alter the government's approach to fluoridation of drinking water. The proposed changes will provide choice for all local governments across Queensland on whether to implement or continue the fluoridation of our drinking water supplies. The health minister, the Hon. Lawrence Springborg, will also address these recommendations in his contribution to the debate.

The proposed amendments have been circulated in the House. It is important to give some background to these amendments. With the leave of the House, I want to first and foremost mention and state clearly that the Newman government supports the inclusion of fluoride in drinking water as an effective oral health measure. However, this government also recognises the role of local government as the closest level of government to our communities. It is right that local governments make these decisions as to whether to include fluoride in drinking water. This is consistent with the partnership approach of the Newman government with local governments as has been referred to by the Minister for Local Government this morning and as is evidenced by the Partners in Government Agreement. These amendments will empower local governments to make a decision that reflects the intent of its communities. However, with this empowerment comes responsibilities. As the Minister for Local Government confirmed in visiting each local government across this great state, each of the local governments in Queensland has the capacity and the leadership to make these decisions.

In recognising the strength of the Newman government's relationship with the local government, I should also reflect on the actions of the previous government. In April 2007, then Premier Beattie, with his then minister for local government, Andrew Fraser, first met with mayors moments before announcing in this House the sudden and unexpected decision to force amalgamations. This epitomised the relationship of the other side with Queensland local governments.

Unlike the contempt that the other side had for local government, the Newman government is giving the power to local governments to make decisions for their communities on those matters that are important to their communities. We have a positive plan for Queensland's future. We are sorting out the mess left by Labor. That is why we are involving local governments in the decision making process. As I said, I will be talking further in relation to the terms of the amendments when we get to the clauses in the consideration in detail of the bill. However, it is most important that members in the House clearly understand that the recommendations state that the implementation of a decision to fluoridate or not must not affect water supplies to communities in other local government areas without the agreement of those other local governments. Secondly, the cost of implementing a decision of a local government whether to fluoridate or not is to be borne by the local government and not the water supplier. In essence, the local government can make the determination to fluoridate or not, but the cost associated therewith is upon that local government and the impact upon adjacent local governments, if any, is a cost to be borne by the local government that makes the determination.

In its final recommendation the committee asked the department to consider a change in title to better reflect section 169 which deals with water restrictions. As the committee is aware, the government is undertaking a full review of the SEQ water restriction framework in 2013. I will undertake relevant amendments which arise out of this review, including changes to section 169. A key part of the review will include the development of appropriate powers of compliance and enforcement to ensure the restrictions are achieved. Importantly, the development of a SEQ water restriction framework will be developed and tested with the community. As a number of small businesses would argue, water restrictions can have a severe impact on their business, their revenue and their customers. We need to ensure that the level and type of water restriction is appropriate.

The new single bulk water authority has a big task ahead of it. It will need to bring about significant change to the bulk supply operations, identifying and eliminating waste and deliver least-cost solutions. The bulk water authority has to develop and maintain a water security program which includes understanding customers—that is, the demands of the SEQ water businesses—and implementing solutions to deliver water at the lowest cost. This will not be a bill-at-all-costs mantra as demonstrated by the former government. The bulk water authority will work with the SEQ water businesses to plan to meet future demand. It will also optimise the current infrastructure before building new infrastructure, thus ensuring smarter and coordinated use of investment funds. They will together consider development drivers arising from the SEQ Regional Plan and local government and growth plans. In some cases the businesses may want to influence development to better use existing infrastructure.

I remind the parliament of some key facts in relation to the background of this bill. It costs \$1 billion a year to operate the SEQ water grid and bulk water system. Only about one half is returned in paying water bills. Therefore, we are left with an annual under-recover of between \$450 million and \$500 million. The so-called drought-busting infrastructure was debt funded—that is, there was no

money in state coffers to pay for the Western Corridor Recycled Water Scheme and the Gold Coast desalination plant. In 2008 at the high point of the grid we had five entities, five separate boards, five chief executive officers and countless senior executives and corporate teams supporting these five entities—this was not only an excessive cost but poor coordination and use of assets. We had Seqwater responsible for water storages, WaterSecure responsible for the manufactured water assets, LinkWater responsible for the transport of water, the SEQ Water Grid Manager managed the flow of water across the bulk system and, fifthly, the Queensland Water Commission, an independent policy advice agency to the government, that grew like a mango tree.

In 2011 the prior government merged WaterSecure and Seqwater. What this government has delivered is the abolition of the Queensland Water Commission and the establishment of a single bulk water authority. This is about being responsible and being accountable to the community for public money. Sadly there have been job losses, but I am advised that the unions have been consulted, largely through the Public Service Commission, and a fair process is occurring. These losses have generally been in the executive ranks and in corporate functions. Front-line delivery tasks have not been impacted. The new bulk water authority will need to review its business operations, including staffing and skill requirements, to meet the government's—but more importantly the community's—expectations on delivering water security and reliability to meet customer demand at low cost. Any redundancy arrangements will be at the discretion of the authority based on its assessment of business needs.

This bill delivers in bounds, but it also paves the way for further consideration and consultation on key issues such as an appropriate economic regulatory framework to oversight and report on costs and prices. The bill does a key thing that the former government could not do: it cements a working relationship between the bulk water authority and South-East Queensland businesses. The bill was developed in consultation with Queensland Treasury and I thank officers from both agencies who worked long hours to have this bill ready to enable a fresh start for water supply in 2013. I thank officers of my office and, more importantly, of my department, for the long hours they put in to bring this bill together. To amalgamate these entities in a short time frame was a herculean task. They worked long and diligently and pulled together a bill that will achieve great outcomes for the state. I also would like to thank the staff of the Minister for Health and his department in relation to the fluoride issues. I commend the bill to the House with the caveat that I will be moving amendments in consideration in detail.

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (3.16 pm): Firstly, as a fellow participant in Movember, I congratulate the honourable the minister on his moustachioed appearance. I thank him for participating in promoting men's health issues. The opposition will not be opposing this bill. We do, however, have some concerns, that I will outline in detail, regarding the government's proposed water reforms as well as the proposed amendments. In particular I want to address the implementation of the LNP's election promises in relation to the water sector. Before I do, I want to point out that on Tuesday the minister issued a media release announcing the appointees to the board of the amalgamated bulk water entity that this bill seeks to establish. This media release does not show proper deference to the legislative process. The bill is still before the House and for the minister to jump the gun and announce the new board members for this entity is presumptuous and I think shows a lack of respect for the parliament.

During the election campaign the LNP promised it would implement a four-point plan to reform the bulk water supply and water retail entities in South-East Queensland. Those four points were as follows—these are not my words, I quote from the LNP website—

Amalgamate the four bulk water entities into one entity to reduce the cost of supplying water;

Hand back control of water distribution and retailing to councils who previously did a far better job of managing water resources than the Bligh Government;

Write off non-performing water grid assets to reduce sharp price rises;

Adopt a 40 year price path to repay the Bligh Government's \$7 billion water grid debt over the economic life of the assets, which will also reduce the cost of water.

The adoption of those four policies was supposed to generate a budgetary saving large enough to pay for a one-off \$80 water bill rebate for all households in South-East Queensland. The bill seeks to implement the first of the LNP's four-point water plan, the amalgamation of the bulk water entities. One would assume that this amalgamation was intended to provide a significant part of the savings required to fund the \$80 rebate. Of course, we now know from the budget that the LNP promised more than it could deliver during the election campaign. Once in government the minister realised that the LNP's water plan would not actually provide any savings. In order to meet its election promise to give a water rebate to South-East Queensland householders it would have to call on all Queensland taxpayers to fund it because it could not get its sums right.

In the September budget, we saw an allocation of \$92 million from the government to fund the promise that was not supposed to cost anything. It is the same story as the promise to save householders \$120 on their electricity bills by freezing tariff 11. That was not supposed to cost taxpayers anything, either. There has been an allocation of \$63 million to pay for that promise, even though we

knew that the true cost would be much higher. A simple calculation reveals that the cost of the \$120 electricity bill saving will be much higher. We know that 1.8 million Queensland customers use tariff 11. Simple maths proves that \$120 multiplied by 1.8 million is \$220 million and not \$63 million. That is a shortfall of \$157 million. The promise was that it would cost nothing and then that it would cost \$63 million, but it will end up costing \$223 million. That is yet another instance of the LNP's election costings being way off the mark. Using the LNP's own estimate that it saves \$100,000 for every government worker it sacks, the \$220 million to meet its election promise will cost 2,200 jobs.

However, back to water, where another of the government's poorly planned and thought-out election promises will end up costing more than it promised. The \$80 water rebate promise is in tatters. It was supposed to cost nothing, but we know it will cost \$92 million. That is another 920 jobs. Of the 14,000 full-time public sector workers sacked by this government, more than 3,100 of those have been sacked as a result of the LNP's failure to properly develop and cost its electricity and water promises before the election. Unfortunately, the failings of the LNP's water and energy policies do not end there, because one of the other major parts of the LNP's water plan is to repay water grid assets over 40 years instead of 20. The Costello audit forecasts that water grid debt will peak at \$3.5 billion in 2016-17. I refer honourable members to page 174 of that report. However, in another failure to understand the operations of the water market and poor policy development, the LNP promised to repay the water grid debt over 40 years. To say that the modelling of the consequences of this policy has been unkind to the government and the minister would be an understatement.

In his answer to question on notice No. 14 during the estimates this year, the minister said—

Initial modelling indicates that extending the 20 year debt repayment period to 40 years but retaining the 10 year bulk water price path would result in a peak SEQ Water Grid Manager debt of approximately \$6.8 billion in 2029-30.

That is almost double the level of debt under the 20-year repayment path. That is an additional \$3.3 billion of debt, all because the LNP got its election policy wrong and did not think it through properly. Unfortunately for the minister, he has been charged with implementing a policy that I do not think is of his making. It has the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Treasurer written all over it. They are the three ringleaders of the three-ring circus that we are seeing opposite. Not only has the LNP water policy to amalgamate the bulk water entities failed to deliver the savings it promised, requiring funding from all Queenslanders to pay for the \$80 rebate, but if fully implemented the LNP's water policy will effectively double the water grid debt and increase the cost of water to Queenslanders. The LNP's water policy actually increases the cost of water and needs to be bailed out by the taxpayers, because it was not properly costed.

I take this opportunity to talk about some of the concerns raised during the consultation on this bill, particularly from the unions about the industrial relations impact for workers who are being transferred into the new bulk water entity. In its submission to the Finance and Administration Committee, Together, the union of employees, raised concerns regarding the transition of employees. In particular, it raised concerns regarding the potential for job losses as a result of the restructure and a potential for employees to be forced to accept lesser conditions of employment. Together was concerned that there is a potential for employees to be given redundancies under the legislation as it is currently drafted. I ask the minister to comment on that and whether the government can guarantee there will be no forced redundancies as a result of this amalgamation. Concern was also raised about employees currently working 36¼ hours a week moving to positions that are slated as 38 hours per week without any additional compensation. I think all members of the House would agree that employees are entitled to be paid for the hours that they work. If employees are required to work more hours as a result of this amalgamation, they are entitled to be paid for that additional time.

The bill abolishes the Queensland Water Commission. The QWC was established in 2006. This bill will transfer most of its functions, responsibilities and staff to the Department of Energy and Water Supply and the new amalgamated bulk water entity being established by the bill. I take this opportunity to thank the hardworking past and present staff of the QWC for their efforts over the past six years to help reform the water sector. If we cast our minds back to 2006, I am sure all members will recall the dire situation that had arisen after years of drought. In 2006 in South-East Queensland the combined dam levels fell below 20 per cent. It was the worst water shortage in 100 years. I commend the Queensland Water Commission for the fine work it did at that time and since. In particular, the public education campaign surrounding water usage should stand as a model for similar campaigns. At the height of the drought in South-East Queensland, water usage per person was reduced considerably to approximately 140 litres per person per day and the education component of that campaign was so successful that water usage per person has remained low.

The opposition is concerned about the new regime for water restrictions. I seek some clarification from the minister about how they will operate. The explanatory notes state—

The QWC water restriction powers will also be removed and the SEQ water service providers will no longer be delegated a compliance role to ensure restrictions are adhered to, but will be empowered to impose restrictions where they consider these are necessary...

I ask the minister for some clarification as to how that change will operate in practice and whether the new bulk water authority as a service provider will set its own restrictions. I note that the explanatory notes go on to state that water service providers will be—

... subject to a direction from the Water Supply Regulator to impose a restriction consistent with legislative provisions that apply throughout Queensland. SEQ water service providers will achieve a level of reduced business costs with the removal of these QWC functions.

Again I ask the minister for clarification around this legislative framework, which will govern the setting of water restrictions in the future in South-East Queensland.

The bill makes some amendments to the Water Fluoridation Act 2008 to expand the criteria under which a water supplier may apply for an exemption from the requirement to fluoridate a water supply. I understand that, after many years of debate, fluoridation is still a controversial topic for some Queenslanders. Labor strongly supports the fluoridation of drinking water. Historically, Queensland has had significantly poorer outcomes in dental health, in part because fluoride was not added to drinking water across the state. Water fluoridation was introduced by the previous Labor government as a preventive health measure. When state-wide water fluoridation was introduced, Queensland had the worst dental health in the nation, with tooth decay affecting 50 per cent of children before the age of six. Until recently, Townsville was the only major city with fluoridated water and childhood tooth decay rates were up to 65 per cent lower than in Brisbane. Water fluoridation is supported by overwhelming scientific evidence and is endorsed by the World Health Organisation, the AMA, the Public Health Association of Australia and the American Academy of Pediatrics. In 2008, the previous government legislated to mandate the addition of fluoride to water supplies. The overwhelming weight of scientific evidence points to fluoridation as a safe solution that will improve the dental health of all Queenslanders. It is a form of early intervention that will save money in the long run as the level of expenditure required to provide dental services will be reduced in this state.

I have heard that the amendments to be introduced by the minister will allow local governments to make their own decisions about the fluoridation of water supplies and will remove the mandatory fluoridation requirement across the state. This will allow local governments to cease adding fluoride to the water supply if they already do so. Labor is wary of any moves that would significantly relax the provisions with regard to mandatory fluoridation. The opposition will not be supporting those amendments. I will speak more about the amendments in the consideration in detail stage. Again I put on record our strong support for the ongoing rollout of fluoridated water across Queensland.

To conclude, as I said the opposition will not be opposing the legislation. We do have concerns and I place those on the record today. However, the LNP's water policy is fundamentally flawed. To date it has not produced the promised savings and if fully implemented it will increase the cost of water by doubling the debt. Whilst we will be supporting the amalgamation of the bulk water entities, we do have concerns regarding the rights of employees, and I have mentioned those. I thank the House.

 **Hon. JA STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games) (3.28 pm): I stand before the House as the very proud member for Currumbin to join the debate on the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, introduced by the very capable Minister for Energy and Water Supply, the honourable member for Caloundra, on 31 October 2012. The objective of this legislation is to deliver on the Newman government's commitment to amalgamate the three South-East Queensland bulk water entities and to establish a single integrated water authority responsible for delivering water to the region. To do so, the bill seeks to amend the South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Act 2009, the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) Act 2007, the Water Act 2000, the Water Fluoridation Act 2008 and the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008.

The bill, if passed, will allow the businesses of LinkWater and the SEQ Water Grid Manager to be integrated into the Queensland Bulk Water Supply Authority, with the amalgamation expected to take effect by regulation from 1 January 2013. This merger will see responsibility for water planning largely transferred to the merged bulk water entity and more closely align SEQ with the rest of Queensland.

This bill also provides for the abolition of the Queensland Water Commission by drafting amendments to the Water Act 2000. The commission has no operational role in the SEQ water market, given it was established in 2006 by the Beattie Labor government at the height of severe drought conditions. Whilst it has played an important role in developing long-term supply plans and demand management strategies, the need for a commission is no longer there and as such this bill will abolish it. Any continuing functions of the Water Commission will transfer to the Department of Energy and Water Supply or the bulk water entity established by the merger. This is all about taking a common-sense approach to creating and fostering an efficient, productive water sector.

As the minister said in his explanatory speech, the overriding objective is to simplify the complex operating and regulatory environment while allowing government to maintain appropriate oversight and policy responsibility in key areas such as water pricing. The merge will generate immediate cost-saving

benefits—namely, reducing the bureaucracies and duplications put in place by the previous government. This move will help restore accountability in the sector and over time the confidence of the constituency in their ability to deliver low-cost water.

The merged entity will have a new board appointed to plan for a strong, productive future whose aim will be to ensure construction and maintenance of infrastructure is of the highest standard and able to continually meet growing demand in the most proficient way. This move will see the needs of customers become the central focus of the new entity and ensure decisions made into the future focus on driving efficiencies and ultimately driving costs down. It is a positive way forward.

Under Labor we saw eight pieces of legislation related to their ill-fated water reform from 2006 to 2012 pass through this parliament. In February of this year Labor put forward legislation that, among a number of things, allowed the dismantling of distributor-retailer Allconnex. Whilst in opposition and now in government the LNP did not and will not support ill-thought out legislation. But those opposite did. I am surprised at the gall of the honourable member for Mulgrave who was a willing participant in Labor's mangled water reform bills.

Labor ignored any creative solutions and positive amendments put forward by the LNP and instead were content to see the mess of the water sector spiral out of control. The manner in which Labor treated South-East Queensland residents and the pain they caused them as a direct result of their total incompetence was nothing short of shameful. Whilst in opposition we watched bill after bill being introduced to the House that did nothing but cause the water bills of residents to soar to unjustifiable heights.

I feel it important to note the Minister for Energy and Water Supply's comments in his explanatory speech. He stated—

The new entity and its board has one primary deliverable: a supply network that delivers high quality water at the lowest cost possible.

What a refreshing change of attitude from our minister compared to how Queenslanders were treated by the former Labor government and its ministers. I have stood in this House countless times exposing the appalling actions of the former Labor government. Currumbin residents suffered no end due to a government that did not care how often or how hard they hit Queenslanders in their hip pockets. My electorate office was inundated with constituents who were outraged at what was happening. I cannot stress enough just how angry and upset residents were when those hugely increased water bills arrived in their letterboxes.

Some people simply could not pay them. Rises were often as much as 20 per cent on their last bill despite their conservative water usage. It is very important to note that people on the Gold Coast were some of the best water warriors in the state. We were used to restricting our water use and we were doing it very well. My community groups were devastated and worse a large number of water meters had not even been read by Allconnex. Residents were powerless to do anything, but they were mighty cranky and protested loudly.

I have lost count of how many times in this House I expressed the anguish and pain of people in my electorate over the Tugun desalination plant or the water entity Allconnex. The Tugun desalination plant has had more episodes than *Days of Our Lives*, and it is continuing. Those heartless Labor members, some whom are still here, not many mind you but still some, did not care less. Labor did nothing for the good folk of Queensland as their bills and other basic living costs continued to climb. They did what Labor did best—they buried their head in the sand, time and time again.

In the short time the LNP have been in government we have demonstrated we are a government about lowering the cost of living and about getting Queensland back on track. This government, under the very capable minister, the honourable member for Caloundra, is doing all we can to rectify the mess that Labor created. South-East Queensland residents have been paying the price for Labor incompetence for too long. The ill-fated water grid cost Queensland residents a staggering \$9 billion or thereabouts due to the Labor government failing to properly plan. We saw problem after problem created because of that water grid that blew the cost totally out of the water, pardon the pun, while those opposite sat unmoved and watched residents endure unnecessary pain. Labor fostered a culture of debt and deficit as honourable members are all too aware of.

This year's budget provided for an \$80 rebate to domestic households in South-East Queensland. This rebate demonstrates that the LNP government understands the cost-of-living pressures Queenslanders are dealing with every day and showcases our unwavering commitment to finally provide relief. In order to provide the most relief and see the largest rebate provided, local councils have been asked to contribute to the cost. This ensures the residents truly are the winners in this situation. As reported in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* on 17 November, Gold Coast City Council Mayor Tom Tate has committed to chipping in \$10 of this \$80 rebate.

It will be a long road to untangle the disgraceful mess that Labor created, but the minister has already made huge inroads in this area, and I sincerely congratulate him. Residents are finally starting to realise they have a government that will work for them, not against them. This government has a plan

for the future of South-East Queensland water and will ensure that the incompetent mismanagement of the water sector is well and truly behind us. The Newman government will work with Queenslanders and with local councils to ensure water prices are kept as low as possible.

 **Hon. LJ SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—LNP) (Minister for Health) (3.37 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the debate on the bill before the House. In particular, I rise to make a contribution about the provisions that relate to water fluoridation and the amendments which are to be moved in the consideration in detail stage by the sponsoring minister, the honourable member for Caloundra.

There is little doubt that nothing stirs up sentiment and emotion in the community as much as debate and discussion around the benefits or otherwise of the fluoridation of the water supply. As the Minister for Health, I want to make the point at the outset that I am convinced that the evidence in favour of fluoridation of the water supply to the levels we do in Queensland provides absolutely no disadvantage to people's oral health but only provides significant benefits to their oral health. I think there is no doubt that the evidence is there.

I think it is also important to point out that there is no credible quantitative evidence that indicates that there is any substantial harm to people from fluoridation at the level we fluoridate water supplies in Queensland. We have very strict criteria around that. In areas where there is significant occurring natural fluoride those communities are exempted from fluoridating their water supply. The level of fluoridation of Queensland water supplies is such that it will do no harm to individuals and can only provide benefit to individuals.

Notwithstanding that, I think it is also very important to understand that there is a significant degree of emotional connection and concern about this issue in the community. That is why when there was a discussion, when there was a debate about a move towards mandatory fluoridation in Queensland some four years ago, there was much concern in the community from people about the issue of freedom of choice, and not only that but respect for local government when it came to the issue of being able to decide what should happen in their communities.

Indeed, we have about 87 per cent of the Queensland population currently covered by fluoridated water supplies. There is potential for another few per cent to fluoridate. But, under the amendments which are going to be moved later in consideration in detail by the sponsoring minister, there will also be an opportunity for those communities and those local governments which are currently fluoridating to consider what is in the best interests of their community and move to opt out of fluoridation in the future.

Even the previous Labor government in Queensland realised that there was some significant community concern and great desire to be involved in the issue of choice with regard to fluoridation. That is why they proposed in about 2007 to have a number of community polls or referendums. One of those was to be in Warwick in my electorate where there was some discussion about that. They were preparing for an advisory poll. I think the previous government did recognise that there was an underlying desire within the community for them to be consulted with regard to fluoridation. But the previous Labor government, after promising those advisory polls, came along and took away that particular right and they moved towards a mandatory basis for fluoridation in Queensland.

As I indicated, there is little doubt that fluoridation of the water supply can actually provide some benefit with regard to oral health. It is also true, if you look at some of the significant evidence emerging throughout the world, that even countries in Europe are now moving to remove fluoride from their water supply, not because of any evidence that it is going to be harmful to people—because there is no evidence of that—but based on freedom of choice. There has also been significant evidence that, in those countries where there has been a move towards fluoridation of water supplies and in those countries where there has not been a move towards fluoridation of water supplies, there is almost the same proportional increase in improvements in oral health. A lot of that has been based on the fact that many people are now more aware of oral health and a lot more has been done with regard to public awareness and education. Notwithstanding that, I think it is fair to say that there is still a small gap, but that gap is nowhere near as wide as it was previously.

Indeed, I heard the honourable member for Mulgrave speaking a moment ago. He may not have been here at the time but I think in 2005 the member for Surfers Paradise proposed a private member's bill in this place to move towards a form of mandatory fluoridation and the Labor Party at the time opposed it on the basis that it was repugnant in that local government was not being consulted. So what we are seeing is some degree of contradiction in their position.

If the argument is that the level of fluoridation in our water supplies is harmful, I do not accept that. Is there an argument that it may be beneficial? Yes, that is the case. But it is also true that there is a significant proportion of our population, regardless of the inclusion of fluoride which, because of their diet and because of poor dental health, are still struggling in this area. Indeed, I think it is fair to say that it has had little impact in some of those areas.

The Queensland government will continue to advocate the benefits of fluoride. We will continue to advocate that those communities that have not included fluoride to date should include fluoride within the benefits of the subsidy for putting it in—because there are some smaller communities out there that may not be able to afford to do that. But we do respect that communities and local governments will have a differing view on this. Indeed, that is always something which has been philosophically at loggerheads with the underlying principle of the LNP that local government should have a right to determine what it seeks to do in its own local community. There has always been this philosophical disconnection between the mandatory inclusion of fluoride in our water supplies and the position of the LNP that communities do have a right to have a say and local governments do have a right to be able to reflect upon that when they make a decision on behalf of their community.

Indeed, this is also very consistent with the position that has been put forward by the honourable Minister for Local Government when he moved towards ensuring more empowerment for local governments with regard to their decision making. So this respects the role of local government. It understands the role of local government. We will continue to encourage local government as to the positive health benefits that can come from not only fluoridating your water supply but also continuing to fluoridate your water supply. Indeed, for those communities that may wish to fluoridate their water supplies that have not fluoridated their water supplies over and above the 87 per cent that have, then through government we will provide them with a subsidy which will be 100 per cent of the lowest cost price capital cost of actually putting those particular facilities in. That is something that will continue until 30 June 2014.

The other thing too is that, particularly with the water supplies in South-East Queensland where you basically have one entity which supplies that water, if any of those local governments were desirous of no longer fluoridating their water supply, they would have to bear the full cost of removing themselves from that network. So that in itself would be a significant disincentive for that happening as well.

It is about understanding the desires of local governments to be involved in this process. It really does very much fit around what is one of the key values, one of the key philosophical underpinnings of the LNP—and that is giving individuals and communities a greater capacity to be involved in the decision making about things which are important in their communities. Indeed, I think what we have seen over a period of time—whether it be from members on this side or even from the other side, if you go back and read some of the *Hansard* debate from the middle of the last decade—is that many people were searching their philosophical value system with regard to whether it was right to mandate something such as fluoride, which was in many ways seen as the imposition of a will of a government over and above what local governments may have wanted to be able to consider in their communities.

Indeed, in discussions and feedback from the large water suppliers and water providers around Queensland, I know there is a significant desire for those local governments to continue with the process of fluoridation, something which we would continue to encourage. But we do understand and we do respect the right of local governments in consultation with their local communities to make these decisions which are important to them, and this does very much carry forward that particular value.

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (3.47 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the bill at hand, the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. As the chair of the Finance and Administration Committee, my role and the committee's role was to review this legislation prior to it being debated in this place. I must say that we were put on a very tight time line. I seem to be a broken record when I get up and talk about these matters. But we do really need to start to address some of these short time frames from the perspective that it puts undue pressure on other work of the committee and certainly on the people who are supporting us in that committee role—our executive who are working very long hours at times to ensure that the committee reports on bills are delivered on time.

The report presents a summary of the committee's examination of the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. The committee's task was to consider the policy outcomes to be achieved by the legislation, as well as the application of the fundamental legislative principles—that is, whether it has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals and to the institution of parliament. The public examination process allows the parliament to hear the views from the public and stakeholders that may not have otherwise been heard, which should make for better policy and legislation in Queensland.

Although the issue of whether or not fluoride should be in our water supply was outside the terms of reference for my committee, it was interesting that most of the submissions were in relation to that specific issue—to not have fluoride in their water. Indeed, the CEO and one of the councillors of Bundaberg Regional Council appeared as witnesses in the committee process. They came along to tell us all of the financial and economic reasons why there should not be any fluoridation in their water supply.

As we went through the process we discussed the actual dollars involved. Many of the dollars were being provided by the state under the terms that expire on 30 June 2014. From memory, I think there was something like a \$1.3 million cost to the council and an ongoing cost in the order of \$600,000 to \$650,000 a year. They were fighting hard on the basis of that economic cost to the local community and argued that that money would be better spent on other infrastructure and so forth. Interestingly, when we put the assumption to the councillor that the state government says to you, 'It is going to cost you nothing. We will pay the full cost of implementation and we will pay the ongoing cost of maintaining the fluoride treatment. Would you then be happy with the fluoride treatment plants to be put in place?', it became evident then that the concept of arguing about the cost was simply a smokescreen. The reality was that the people of Bundaberg, and indeed the councillor who was with us on the day, were very clearly against the concept of having fluoride in their water at all. They indicated they would prefer not to have it.

It is interesting that the committee system had something brought to it that was outside the terms of reference and this was what was most likely the catalyst for a change and the proposed changes that have been announced today that will provide choice for all local governments across Queensland on whether to implement or continue with the fluoridation of their drinking water supplies. We had a very tight time line. We had to have things in place by 1 January or the last day of December. That has now gone out the window. There is no real need to concern ourselves with that now, because we are now proposing to change the fundamental issue of whether or not fluoride is required in the water at all right around Queensland.

The committee process formed part of the decision making of the government even though there were no recommendations because we could not make recommendations as it was outside our terms of reference. So there were no recommendations in that regard in the report. The fact that it came before the committee and people had a voice and an opportunity to speak their mind in that committee process gave enough emphasis to the cause, if you like, for the government to reconsider the whole situation and over the last 48 hours do a complete turnaround on the whole issue.

Without taking up a lot more time here, I think all of the issues have been covered. I note that three of the four recommendations made by the committee have been accepted by the government. The fourth recommendation—recommendation 3—is no longer applicable because the requirement of the deadline date, the last day of December, is no longer applicable. So recommendation 3 is unimportant now.

Once again I think it is a reflection on the committee system—and I want to spend a couple of minutes on this—which has again been proven to be working. At the beginning of this parliament when the committee system was being changed we heard from the other side about the 6:2 ratio and the problem that was going to create: that the LNP was going to dominate committees. That is not so in the Finance and Administration Committee. In this committee, with me as chair and the deputy chair from the other side, we work well together in a bipartisan way with all of the work that we do. We do not always necessarily agree at the end of the day, but we work civilly together through the process and find ourselves working and treating one another in the way that we would expect to be treated and we come up with some very good recommendations for this place to consider.

I want to thank the committee. I want to thank all of the members. Indeed, I want to make particular note of the member for Greenslopes, who was on three committees for a while, but he always made an effort to come to the Finance and Administration Committee meetings. He quite enjoyed his time with us. It gave him a little bit of sanity, I think, because we are all nice, calm and collected people. We are losing him. He is off to greener pastures. We have taken on board the member for Moggill. The member for Greenslopes is sitting next to the police minister. I was looking at his seat and he was not there. The member for Moggill is coming on board, and I look forward to working with the member for Moggill into the future.

I thank the committee members very much, but in particular I want to thank the secretariat. The effort that the secretariat has put in on not only this particular bill but on every bill is incredible. We are doing a huge amount of work on the workers compensation review process on top of what we have done in absolutely ridiculously short time frames, and that could only be achieved with a totally dedicated secretariat. I want to thank each and every member of the secretariat, one of whom, Marilyn, is retiring on 4 January after 5½ years with the committee office. We have thoroughly enjoyed her time with us. I know she has enjoyed her time here, but she is off to Toastmasters. She is going to be heading up Toastmasters around Australia, I think. She is a very good speaker in her own right. We have never had an opportunity to really listen to her, but I wish her well. Indeed, the whole committee wishes her well on her future with Toastmasters. I close by saying that I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr GULLEY** (Murrumba—LNP) (3.57 pm): I rise in support of the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. This will be a short contribution, member for Coomera. I am a member of the Finance and Administration Committee that was appointed to review this bill.

**Mr Crandon:** A proud member.

**Mr GULLEY:** It is a great committee. Originally we thought this was going to be a dry topic, but the conversation was quite fluid and we came to a conclusion quickly.

The issue I particularly want to address in my speech is water restrictions and their future management. I note there was some recent media about the dry weather experienced in most parts of South-East Queensland. There rightly have been some questions from the public on the need to ensure water use is still being managed and the memories of the millennium drought are still strong in the minds of many South-East Queenslanders. Importantly, householders and businesses have not forgotten the impact of the drought. They continue to be water smart, using water thoughtfully for their needs.

Prior to the drought, household consumption averaged 300 litres per person per day. The average daily residential water consumption across South-East Queensland for the 14-day period ending 14 November was just 180 litres per person. Our dams are nearly full including Lake Samsonvale and Lake Kurwongbah, which support my electorate and which are only a couple of minutes drive from the boundary of the great place of Murrumba. I also note that the Hinze Dam on the Gold Coast has recently had its walls raised and that has almost doubled its storage capacity. We do have time to re-engage with community on future water restrictions. We are not losing or throwing away anything. At some stage we need to step back to restrictions but not for some time.

A fair and equitable restriction regime will be developed and consulted on with the community in the next 12 months. The South-East Queensland water business, the new bulk water entity and council water businesses clearly have a strong role in keeping the community engaged and informed on water security and water usage.

In conclusion—and I will keep my promise of making a short speech—I want to mention the fact that many households and businesses also remember the terrible floods that hit South-East Queensland during January 2011, including of the Pine River that flows past my electorate. South-East Queensland needs to be aware of and manage both extremes. I would like to congratulate the Minister for Energy and Water Supply on delivering this important piece of legislation and I support the amendments he is raising today. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr KAYE** (Greenslopes—LNP) (4.00 pm): I rise in this place today to speak on the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill through my involvement in the Finance and Administration Committee. Firstly, I would like to congratulate the minister for bringing this bill to the House, and I would also like to thank the chair of the committee for his stewardship. One of the platforms the Newman government was elected on was a commitment to get the state's finances back under control and to help Queenslanders with cost-of-living increases. Since our election in March this year, we have gone a long way to achieving our objectives. In my electorate of Greenslopes, we as a government are helping all of those people whom I spoke with during the campaign who were crying out for relief from ever-increasing prices.

I do not think anybody in here would forget the drought we were in prior to the flooding in Queensland. However, we are now in a very different situation. Unlike various discredited predictions, the rain did not come again and most of our dams are in a good position volume wise. The government of the day committed to a drought-proofing scheme that involved a series of pipelines and a desalination plant, and these big ticket items had the big ticket price tags to match. I quote from the explanatory notes of the bill—

With the completion of major infrastructure projects and a transition to post-drought operating conditions, there is a clear need to redirect the focus of the sector from construction to cost-containment, including targeting duplication of functions across the industry. The continuing requirement for a dedicated source of policy advice on regional water security has also receded with the shift to a full-supply operating environment and the increasing organisational maturity and regional focus of SEQ water industry participants.

This bill will merge the three existing South-East Queensland bulk water entities—the Queensland Bulk Water Supply Authority, LinkWater and the South East Queensland Water Grid Manager—into one single bulk water service provider, the South East Queensland Water Grid Manager. This entity will be the monopoly purchaser of bulk water to the councils of South-East Queensland and the distributor-retailer authorities. Aside from eliminating levels of duplication amongst the three entities, it will mean the following will occur, and again I will quote from the explanatory notes—

The Bill will impose specific obligations upon the new bulk entity to ensure that it demonstrates how it will achieve the DLOS objectives—

the desired level of service objectives—

where these have been prescribed by Regulation, recognising that it will now own, operate and control all bulk water supply and transport assets in SEQ and will need to take ownership of short and long-term planning to ensure it can meet growing demand for safe, secure and reliable water supply in SEQ and be appropriately responsive to emerging security issues.

By eliminating duplication amongst the existing entities via this merger, it will mean a more efficient operation of resources in South-East Queensland. By creating efficiencies, we can start to pay down the debt and contain prices for consumers, both residential and commercial. I am all for anything that helps drive down the cost of living for people in the Greenslopes electorate. The Newman

government came to office with an enormous debt to pay off as well as the need to mitigate the ever-increasing demands on family budgets. We are working hard to achieve these objectives without imposing more costs and tax increases on the people of Queensland.

This will be the last legislation that I will speak on as a member of the Finance and Administration Committee. I would like to take this opportunity to commend all members of the committee for the work they do and the way in which the committee conducts itself. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the chair, the member for Coomera, and his stewardship of the committee. I extend my thanks to the staff, Deborah, Maggie, Lynette and of course Marilyn Freeman, who will soon retire. Thank you, Marilyn, for your dedicated service. I also acknowledge the hard work by the technical scrutiny secretariat. I commend the bill to the House and ask everyone in this place to support it.

 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (4.04 pm): I rise to make a short contribution on this bill. I just wish to commend the minister for the additional amendments that are to be circulated and debated subsequently. I am sure a lot of other matters could be discussed in the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, but I will leave that to others.

The fluoridation of water has been a contentious issue since it was first mooted. When discussions were held, there was a lot of opposition. Those of us who were in parliament at the time received a lot of correspondence on this. In my office, I received hundreds if not thousands of letters and emails, with the overwhelming majority opposing fluoridation. When the votes occurred in this House, I opposed fluoridation. I think it is just another additive to the water and it took away people's choices. It is very easy to administer fluoride to children in your family if that is your want.

This bill will re-devolve power to local governments so they can make a decision that reflects their community's wishes—if the decision has not already been made. It takes a strong minister to do that. The legislation was in place. Although there were still clearly people who were opposed to fluoridation of water, it takes a minister with conviction to say, 'We will re-examine this matter and where it is possible we will give choice back to the community.'

The amendments set out the process, because some councils have already been required to implement fluoridation because of the timing of the rollout when the bill was passed. Other councils still have not introduced fluoride, and these amendments will certainly empower those local governments, and more importantly those communities. I acknowledge that the minister and the opposition have said they support fluoridation. I have already said on the record that I believe it should be a matter of choice.

I commend the minister for this move. I wish local councils success in reflecting the wishes of all or the majority of their community, whichever it may be. I hope the communities will be heard on this matter. This issue has been incredibly emotive over the years and, again, I put on record my appreciation to the minister for these amendments.

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (4.07 pm): I will also make a brief contribution on the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, and I wish to mainly speak to the amendments that have come in. My main concern with the bill is the part that refers to fluoridation. I wrote to the minister regarding fluoride water in Mount Isa, and we were concerned that there had not been proper consultation. There has been a lot of toing and froing and a lot of arguments for and against. The important thing is that the people should be properly consulted on the risks and the benefits and they should play a strong part in the decision-making process, and I do not feel that has been done effectively in Mount Isa.

That then left us with the issue of those places that had already embarked on the path of putting in the fluoridation systems, such as had happened in Doomadgee in my electorate. They spent a lot of money starting the process, but they had dire concerns about the safe storage of the fluoride on-site and keeping the place operable. This was going to put a lot of stress on an already stressed council, and they felt that, despite any benefits that may eventuate, it would be a very large burden for the council to take. My concern is that it may not have been in the best interests of the state to force that upon them. So I commend the minister for adopting those amendments and allowing places such as Doomadgee to determine their own future. They have been provided with autonomy in that respect.

I will not speak too much on the other aspects of the bill. Some acts have been passed in here that reduce the bureaucracy surrounding the management of many of our utilities, and I am a great advocate of that. A lot of people are very sceptical of the water boards set up in my area. They are very cautious of these bureaucratic things that end up adding to the cost for the end user, who in most cases are the mums and dads. Anything that attacks that is a positive approach. I think it is healthy that those issues regarding fluoridation are contained within these amendments in this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr STEWART** (Sunnybank—LNP) (4.09 pm): Today I rise to support the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. The objective of the bill is to facilitate the restructuring of the South-East Queensland bulk water industry. This will deliver on our election commitment to amalgamate the three South-East Queensland bulk water entities and establish a single

integrated water authority responsible for the effective delivery of water to the south-east. Immediately, this bill will deliver significant savings at a corporate level, with the removal of three boards and several executives. This will assist the new board of the Queensland bulk water authority in its primary focus of delivering high-quality water at the lowest possible price.

The residents of Sunnybank spoke on 24 March and overwhelmingly the people of Queensland spoke also. They were sick and tired of the lies and the waste from the previous Labor government. Their support had dried up. What followed was a flood of support for a responsible government, an LNP government, a Campbell Newman government, a government that would listen to the people and provide cost-of-living relief that was so desperately needed by local families. This will directly save families money and help ease the cost-of-living pressures—pressures that have been increasing under Labor's watch.

To assist in the delivery of low-cost and high-quality water, this bill will allow for the abolition of the Queensland Water Commission. The commission is no longer required and has no operational role in the current water market. This is not to take away from the work that was completed by the commission as it was established at the height of the Queensland drought to ensure appropriate policies were introduced to manage the water restrictions to further protect families. With the proposed structure of the Queensland bulk water authority it will be important to ensure correct management of all of its assets across the network and that they are maintained and utilised so that families and businesses in South-East Queensland know that there is a plan for the future water supply.

I grew up on acreage in Runcorn. We were not connected to the water supply. We had a rain tank and if it did not rain we soon ran out of water. We did have a bore that we were able to top up the tank with. Having two sisters who washed their hair every chance they could get, we often reverted to the bore. This is a story that I am sure many of our rural members will be able to relate to. The reason I share this is that it is important that we do not forget the history, we do not forget the lessons that we have learned and the steps that have been taken in every household to protect and save one of our assets, water. We need to continue to remember the very low levels that were recorded in our dams and how precious water is. We need to continue to be water wise and protect this asset. I believe that, when the bulk water authority works together with council and there is community consultation, this will encourage better communication and information sharing and will ensure that our community is informed and takes an active part in how to best manage our water usage. This bill will reduce costly red tape for councils by removing the five-year price path as it currently burdens councils and does nothing to reduce prices or increase accountability.

This bill also amends the Water Fluoridation Act 2008. The amendments to this section will further expand the criteria under which water suppliers may apply for exemption. There is no doubt that the committee received many submissions from the Bundaberg and Burnett region and there is no doubt that the current water network in this area is extremely complicated. Some submissions have detailed that we have not relaxed the rules enough. However, the main reason for people making submissions was their opposition to fluoride, and submissions were not completely relevant to the bill.

I was, however, pleasantly surprised that the minister has proposed additional amendments to further empower local governments and to reduce the regulatory burden. It is proposed that local councils will have the power to decide if fluoride in the community's drinking water is right for them. However, I am also glad that the bill further explains that councils should consult with water suppliers and that they will be responsible for any costs associated with this decision. This amendment will further add to the cost-of-living savings for families and businesses and allow locals to make decisions. This amendment proves that we are a party that listens to the local councils and works together to make Queensland a great state and a state of opportunity.

I congratulate the members of the Finance and Administration Committee on their work on this bill, particularly the chair for his leadership and the committee staff for their efforts and support with this tight, but necessary, time line. I congratulate the minister on the bill and the amendments. This bill was an election commitment that will provide people in our great state with savings and an efficient government delivering for all Queensland. I once again am very pleased and honoured to be part of a government that is continually showing its commitment to reducing the cost of living for families. I support this bill for the benefit of the people of Sunnybank.

 **Mr GRANT** (Springwood—LNP) (4.14 pm): I rise to speak in support of the South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. Indeed, I could not contain myself when I saw some of these recent amendments coming through and wish to thank the minister sincerely for the amendment that he is putting through in this bill today.

Before I get into the substance of some of those amendments, I cannot but speak on this momentous and historic occasion. I have spent many years following this topic. To say that I am disgusted with former ministers responsible for water supply would be an understatement. Indeed, back in around 2007 our city and the people of my electorate contributed their part to about a \$12 million annual bill to purchase bulk water because in Logan we have no dams to store it. That was when things started really getting off track with the previous Labor government. We started hearing talk of the cost of

water doubling, and we were shocked and horrified. I did a calculation on the former Labor government's handling of this topic—they publicly advertised their price path—and I found that from 2007 to 2017 their advertised price path was going to see the price of bulk water for my residents, my constituents, increase by over 430 per cent.

Part of the atrocious mismanagement of former ministers meant that money was wasted—completely wasted. Take, for example, just the desalination plant. Hundreds of millions of dollars were spent on that plant that would have produced water at 10 times the price of drinking water. The planning in water supply was lacking. The levels of water got so low because over 20 years insufficient attention was given to the provision of infrastructure. Things got off track and the consequences are being paid for by all of us. That is just a little bit of background.

With respect to the amendments, I cannot allow this opportunity to pass without quickly putting on the record for the benefit of those involved, especially those who have lobbied me heavily in my electorate, some of the strong thoughts that I have. I mention in particular Sonja Hardy from the Springwood electorate and all the lobbying that she has done on the issue of choice with regard to fluoridation. I would like to mention and put on record my appreciation of Jason Woodforth, Michael Trout, Rosemary Menkens and Steve Bennett for the work that they have done in working within the party to raise this issue of choice. After all, the people simply want choice rather than copping sweep mass compulsory medication.

Some of the amendments that have come through which I am so happy to put on the record today include the repeal of section 7, which imposes the mandatory obligation on a public potable water supplier to fluoridate the relevant potable public water supply for which they are responsible. That will at least be taken away. That mandatory obligation to fluoridate potable water will be repealed. The next amendment is the insertion of a new section in part 3 to empower local governments to decide whether or not the drinking water supplied to members of the public within a community in their local government area should be fluoridated. Thirdly, there is the insertion of a new section in part 3 to require that a public potable water supplier responsible for the supply of drinking water to a community within a local government area must fluoridate, or cease fluoridating, the water supply if this is the decision of the local government.

Logan and the people of Springwood are in a difficult situation. They must buy all of their water, and they buy it in the condition it is in when it is pumped into their city, so they have the complication of negotiating with those who currently dose our water with fluoride. I want to put on the record a few of the points given to us on hot issues. These are just stand-alone statements for the information of the people in my electorate.

Firstly, after further consideration of the proposed amendments and in light of the representations made to the government it has been decided to remove the mandatory obligation to fluoride from the act. This decision reflects the government's overarching policy objective of empowering local governments to make decisions in the best interests of their communities.

Secondly, local governments are best placed to assess the benefits and disadvantages of implementing fluoridation or continuing to fluoridate water supplies in their area. The Queensland government will be able to provide local governments with credible information on the benefits of fluoridation and the details of the funding arrangements for the installation of fluoride-dosing infrastructure.

Thirdly, the water board or other entity responsible for the water supply is required to act on the relevant local government's decision. In other words, when a local government determines it is in the best interests of the community to commence or cease fluoridation, the entity responsible for supplying drinking water must give effect to the local government's decision. However, any additional cost to the water board or water authority associated with giving effect to the local government's decision must be borne by the local government.

Lastly, those local governments that have up to now invested in drinking water fluoridation infrastructure in good faith and that subsequently determine that it is not in the best interests of their community to continue fluoridation will still be able to claim eligible capital costs back from the Queensland Fluoridation Capital Assistance Program, as long as claims are submitted in sufficient time for reimbursement to take place before 30 June 2014.

I pass on my sincere appreciation to the minister responsible for these amendments. I believe that these decisions that will pass through the House today will bring great joy to many residents in my electorate.

 **Hon. MF McARDLE** (Caloundra—LNP) (Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (4.22 pm), in reply: Before I commence my comments in response to the second reading debate, I join with the member for Mulgrave and acknowledge that Movember is almost over. On my side of the House I have been told on many occasions that, looking at my mo, it is not soon enough. Movember is all about

raising funds for prostate cancer and beyondblue for mental health issues in men that impact upon not only them but also their families. There was a time, not all that long ago, when men would die with prostate cancer, not of prostate cancer. It is a sad fact that today one in nine men in Australia will develop prostate cancer in their lifetimes and that almost 20,000 cases are diagnosed each year. Depression in men is an issue that is growing in our society. Indeed, the statistics for the past 30 years indicate that suicide rates for males between 15 and 24 years of age have tripled. Though it may be the cause of some humour, the men in this House have undertaken Movember for a very good reason. I will never do so again. Cruelty is something that I had visited upon me by those whom I call my colleagues. I will not name them, but one is associated with a mythical fish called a mermaid and the second resides at the northern tip of the Sunshine Coast. I will not name either member in that regard. Needless to say, it has been done for a very good cause. I certainly urge other members of the House to take it up next year.

This bill does what the former government should have done. It cuts costs in the bulk supply system. It removes duplication. What we now have is one accountable bulk water authority. The merger of Seqwater, LinkWater and the SEQ Water Grid Manager and the establishment of a single bulk water management authority under the strategic direction of a single board is a critical step to rethinking the operations of the bulk supply system.

Yes, the bulk supply authority and its board will be charged to find savings and implement sustainable and efficient business practices, but we must remember the legacy of the bloated SEQ water grid and its debt. As we all now know, the bulk system—the SEQ water grid—runs at a significant loss as bulk water prices do not reflect the full costs. This loss is funded by debt, which is forecast to reach around \$3 billion. This is in addition to the debt that funded the construction of the grid.

The opposition has spoken about staff cuts as a result of the merger. Like the situation that applies more broadly across the public sector, the need to find savings is the unfortunate legacy of the prior government's policy decisions, including the duplication inherent in the institutional arrangements it put in place for the South-East Queensland bulk water industry. Moreover, I remind the opposition about the water debt that all of us in South-East Queensland are paying off. The unions have been consulted on the merger process, yet South-East Queenslanders were not consulted on the debt that we have to pay through our water bills. The bill also abolishes the Queensland Water Commission. A separate water policy entity to that of the department is not needed.

As members would be aware, the government had proposed amendments to the Water Fluoridation Act 2008 to expand the grounds upon which local government could apply for an exemption from the requirement to fluoridate their drinking water supplies. We had also proposed to clarify which water supplies would be eligible to apply for an exemption. However, as I stated earlier, following further consideration the government will promote local level decision making in relation to the fluoridation of drinking water. Proposed amendments to the act will now ensure that the decision on whether to fluoridate a water supply is made by local government and it will be local government's obligation to determine what is in the best interests of the community when deciding whether or not to fluoridate.

More specifically, the amendments will permit all local governments that are yet to implement fluoridation to decide whether or not this should occur in the best interests of the communities within their local government area, local governments that are currently fluoridating their water supplies to cease doing so or local governments that are currently fluoridating their water supplies to continue doing so. The cost of implementation—that is, the cost of implementing a decision of a local government whether or not to fluoridate—is to be borne by the local government and not the water supplier.

Whether fluoridation continues or commences in the future, all existing legislative provisions to ensure safe fluoridation will remain. These amendments will result in consequential amendment to other sections of the act and removal of schedule 1 of the Water Fluoridation Regulation 2008, which currently specifies the implementation dates for each water supply. The amendments will also abolish the Queensland Fluoridation Committee as its role to advise the minister on the merits of exemption applications will no longer be required.

Local governments that are yet to implement fluoridation of their drinking water supplies that wish to proceed with fluoridation will still be able to access the Queensland Fluoridation Capital Assistance Program funding to cover up to 100 per cent of eligible capital costs. This funding is administered by the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning and is available until 30 June 2014. Those local governments that have up to now invested in drinking water fluoridation infrastructure in good faith and that subsequently determine that it is not in the best interests of the community to continue fluoridation may be able to claim eligible capital costs back from the Queensland Fluoridation Capital Assistance Program.

I do want to thank all members of the House who made a contribution to the debate of the bill before the House today. I note that the opposition is not opposing the bill but will be opposing the amendments in relation to fluoridation.

I now turn to some of the comments made by the member for Mulgrave, the opposition spokesperson on energy and water. He made the comment that the four-point water plan was to generate a saving of \$80 and that the sum of money that we have referred to in press releases and also in the budget actually comes at a cost to the consumer—that is, the budget required that money be put into it to satisfy that commitment. The commitment by this government was quite clear—that is, we would put in place a four-point water plan and that water plan would then generate savings of \$80. We are still doing that. This is another step down the process of amalgamating the bulk water entities into one bulk water entity, and we will continue with those four-point water plans.

However, we saw that the people in South-East Queensland were hurting. They were hurting, so we decided to give immediate relief with a one-off payment of up to \$80. We decided not to delay that payment until such time as the savings that came into account would provide the \$80 per household in South-East Queensland. We decided that people were hurting now and we took the step. We are still committed to the four-point water plan. We are still committed to deriving savings for people right across South-East Queensland and also to make certain that people's cost-of-living expenses continue to go down.

One thing that is quite clear that was raised by members in their speeches is the fact that the \$9 billion debt associated with the water grid lies squarely at the feet of the former Labor government in this state. It was made quite clear by the member opposite that in 2006 there had to be some form of crash infrastructure rollout because of the drought. I say this: the drought was nothing new. Droughts are a known situation in this state that occur over and over again with a great degree of regularity and monotony. What the then government failed to do was put in place a plan of infrastructure that would indeed cater for the necessity to provide water in a drought situation. Rather, it simply poured money into a debt based infrastructure plan that delivered a \$9 billion debt. When we look at the problems that this state is facing, we have to look squarely at the role of the former government in putting in place a debt scenario that we now have to unravel, and this government is committed to doing that. We also knew that delivering the \$80 by putting in place a four-point plan would take a very long time, so we moved immediately to assist people in the south-east corner with a one-off payment of up to \$80 and that will occur in the first quarter of next year.

The member also raised an issue in relation to power—indeed, tariff 11. It is in my opinion ironic that the member opposite—a member of the former government and a member of the cabinet in the last term of the former government—raises the issue of power prices in this state. We were left with an unmitigated disaster with escalating power prices, again hitting the hip pocket of every Queenslanders. What did this government do? We made the commitment well before the election campaign that we would tackle these issues and we would work with the community to ensure that we put in place programs that would deliver the outcomes we knew this state needed. Again, I repeat for the benefit of the member, as I stated in the House yesterday, that we did freeze tariff 11. We did reduce the solar feed-in tariff. We did put in place the IDC and the IRP to drive down these costs. We have also given the QCA the delegation to look at a three-year price path.

These are all things that we have done in only a matter of months since getting into government, but I still have not heard anything from the member opposite with regard to what the opposition's plans are to reduce the cost of living in terms of electricity. Based upon the history of the former Labor government, those opposite would not have a clue as to how to put a plan together. I made the comment before that since deregulation in 2008 we have seen an 80 per cent increase in power prices since that time. It is a bit rich to come into this House as a member of the opposition at this point in time and point the finger at us and say that we are doing the wrong thing when over 12 to 14 years those opposite could not get anything right at all. In eight months this government has moved quickly to alleviate the concerns of Queenslanders and put in place a process to deal with the major factors or levers that drive energy prices.

In relation to redundancies and other working hours, the member raised the point about people working up to 38 hours per week when they were only supposed to work 35½ or 36½ hours. I can inform the member that this will affect around 25 out of a total of 500 employees on certified agreements only. A fundamental objective of the merger will be to create a fully integrated business. Retaining historical differences and irregularities in terms of conditions will act as a barrier to achieving this integration, including expected cost savings from establishing a single payroll.

The member correctly raised the work undertaken by the Queensland Water Commission, and I concur with him that it did do great work and that it did achieve great outcomes at a time when the necessity was clear. However, I think the member would also join with me in acknowledging that perhaps that body's work has now passed given the dam supply levels and given the necessity now to look at other ways of dealing with the water needs of this state. But I certainly agree with him that it did a great job during a tough time. With regard to the issuing of water restrictions, I can advise the member that the amended act would allow the SEQ water service providers—that is, the new bulk authority and

the council water businesses, including the DRs—to impose restrictions on their own customers where they consider they are required. However, I would say that it is unlikely that they would be imposed at this time given the high water levels and water security across South-East Queensland.

In addition, the Water Supply Regulator located within my department has the power to direct a service provider to impose a restriction if required. There are plans in train for 2013 for the government to consider what water restrictions will be imposed, if any, and, more importantly, what process will be undertaken to have those restrictions imposed. That will be by way of consultation with the relevant bodies and also the community at large. It is most important that when we consider that we have now moved from a drought into a full supply level at almost 100 per cent we need to focus on the future and get from the community their input into that process. From 1 January 2013 there will be, in effect, no restrictions, unless of course the relevant entities determine that they need to do so for issues of emergency.

I note that the member will be opposing the issue with regard to fluoride, and we can debate that issue during the consideration in detail stage. I also congratulate the member for Currumbin, who adopted a very balanced approach in her assessment of the bill. She highlighted the necessity of the desal plant and the western corridor and what can be done with regard to the usage and equally so the costs associated with the running of those items. That is being considered by my department and I hope to have an answer in the near future. The problems in relation to that is the interweaving of contracts that are associated with the water that is produced in particular in the corridor, but again I do hope to have a solution in the near future.

Minister Springborg, the Minister for Health, raised the issue of fluoride and again emphasised that this government understands very clearly that fluoride is positive for oral health and raised the fact that emotions with regard to this issue run very high. I can recall the debates in this House in 2008 and the lead-up to that debate. Most offices would have been inundated with pros and cons with regard to fluoride. It is perhaps a very emotive issue and in fact can divide communities. Again, that is why we believe it is important that local government have input into that.

I note that in 2008 during that debate an amendment moved by the then shadow health spokesperson and the current education minister, the Hon. John-Paul Langbroek, actually sought to insert into the then government's bill a proposal that a referendum exist in each local government area to ensure that that local government area had the right to determine whether or not they would put fluoride into their drinking water. That was defeated by the then Labor government, so in one sense we are in fact going back to the principle enunciated in 2008 in endorsing the role of local government—something that has been endorsed again by the Minister for Local Government. Minister Springborg also indicated quite strongly that the government believes in freedom of choice—that is, it should be up to the community to make the call with regard to matters of this nature and the fact that the community can be properly informed through the processes of media, mail and other formats can give them all the evidence and information to determine what course of action that particular local government takes.

The member for Coomera raised a very important point in relation to committees as a whole, which are under enormous pressure at this point given the number of bills that are going through the House. I inform the member for Coomera—and, indeed, all members of his committee and other committees—that the government appreciates sincerely the great work they do. The fact that they are under pressure does not go unnoticed. The fact that committees prepare reports that are important is evidenced by the fact that many recommendations contained in those reports are taken up by the government. But can I say to all the members of committees that the work they do is very important to us. It highlights issues that we have not taken into account and it also makes for a better process whereby the public and the stakeholder groups can contact the government through those committees.

The member for Murrumba focused on the issue of water restrictions. As I outlined, there will be a review of water restrictions next year, taking into account the full supply level of our dams and also community expectations. If I recall correctly, the members for Greenslopes, Mount Isa, Gladstone, Sunnybank and Springwood all highlighted the issue of fluoride. I think the member for Gladstone indicated that it is a very important issue in her electorate. She feels quite strongly that the people of her electorate will have a very strong view one way or the other. As I said, the issue of fluoride is one that is charged with emotion. I think members on both sides of the House know that. Those who were in this place in 2008 would certainly appreciate what the situation was like then. But we feel that it is now an opportune time to return power to local governments—the level of government that is closest to the people of the state—so that they can make their own determination one way or the other. With those few words, 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

Clauses 1 to 79, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 80 to 84—



**Mr McARDLE** (4.42 pm): I move the following amendment—

1

**Clauses 80 to 84**

Page 89, lines 10 to 25, page 90. lines 1 to 31, page 91, lines 1 to 32, pages 92, lines 1 to 33 and page 93, lines 1 to 6—

*omit, insert—*

**'80 Amendment of s 4 (Object of Act)**

'Section 4(2)—

*omit.*

**'81 Omission of s 6 (Meaning of *relevant public potable water supply*)**

'Section 6—

*omit.*

**'82 Replacement of ss 7–11**

'Sections 7 to 11—

*omit, insert—*

**'7 Decisions about fluoridation of public potable water supplies**

'(1) A local government may decide that fluoride be added to the water supply that supplies potable water to the community in its local government area if it is satisfied the decision is in the best interests of the community.

'(2) If a local government makes a decision under subsection (1)—

(a) if the local government is not the public potable water supplier for the potable water supply that supplies potable water to the community—the local government must give the water supplier notice of the decision; and

(b) the water supplier must add fluoride, or continue to add fluoride, to the water supply.

'(3) A local government may decide that fluoride not be added to the water supply that supplies potable water to the community in its local government area if it is satisfied the decision is in the best interests of the community.

'(4) If a local government makes a decision under subsection (3)—

(a) if the local government is not the public potable water supplier for the potable water supply that supplies potable water to the community—the local government must give the water supplier notice of the decision; and

(b) the water supplier must not add fluoride, or must cease to add fluoride, to the water supply.

'(5) A local government may, before making a decision under subsection (1) or (3), consult with the public potable water supplier for the potable water supply about cost implications, infrastructure arrangements and potential impact on water supply inside or outside the local government area.

'(6) In this section—

**community**, of a local government, includes part of the community of the local government.

**'8 Requirement for public potable water supplier not to impact on another local government**

'(1) This section applies to a public potable water supplier for a public potable water supply that is required under section 7 to add fluoride, or cease to add fluoride, to the water supply that supplies potable water to a community in a local government area.

'(2) The public potable water supplier must not, when adding fluoride, or ceasing to add fluoride, to the water supply, affect another local government's water security or water supply or the fluoridation of another local government's water supply without the other local government's agreement.

**'9 Costs**

'If—

(a) a local government makes a decision under section 7 to add fluoride, or cease to add fluoride, to the water supply that supplies potable water to the community in its local government area; and

(b) the local government is not the public potable water supplier for the potable water supply; and

(c) the public potable water supplier for the potable water supply incurs costs (**compliance costs**) in complying with the local government's decision;

the local government must pay the public potable water supplier's compliance costs.'

**'83 Replacement of s 13 (Notification of intention to add fluoride to public potable water supply)**

'Section 13—

*omit, insert—*

**'13 Notification of intention relating to fluoridation of public potable water supply**

'(1) This section applies if a local government makes a decision (a **fluoridation decision**) to add fluoride, or cease to add fluoride, to the public potable water supply that supplies potable water to the community, or part of its community, in its local government area.

'(2) The local government must—

(a) give the chief executive a notice stating that the local government has made a fluoridation decision and the nature of the decision; and

(b) publish the notice at least once in a newspaper circulating in the area of the State serviced by the water supply.

'(3) The public potable water supplier for the public potable water supply must, at least 30 days before adding fluoride or ceasing to add fluoride to the water supply—

(a) give a fluoridation notice to the chief executive; and

(b) publish the fluoridation notice at least once in a newspaper circulating in the area of the State serviced by the water supply.

'(4) In this section—

**fluoridation notice** means a notice stating—

(a) that the local government has made a fluoridation decision; and

(b) that the public potable water supplier for the public potable water supply intends to add fluoride or cease to add fluoride to the water supply from a stated day.'

**'84 Amendment of s 14 (Only certain persons may add fluoride to a public potable water supply)**

'Section 14(c), 'section 21 or 60'—

*omit, insert—*

'section 60'.

**'84A Omission of pt 4 (Noncompliance with requirement to add fluoride to relevant public potable water supply)**

'Part 4—

*omit.*

**'84B Amendment of s 57 (Definition for div 3)**

'(1) Section 57, heading, 'Definition'—

*omit, insert—*

**'Definitions'.**

'(2) Section 57, definition *the contravention*, 'section 58(2)(b)'—

*omit, insert—*

'section 58(b)'.

**'84C Amendment of s 58 (Application of div 3)**

'(1) Section 58(1)—

*omit.*

'(2) Section 58(2), 'Subject to subsection (1), this'—

*omit, insert—*

'This'.

**'84D Omission of pt 7 (Queensland Fluoride Committee)**

'Part 7—

*omit.*

**'84E Amendment of s 85 (Appointments and authority)**

'(1) Section 85(c)—

*omit.*

'(2) Section 85(d)—

*renumber* as section 85(c).

**'84F Amendment of s 87 (Evidentiary provisions)**

'Section 87(1)(d), 'or a member of the committee'—

*omit.*

**'84G Amendment of s 95 (Protecting officials from liability)**

- '(1) Section 95(3), definition *official*, paragraph (c)—  
*omit.*
- '(2) Section 95(3), definition *official*, paragraphs (d) to (f)—  
*renumber* as paragraphs (c) to (e).

**'84H Amendment of s 96 (Indemnity)**

- '(1) Section 96(1), after 'indemnify'—  
*insert—*  
'a local government or'
- '(2) Section 96(1), 'section 7 or 11'—  
*omit, insert—*  
'section 7'.

**'84I Amendment of s 100 (Regulation-making power)**

- '(1) Section 100(2)(a)—  
*omit.*
- '(2) Section 100(2)(b) to (f)—  
*renumber* as section 100(2)(a) to (e).'

I table the explanatory notes to my amendment.

*Tabled paper:* South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, explanatory notes to Hon. Mark McArdle's amendments [[1797](#)].

This amendment removes clauses 80 to 84 of the bill and replaces them with new clauses 80 to 84I. The new clauses amend the Water Fluoridation Act to remove the mandatory obligation for water suppliers to add fluoride to water supplies that supply water to populations of greater than 1,000. The new sections are added to the Water Fluoridation Act to state that it will now be up to local governments to determine whether fluoridating water supplies within their local government areas is in the best interests of their communities.

The new sections require that water suppliers that are not owned by local governments comply with the decisions of local governments about the water supplies of their communities. The new sections also specify that the implementation of a decision to fluoridate or not must not affect water supplies to communities in other local government areas without the agreement of those other local governments.

The cost of implementing a decision of a local government as to whether to fluoridate or not are to be borne by the local government and not the water supplier. Notifications must be made if a local government decides to change the fluoridation status of water supplies to its community or communities and notifications must be made when a water supplier implements a decision.

The amendment also repeals those sections of the act that establish and empower the Queensland Fluoridation Committee, as this committee will no longer be needed to advise the minister on exemptions from the obligation to fluoridate. This is the crux of the amendments proposed by the government. As I have said in this House on a number of occasions this afternoon, the amendments simply say that local governments will now have the ability to determine whether to opt in or opt out of fluoridating their water supplies.

The important point is that, if a government takes an action—for example, to opt out of fluoridation—the costs associated will be borne by that particular local government. For example, if there are two local governments that draw water from the one source—from a water treatment plant—and the water treatment plant places fluoride in the water and then one of those local councils determines that it does not want that water, it is then up to the individual council that does not want that fluoridated water to pay for the costs associated with non-fluoridating the water. So it is not a bland statement that you opt in or opt out; local governments must be aware of the fact that, if they opt out, there could well be costs associated with taking that step.

Of course, those councils that are not required or are at this point not putting fluoride in their water can determine not to opt in. Therefore, they are not required to meet any ongoing costs associated with that. So I ask members to please bear in mind that the amendments allow the local governments to opt in or opt out, but there is a cost involved if the impact of doing so impacts upon neighbouring councils or other councils around the area. I recommend the amendment to the House.

**Mr PITT:** As I have indicated earlier, the opposition will not be supporting these amendments. Queensland Labor supports fluoridation, because Queensland Labor supports science. Labor believes that governments should be listening to the best available science and legislate accordingly. As we know, water fluoridation is overwhelmingly supported by scientific evidence. It has been used around

the world for upwards of 50 years and in all that time it does not seem that we have found one skerrick of scientifically credible evidence that has been presented that shows water fluoridation to be harmful. Instead the evidence keeps rolling in that it is an incredibly successful preventive health measure. Water fluoridation is endorsed by just about every leading dental, medical and scientific organisation.

When the previous Labor government mandated water fluoridation, Queensland had the worst dental health in the nation, with tooth decay affecting 50 per cent of children before the age of six. As I said in the second reading debate, until recently Townsville was the only other major city with fluoridated water, and childhood tooth decay rates for that area were up to 65 per cent lower than they were in Brisbane. This amendment returns Queensland to where it was before 2008, with local governments in charge of whether fluoride will be added to water supplies. To refresh everyone's memory, only Townsville had fluoridated water.

We have heard the health minister talk about a 2005 private member's bill that the now Minister for Education, Training and Employment introduced, which contained mandatory fluoridation. The health minister mentioned that that bill was rejected by the Labor government at the time. We have not forgotten that, but I guess at the same time there seems to be a case of role reversal on both sides. I find that interesting. To me, it says that that member was very passionate—and I believe still very passionate—about fluoridation. I am wondering whether he has been rolled in cabinet. The health minister said that we had changed our minds, but that does not mean that the current Minister for Education, Training and Employment was not rolled on this issue.

Let me be clear: the Newman government still supports fluoridation but it also supports empowering local government. That is a bit like having a foot in both camps, because it says to me that the LNP is putting the power for councils to choose ahead of children's health in Queensland.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr PITT:** Before members react, I am not saying that to be flippant; I am saying that the government either believes in the science of fluoridation or it does not. If it believes in it, then I would think that the policy would dictate that it should be pushing every available option to have fluoride in water supplies. To me, this amendment says that there needs to be a clarification broadly of the policy of the LNP around fluoridation, because I was of the understanding that it was a bipartisan position and fluoridation was supported by both the LNP and the Labor Party in Queensland. So we will not be supporting this amendment.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** As the Minister for Health responding to the honourable the Leader of Opposition Business I say that the LNP does support fluoridation. As I indicated a moment ago in my speech, we support the science of fluoridation, but we also support very strongly the role of local communities and local governments to have a say over issues as controversial as this. As I said earlier, if one goes back to the contribution of the now shadow minister for health in 2005, she was repudiating the position put forward by the honourable member for Surfers Paradise when he moved a private member's bill in this parliament to seek to introduce mandatory fluoridation and said that local governments should have a role, that they should be consulted and respected in this particular process.

If one fast forwards to when the government changed its mind in 2008 and put forward its position for mandatory fluoridation, the honourable member for Surfers Paradise sought to move an amendment in this place, as was pointed out by Minister McArdle a moment ago, to have a plebiscite of members of local communities to make a decision around this that should be reflected on and respected by that local government. Indeed, if one goes back to the proposition being put forward by the then Bligh government in Queensland, it envisaged having these plebiscites around Queensland. In my electorate Warwick was one of those communities that was earmarked as a place to have a Bligh government funded plebiscite on fluoridation. That was then snatched away from them.

I do not think there is any particular argument with regard to the issue of the science of fluoridation. There is a very strong proposition that is coming forward that if one looks at the significant progression of oral health in our country over a period of time, we are making some remarkable gains even in non-fluoridated areas and the gap has closed quite extraordinarily. It is also true that if one looks at some of the areas around Queensland where fluoride has been implemented in the water supply people do not even drink water from the town water supply because it has been imposed on them. They have tank water. Because they did not meet the previous exemptions they had to put those supplies in. They will have an opportunity to revisit that if they so wish.

We understand that this is difficult. We understand that there is certainly an element of controversy around the issue of fluoridation of water supplies. There always will be. Notwithstanding that, the previous position was philosophically uncomfortable for the LNP that believes very much in the right of local government to consult with their local communities to make decisions and yet had to commit to a mandatory process. I think this gives us the best of both worlds.

**Ms TRAD:** I rise to echo my opposition to this particular move by the government. I cannot believe that in the 21st century, after all of the science and data before us, we are turning back the clock on a significant public health issue. Fluoridating our water actually means better oral health outcomes

for generations, not just for this generation. The issue of local government rights trumping the public health imperative of a population is nonsensical. You could extend that to whether or not local governments allow bicycle users to wear helmets in particular areas. You could extend it to individuals and whether or not they should be exercising their individual right not to wear a seatbelt, their individual right to smoke wherever they please regardless of whether there are children in proximity, regardless of whether or not they are smoking next to people who are eating or women who are pregnant.

Oral health affects a whole range of public health areas, including pregnancy and bone density later in life. In the 21st century it is nonsensical for a government to be turning its back on science and good public health outcomes merely to say local governments should have a right. Individuals have a right in this country and we mandate particular laws in relation to their choices and in relation to what they can do in order to achieve good public health outcomes. What this does is achieve a bad public health outcome and this government should be ashamed of this move.

**Mrs CUNNINGHAM:** Good oral health outcomes are a result of many things: access by parents to good education, access by parents economically to good dental care and the ability of children to form good dental care habits. In the years that we have debated fluoridation there has been conflicting scientific evidence. It has not all fallen on the side of fluoridation is the silver bullet to oral health success. Though there are those who are scientists, well informed and well intentioned, who have said fluoridation is not the panacea, it may be one option.

These amendments are not removing that option. It is giving local council and the community some choice. The choice has always been there. If the government wants to mandate fluoridation, make available fluoride tablets. Those families that want to fluoridate their kids can line up and get some little pink pills and everybody will be happy. I do not live on town water, I live on dam and tank water. I am very thankful that our kids have good, strong, healthy teeth. They had good oral health habits: they cleaned their teeth at night, they cleaned their teeth in the day. We have been blessed that way. There are many families that are financially challenged and getting to the dentist regularly is difficult.

All of those things add up to good oral health. Good oral health in children is a contributor to much in the way of general health, I do not argue that point at all. Fluoridation is not the be-all and end-all for oral health. It is one of many choices and people should have choice. I commend the minister.

**Mr McARDLE:** It is again sad to see those opposite railing against local government as though they have absolutely no knowledge of how to conduct their own citizenry, as though they cannot be trusted to take appropriate and proper steps to protect the people who live under their banner. This harks back yet again to Peter Beattie walking into this House—and there are many here who can still recall the fact—and simply telling local government that they were going to be amalgamated into a number of councils. This government believes that local government has a very important role to play in our society, well and truly above what the Labor Party believe they are—that is, in essence, a serf to their whims and desires. We are saying in this particular bill that they have a right to determine what is in the best interests of the people who live within the boundaries of the shires or the cities—nothing more than that. As a government we endorse the use of fluoride, but we think it is about time that the people who are closest to the citizens of this state have a say, and a right to have a say in conjunction with their citizens, as to whether or not fluoride should or should not be in their water. It is as simple and as straightforward as that.

The government went to the election campaign quite clearly saying we are going to empower local government. If those opposite do not believe they have the capacity to make that determination, that simply reinforces my belief yet again that they have no faith in local government. If those opposite got back into power again God help local government in this state all over again.

I make this point very clearly: we believe in fluoride. It is now up to local governments across this state to ensure they act in the best interests of the people they represent. The member for Gladstone is exactly right: good teeth and good gums is a product of years of a multifaceted approach to dental hygiene. There are many factors that come into play. This debate here tonight is not about the science, it is about the right of local government to have a say, in conjunction with their citizenry, as to what should or should not happen. I commend the amendment to the House.

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

**AYES, 67**—Bennett, Berry, Bleijie, Boothman, Cavallucci, Choat, Costigan, Cox, Crandon, Crisafulli, Davies, C Davis, T Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Dillaway, Dowling, Driscoll, Elmes, Emerson, France, Frecklington, Grant, Grimwade, Gulley, Hart, Hathaway, Hobbs, Holswich, Johnson, Katter, Kaye, Kempton, Krause, Langbroek, Latter, Maddern, Malone, Mander, McArdle, McVeigh, Millard, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, Ostapovitch, Powell, Pucci, Rice, Rickuss, Robinson, Seeney, Shorten, Shuttleworth, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Symes, Trout, Walker, Wellington, Woodforth, Young. Tellers: Menkens, Smith

**NOES, 6**—Byrne, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Trad. Tellers: Miller, Scott

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clauses 80 to 84, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 85 to 102—



**Mr McARDLE** (5.09 pm): I seek leave to move the following amendments en bloc.

Leave granted.

**Mr McARDLE:** I move the following amendments—

**2 Clause 85 (Insertion of new pt 12)**

Page 93, line 10, 'provision'—

*omit, insert—*

'provisions'.

**3 Clause 85 (Insertion of new pt 12)**

Page 93, lines 15 to 19—

*omit, insert—*

**'102 Definitions for pt 12**

'In this part—

***amending Act*** means the *South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2012*.

***commencement*** means the commencement of this section.

***former***, in relation to a provision, means the provision as in force immediately before the repeal or amendment of the provision under the amending Act.

***relevant public potable water supply*** see former section 6.

**'103 Adding fluoride to relevant public potable water supply continues**

'(1) This section applies to a public potable water supplier for a public potable water supply that is, immediately before the commencement, adding fluoride to the water supply.

'(2) From the commencement, the public potable water supplier must continue to add fluoride to the water supply until the local government in whose area the potable water is supplied makes a decision under section 7 to cease to add fluoride to the water supply.

'(3) This section applies despite the repeal of former sections 7 and 11.

**'104 Exemptions and applications for exemptions from requirements to add fluoride to relevant public potable water supply**

'(1) Subsection (2) applies to an exemption given under former section 8 from the requirement under former section 7 for a public potable water supplier for a relevant public potable water supply to add fluoride to the water supply.

'(2) On the commencement, the exemption is of no effect.

'(3) An application for an exemption, made under former section 8 but not decided before the commencement, is taken never to have been made.

**'105 Dissolution of committee**

'(1) This section applies to the Queensland Fluoridation Committee established under former section 76.

'(2) On the commencement, the committee is dissolved and each person who, immediately before the commencement, was a member of the committee goes out of office.

'(3) No compensation is payable to a member because of subsection (2).'

**4 Clause 86 (Amendment of schedule (Dictionary))**

Page 93, lines 21 to 26 and page 94, lines 1 to 5—

*omit, insert—*

'Schedule, definitions *accepted representations, appointed members, chief dental officer, chief health officer, committee, health executive, proposed action, relevant public potable water supply, show cause notice and show cause period—*

*omit.*'

Amendment No. 2 is a change in the heading of new part 12. Amendment No. 3 amends clause 85 to add appropriate conditional provisions for the amendments to the Water Fluoridation Act and amendment No. 4 is consequential only in detail.

Amendments agreed to.

Clauses 85 to 102, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

### Third Reading

 **Hon. MF McARDLE** (Caloundra—LNP) (Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (5.10 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. MF McARDLE** (Caloundra—LNP) (Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (5.10 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.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Miss Barton): Order! Members, if you are leaving the chamber or returning to your seat, please do so in silence.

## RIGHT TO INFORMATION & INTEGRITY (OPENNESS & TRANSPARENCY) AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 27 November (see p. 2810).

### Second Reading

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (5.11 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.12 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Right to Information and Integrity (Openness and Transparency) Amendment Bill 2012. This opportunistic LNP government is trying to ram through changes to integrity laws in this state under the guise of integrity and accountability that actually reduce transparency and openness for the government. The legislation places additional requirements on the opposition and additional requirements on lobbyists.

In fact, the bill increases requirements and responsibilities for everyone except the government. The naming of this bill is quite ironic. What this bill does is weaken the existing integrity laws in this state—laws that have been developed over a number of years of Labor government to ensure that the excesses of the Bjelke-Petersen government and the attendant widespread and institutionalised corruption that accompanied that government will not ever be repeated in this state.

The Fitzgerald inquiry uncovered a level of corruption that shocked all Queenslanders. To know that members of parliament were corrupt and that the Police Commissioner and other highly positioned police officers were accepting bribes from organised crime operators shocked Queensland to the core. Since Labor was elected in 1989, we have brought in laws to increase accountability in public office and to ensure appropriate watchdogs are in place to oversee integrity in public office.

What this government refuses to acknowledge is that the former Labor government had an enviable record of Australian firsts in the field of integrity and accountability reforms. It was a Queensland Labor government that established Australia's first Integrity Commissioner.

**Mr Davies** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Capalaba, you are not in your seat. If you wish to interject, please return to your seat.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** It was a Queensland Labor government that enshrined the lobbyist code in legislation. It was a Queensland Labor government that banned the payment of success fees for lobbyists.

But what else has Labor done? Labor has established the CJC and then the CMC; changed the law to allow the CMC to investigate GOCs; placed restrictions on former MPs and staffers conducting lobbyist activities for up to two years; introduced the Public Interest Disclosure Act, making it easier for public servants to blow the whistle on misconduct and mismanagement; introduced the Freedom of

Information Act and then reviewed those laws and introduced the Right to Information Act, making it easier for the public to get access to information from the Public Service and government; oversaw the biggest shake-up to the parliamentary committee system in Queensland's history; agreed with the recommendation to allow the Leader of the Opposition to appoint the chair of the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee and appointed the member for Gaven to chair that committee; introduced direct questioning of public servants by the opposition during estimates committee hearings; and placed restrictions on political donations and created a requirement for disclosure of political donations in Queensland.

This is in stark contrast to what the Newman government has done. Let us reflect on what the government has done in the short time they have been entrusted with the Treasury benches. It has: stacked the parliamentary portfolio committees; bypassed committee examination of key legislation; refused to allow the opposition leader to appoint the PCMC chair; and initially opposed the CMC's independent review of political donations.

We believed that, having introduced those reforms, they would be there for the duration and any changes to those laws would only be to tighten and to increase levels of integrity and accountability. We were lulled into this false sense of security by the fact that the then opposition appeared to support most of those reforms.

I would like to quote some of the things those opposite said during debates on some of our bills. For instance, on 24 November 2009 the education minister, the Hon. John-Paul Langbroek, made a speech in the cognate debate on the Integrity Bill and the commission of inquiry amendment bill 2009, in which he said—

The road to reform is long. The need to stay ever vigilant to the breaking down of probity and integrity under the Westminster system of parliamentary government is always with us. Commissioner Fitzgerald showed us the way more than 20 years ago ...

He then said—

We owe it to each and every Queenslanders to continue on the road to reform and be ever vigilant of an executive government that is unaccountable, riddled with cronyism and unethical behaviour.

On the same day, the final sitting week of the year, this contribution by the member for Currumbin was prophetic. I will be intrigued to see whether the minister makes comments of a similar nature during the debate on this bill. She stated—

In yet another sign that this government is in serious trouble, here we are today in this House debating legislation that has been fast-tracked up the *Notice Paper* soon after being introduced. As this is not time-sensitive legislation and it has forced other worthy legislation to languish on the list until next year, it can only be surmised that the Premier was in need of a good news story this week to prop up her ailing image and poor polling in order to stave off the leadership aspirations of the Deputy Premier, the Treasurer and the Attorney-General.

Equally prophetic was the contribution by the member for Indooroopilly on the same bill the following day. He stated—

Every day in Queensland there is a new headline shaming this government. Every day there is a new headline underlining the need for greater scrutiny, accountability and integrity.

The member for Redlands made an equally far-sighted contribution. He stated—

Integrity is a word that has tremendous power and tremendous value in any community, but it is a word that appears to have lost some of its currency in this place. The community has lost its faith in the government. The community has lost faith in the government because of its inability to be honest ...

So this week the Attorney-General comes into the House to trumpet greater openness, transparency and accountability and introduces a 16-page bill—six pages of which are devoted to the opposition, not to the government.

**Mr Berry** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Excuse me?

**Mr Berry** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Ipswich—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Too many pages on the opposition.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition, please direct your comments through the chair.

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I find those remarks offensive and ask him to withdraw them.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Attorney, the Leader of the Opposition has found your comments offensive and she has asked that you withdraw.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I withdraw.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** This is typical of this government. They say one thing and do the exact opposite. Queenslanders are not that easily fooled. Queenslanders know when the wool is being pulled over their eyes. Part 2 of the bill amends the Right to Information Act 2009. These are not the amendments that cause me such alarm. It requires a person making an access application under the act to state whether access is sought on their own behalf or on behalf of another entity and, if for another entity, to name that entity. The bill also removes the 24-hour delay in accessed information or information which is available for access, but not access by the applicant, being published. So rather than being put out no earlier than 24 hours after the information is released to the applicant, it will be published as soon as practicable.

The ministerial guidelines for the operation of the publication schemes and disclosure logs under the Right to Information Act currently require that the information must be disclosed as soon as possible after the 24-hour period expires, on the next work day and no later than five business days after access. This amendment changes the minimum period by one day but removes the maximum period altogether. A cynical person would think the purpose of this amendment is to discourage anyone, particularly media organisations, from making applications because as soon as they get the information it will be released to the public.

**Mr Bleijie:** Oh, wow, the public shouldn't have access to it?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I didn't say that.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton):** Order! Minister.

**Mr Bleijie:** That's what you were inferring.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I didn't say that at all.

**Mr Bleijie:** That's what you implied.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition, please direct your comments through the chair. Minister, the Leader of the Opposition is not taking interjections and I would ask that you stop interjecting across the chamber. The Leader of the Opposition has the call.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** The disclosure logs for departments and ministers will, if the bill is passed, as soon as the application is received, also be required to include information about the application. If access is granted to information, the log will be required to include the actual document released, the name of the application and whether the access was sought by the applicant on their own behalf or on behalf of another entity as soon as practicable after the applicant accesses the document.

**Mr Choat** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I did not hear what the member for Ipswich West said. The Leader of the Opposition has the call.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** The disclosure logs for other agencies are only required to include the actual documents if it is reasonably practicable. If not, details identifying the document must be included, as well as the way in which the document may be accessed. So whenever a media organisation makes an application, that fact will be in the disclosure log and then everyone will be able to get the document. Again, is the sole purpose to discourage the media from making applications in the first place?

The experience of my office when making RTI applications of ministers' offices has been mixed and in some instances is not as fulsome as others. The information I received from the office of the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts under an RTI decision about CITEC was substantially different from the information I received after a review was conducted by the Information Commissioner.

The former Minister for Housing and Public Works apparently was reluctant to appoint a departmental decision maker, even though the Attorney-General, under direction from the Premier, had I understand sent letters to all ministers telling them that this was required. The education minister was similarly reluctant, although we have yet to ascertain if any action was taken against his staff when other ministers had two staff members sacked for the same thing. But the Attorney-General's office was a little different. The Attorney took a question on notice at estimates in relation to letters he had received in relation to court recording and transcription services. The answer he tabled—

**Mr Bleijie:** This is the fourth time you've said this.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I love this, Attorney. I love this one.

**Mr Bleijie:** Wait till I reply.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** It is one of my favourites from estimates. The answer he tabled advised he had received three letters. When my office RTI-ed his office to get those letters, the response was that there were no letters.

It is no secret that my office has applied for the release of numerous ministers' diaries under the right-to-information legislation. But let there be no mistake: this government when in opposition sought access to ministerial diaries of the former government through the RTI process. In fact, it was not an uncommon practice. But it is interesting to see the attitude now and the responses from different agencies. But the diary that we on this side of the House, and all Queenslanders, waited for with bated breath was the Premier's diary. On 19 November the Premier put out a statement stating that he would release his diary within the week. This is a government that is championing their openness and transparency reforms but the diary was not released until today. However, I do understand that the Premier stated very clearly this morning that there were privacy issues involved and thus the extension of time was needed. So I acknowledge that. I also do want to commend the Premier for tabling that diary. I think that is a good sign of openness and accountability and I will give credit where credit is due.

I was troubled to read an article in the *Brisbane Times* yesterday that showed that nothing had changed in relation to some of the matters before the Brisbane City Council. The article stated that the Brisbane City Council had been failing to comply with requests from the Integrity Commissioner, Dr David Solomon, to provide a copy of its lobbyist contact register. Dr Solomon said in evidence given to the Finance and Administration Committee that he made two requests to the Brisbane City Council over the past 18 months for a copy of the lobbyists register—that is, since May 2011. The Integrity Commissioner has been attempting to obtain the Brisbane City Council's lobbyists register since May 2011 and it has not been provided. Since that time there has been a state and council election. But the requests of the Integrity Commissioner have been declined.

I find this disappointing, especially so because the Integrity Commissioner stated that most local governments in Queensland had been fully cooperative. It appears that the Brisbane City Council is not complying with the requests. Why is this significant? Because the Brisbane City Council has a budget of over \$3 billion. This is in comparison with the budget of the state of Tasmania, which is around \$4 billion. If the government is seeking to extend the scope of laws relating to the disclosure of lobbyist contacts to the opposition, perhaps it should also investigate whether the Brisbane City Council is meeting its obligation and whether the law should be strengthened so that the council must provide its lobbyists register and/or diaries of chairs of committees. This is something we will discuss with the Local Government Association and the Integrity Commissioner.

Brisbane City Council is the largest and most complex local council in Australia. It builds major roads and provides community services on a large scale. Perhaps it should be required to provide its lobbyists register when requested by the Integrity Commissioner. I note that the Lord Mayor, Graham Quirk, has come out and made some comments which were very carefully worded. He said that the council was complying with the requirements of the Integrity Act but that the Integrity Commissioner was perhaps overstepping the mark. So, again, perhaps the law needs to be tightened to make it a requirement that the Brisbane City Council must release its lobbyists register.

I now move to part 3 of the bill which amends the Integrity Act 2009, and that is where we on this side of the chamber start to get worried. The timing of the LNP's bill has meant there has been no consultation or public scrutiny. In fact, we do know that this bill was introduced this week. It did not go to a committee and there was no opportunity really for people to have their views on this piece of legislation aired. So I think it is important to look through how the government's changes will actually work for the day-to-day dealings of lobbyists.

The first couple of sections insert 'and contact between lobbyists and key representatives for the opposition', which is of no concern to us. But the next amendment is where we are worried. Rather than increasing integrity and accountability and transparency and openness, this amendment seeks to limit who is a lobbyist in Queensland. By doing that, it substantially decreases the number of people who have to register their meetings and contacts with ministers and their staff. What in fact it does is it makes it easier for lobbyists to operate outside the bounds of integrity requirements. Openness and transparency in government decision making is of paramount importance. There is a very good reason why the opposition has been relentlessly pursuing the issue of lobbyists registers with this government. It is because two registers have been found to be inaccurate, and the Attorney-General's own register is missing a very important column, listing the parties on whose behalf a lobbyist is acting. Section 41(1) of the Integrity Act 2009 currently provides that—

A lobbyist is an entity that carries out a lobbying activity for a third party client or whose employees or contractors carry out a lobbying activity for a third party client.

That is not changed by this bill. What is changed in fact is the deletion of the next provision, which said—

To remove any doubt, it is declared that a lobbying activity may be carried out for a third party client even though no fees are payable for carrying out the lobbying activity.

Why would this part be removed? It was there because there may be situations where a lobbyist may not charge a fee or reward but the benefit that may flow to the representative entity may be of a more intangible quality. It may include professional kudos; it may include enhancement of reputation. Whatever the reason, if a lobbyist peddles influence, they should be registered. I seem to recall hearing of a person who appeared to work for a lobbyist but was not paid a fee. There must have been some reason this person was engaged in this work. It does not make sense at all if there was absolutely no benefit to them. That is cynical of me; maybe they were just a philanthropist.

I will take this opportunity to again return to the words of the now Minister for Education during the debate on the Integrity Bill 2009. As he said then—

The bill does make some exemptions about who is not deemed a lobbyist. This has been a sham process and the bill is an anticlimax.

I cannot see any legitimate reason for removing this provision, and I would ask the Attorney-General during his speech in reply to explain exactly what he is intending to do by removing this particular amendment. The amending bill then provides the following—

A third party client is an entity that engages another entity to provide services constituting, or including, a lobbying activity for a fee or other reward that is agreed to before the other entity provides the services.

The fee is agreed to before the other entity provides the service, so to get around the section you have to agree on the fee after the service is provided or charge for the service maybe at rates that will be determined after the service is provided—and this could be based on, I do not know, perhaps success. This could be described as the backdoor re-entry of success fees—success fees that were abolished by the Labor government. So lobbyists are not allowed to charge success fees, but if you charge success fees you are not a lobbyist. This is rather a circular argument, one would think. What did current government members think about success fees when they were in opposition and debating the Integrity Bill 2009? Once again, the current education minister said—

I am talking about the issues of lobbying and success fees. If Tony Fitzgerald had reported on those issues—were they around in 1989—I am sure he would have said that it was an inappropriate way for business to do business with government.

I wonder what has happened in the interim that has changed the minister's mind about this. I will be interested to see how the minister views this particular provision. But, not unsurprisingly, the member for Mudgeeraba, the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts, held a different view from the education minister back then. She said—

The third of the key changes is prohibiting the granting of success fees. No other state in Australia or the Commonwealth has entered into arrangements of this nature. I would suspect that this provision would only encourage secrecy, not stamp it out.

But what possible explanation can there be for including this provision in this amendment bill? To actually include the words 'transparency', 'openness' and 'integrity' in the long title of this bill shows that the Attorney-General could have approached this in a completely different manner.

To flesh out the practical applications of these laws, let us look at a few examples. There are three key areas where the workings of lobbyists and their interaction with government could cause serious concern. Example 1 is that these changes are an incentive for success fees and bonuses rather than a clear fee structure. This is a perverse incentive to build into the system, especially in a bill that claims to promote openness and integrity. What is outrageous about this change is that the most questionable interactions—success fees—actually mean that those lobbyists are outside the integrity requirements. So the fact that a lobbyist operates with the less transparent payment structure of success fees then means that the lobbyist is free from any requirements under this legislation at all because they will not be included in the definition of a lobbyist. That is simply ridiculous.

Example 2 is that it encourages informal arrangements. Further, the drafted changes would encourage lobbyists to have an informal, evolving relationship with companies or clients so that they do not have to have an agreed fee payment in place before commencing their lobbying work. In that way, they will not fall within the definition of a lobbyist and have to comply with the lobbyist integrity requirements. Through just minor tweaks in their arrangement, they can operate outside the system—and this is what we are concerned about—free from the transparency and openness requirements this government is talking about. In practice, lobbyists can have a chat with a possible client and have initial meetings and briefings but not have a formal fee agreement in place when they commence lobbying on behalf of the company's interests. So they will not be defined as a lobbyist and they will not have to report any meetings, calls or events held with ministers, their staff and senior public servants. Then, after the lobbying has commenced, the invoices come in.

Example 3 relates to making contact before the clock starts. The change in definition to lobbyists also defies logic when it comes to the operations of professional lobbyists. Narrowing the definition of lobbyists to those who have already settled on fee charges with a client means that many and significant interactions between lobbyists and the government will go under the radar and will operate outside the requirements. What does this mean in practice? It could mean that a lobbyist could contact a ministerial office and ask what legislation is coming up, what particular legislation will mean for certain industries,

what time frames are coming up for decisions or what terms will be included in future decisions. And do you know what? No-one will ever know that they spoke because, under the LNP's new definition, a professional lobbyist gaining inside information off the back of their political connections will fall outside of the integrity requirements.

Of course, the lobbyists will then use their information they have gathered from their contacts without having to declare those meetings and conversations. It is such a backward step that I simply could not believe it when I first read it. I had to ask whether a government could really name a bill the Right to Information and Integrity (Openness and Transparency) Amendment Bill 2012 when the effect is the exact opposite. That is why we will be opposing certain aspects of this bill.

The Attorney-General needs to answer the following questions. How will the practical, very real examples I have just touched on be prevented by the LNP's legislation? Or is it the intention of the Attorney-General that these examples fall outside the definition of lobbying? The rest of the sections just extend the requirement to keep a lobbyists register to the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and staff members of the Office of the Leader of the Opposition.

I read with interest the Premier's media statement of 19 November 2012 in which he announced that his diary and his ministers' diaries and lobbyist contact registers will be released publicly every month. The ministers' diaries and lobbyist contact registers were to be published online monthly starting early next year and would include all information about the Premier's and his ministers' movements and meetings, except material that is exempt under the Right to Information Act and the Information Privacy Act. The purpose of this announcement, according to the Premier, was 'to restore faith in good government after Labor's culture of cover-up and secrecy reigned for so many years'. Well, something must have happened between 19 November 2012 and now, because we have seen another change of opinion. According to today's *Courier-Mail*, the Premier has said that the changes in this bill meant ministers would record lobbyist meetings in their diaries rather than on a lobbyists register, but he insisted they would still need to ensure those meetings were recorded accurately.

Apparently the Premier believes that this will increase accountability by boosting the regulation of lobbyists. While boosting the regulation of lobbyists is one thing, boosting the accountability of ministers would also assist. I am intrigued by the logic that has apparently informed the Premier's decision. The *Courier-Mail* article states—

'If the minister's diary shows a meeting with the lobbyist and it's not there (on the lobbyist's register) then he can go after the lobbyist,' Mr Newman said.

'If the lobbyist records a meeting with the minister and it doesn't appear in the diary ... there will be questions.'

I for one can see the discrepancy in that. The lobbyist can be gone after if they fail to comply; that means they could perhaps be prosecuted for an offence. If the minister has failed to comply, there will simply just be questions.

We believe that, since the new guidelines came out in July 2012, it is now not unreasonable to expect that a minister's office will be able to extract from the diary on a separate form details of interactions with lobbyists. So I ask the Attorney-General: will the Premier's and the ministers' diaries and the monthly lobbyists register be going online or not? Can he please clarify whether what was included in the statement made by the Premier on 19 November will actually be happening? That is why I wish to foreshadow that the opposition will be introducing a private member's bill at the first sitting next year that will increase integrity on the part of the government in Queensland. Unfortunately, the rushed nature of this bill, the fact that it was only introduced on Tuesday and it is being debated now, means that we have not been able to give it the full consideration that is required. Because it has not been to the committee, we have not benefited from the experience of the committee and the input of stakeholders. However, we will be having discussions with the Integrity Commissioner and other stakeholders to work out the best way to ensure integrity of government records in Queensland. The bill will require ministers to keep and maintain a lobbyists register. It will require the Premier and ministers to table their lobbyists register in the parliament every six months and to provide it to the Integrity Commissioner as requested. In that way there will be no issue with the Integrity Commissioner having access to information about the lobbyist activities relating to the Premier and the ministers.

In September 2011 the Integrity Commissioner conducted an audit of all Labor government ministers and my understanding is that all ministers complied with that audit that was conducted. We will raise with the Integrity Commissioner the concerns he has with local government and the best way to address those concerns. We will require every lobbyist in a firm to certify the returns and there perhaps may be offences for incorrect returns. It is unfortunate that this bill is being rushed through the parliament today.

**A government member:** I don't know about that.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** It is being rushed through today. It was only introduced this week.

**Mr Bleijie:** You didn't oppose the urgency motion.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** No, but we have now—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Miss Barton): Order! Leader of the Opposition, could you please direct your comments through the chair.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Having now looked quite closely at the bill there are still a lot of unanswered questions. That is why we believe that over December and January we will have more of an opportunity to look at these particular issues. As I foreshadowed, we will come back to the House with perhaps a few other proposals.

Is the Attorney-General prepared to ensure that, rather than just putting information online, documents will actually be tabled in the parliament? The opposition will not be opposing the amendments to apply the lobbyists register provisions to the opposition. However, we do not understand why the government wants to do this. If the government thinks that lobbyists are lining up to meet with the opposition, it must know when it is on a very slippery slope. This is a government that has not learned how to govern. It is a government that still acts as if it is in opposition. In fact, they act like we are still the government at times. I guess the Premier was not in the parliament when the LNP were in opposition, so he has no understanding of how that works. But his deputy is highly experienced in opposition as are the health minister and the education minister. Maybe they can offer some words of advice.

My advice to the Premier is this: the opposition do not hold any government decision-making power. We have no contracts to award. We do not provide funding. We do not sign off on any funding agreements. We do not introduce government legislation. We do not pass regulations. We do not control the Queensland budget. We do not determine the policies that guide his government decision making. We do not appoint anyone to anything, although I should be able to appoint the chair of the PCMC, but this government will not allow me to do that. Governments undertake all of these things. That is what governments do. They are the decision makers. They have the influence. They administer billion dollar budgets, not the opposition. It is about time they started getting in the frame of mind that they are the government, that they are no longer in opposition.

As I have said, the opposition will not be opposing this bill in the House. We will, however, oppose some elements of the changes that actually reduce openness and transparency. We will be having further discussions with a view to introducing a private member's bill in the new year to strengthen integrity processes.

 **Mr BERRY** (Ipswich—LNP) (5.45 pm): I almost waited for this moment to be able to speak because I remember events that occurred in 2009. I remember being—and I think I was president of the Law Society at the time—at the Moynihan inquiry. At about 5 pm that day, after the adjournment, the members of the Law Society received a copy of the Jury Act. We got 12 hours notice. But do not be alarmed, the Bar Association got 24 hours notice! So they were able to recommend a few amendments. They actually recommended two that were incorporated. In fact, this was probably one of the catalysts in my life which said that I really ought to get involved in politics in a more formative and positive way. I could not believe that the government of the day had treated its key stakeholders with such arrogance.

The year 2009 was eventful for me also in relation to the Integrity Act. As I remember, there were events happening at that time. The Labor Party were having problems with some of their lobbyists, some ex-ministers. As I remember, I caused a newspaper article to be written and I wrote to the Premier, and the next thing we knew we had the Integrity Act. If, in fact, the opposition, the Labor Party, are taking the high moral ground on integrity, I would, with respect, indicate that they ought not to because it was the thrust of other organisations in the community—not only the Law Society but other organisations—which were very concerned as to the goings-on of the government of the day.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned that this bill devotes six pages out of 16 to the opposition. That is not quite so; it is seven pages. It is important to acknowledge this because I am sure the Attorney must have been thinking, 'One page per member? Yes, I think they should be able to cope with that,' and they did. That is good.

The best part about being in a robust democracy is that we do have openness. I think it is obvious what the openness of this legislation is. Here we have an opposition actually complaining about a newspaper having to disclose that it wants a right to information and documents. How is that a difficulty or a fetter on democracy? The logic defies me. Firstly, as I understand the argument, if the media have to disclose that they want documents, they may not want them; they might not put their names forward to actually have the documents. What a feeble bunch of journalists and newspapers we have in this country!

I am really sorry that the Leader of the Opposition takes that view. I personally think the *Courier-Mail* and the *Australian* are quite robust. I think they will disclose their names and I think they will get their documents. I see no difficulty, but that is the openness of the legislation for which I commend the Attorney-General.

Integrity and the right to information are an evolving process. To see this one needs look no further than at a sophisticated economy such as America. They are way ahead in terms of information. We are evolving, and this is just a piece of evolving legislation to cover the circumstances in which we now find our democracy. It is quite tempered, valid and measured. It is a balance. It is a balance in terms of what our constituencies require of us and in terms of the right to free speech and for parliamentarians to be able to talk openly. At the same time, our democracy must evolve as well. We must protect citizens' rights, and those provisions are well and truly included. It seems to me that it is balanced.

Absorbing the contents of 16 pages of legislation in the time provided is not difficult. The now opposition when in government well and truly indicated its desire to rush through legislation. The bill to amend the Jury Act was four or five pages in length. Doing the mathematics and comparing the bill to amend the Jury Act with this bill—four or five pages in 12 hours as opposed to a few days for 16 pages in this bill—it seems to me to be pretty well in line. And they have to read only seven pages, because that is all that is devoted to the opposition.

The end result is that this bill is measured and balanced. It further extends integrity and it is transparent, including the fact that the Integrity Commissioner is involved in the process. Journalists and newspapers will be well and truly able to obtain what they want and all they need to do is disclose who they are.

I take this opportunity to thank the Leader of the House—and the Attorney-General for any input that he may have had—for my appointment as chair of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee. Certainly it is a job I am looking forward to. I also take this opportunity to wish all my colleagues the compliments of the season—even the opposition.

**Ms Palaszczuk:** Thank you.

**Mr BERRY:** Indeed.

 **Mrs MILLER** (Bundamba—ALP) (5.52 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Right to Information and Integrity (Openness and Transparency) Amendment Bill 2012. As outlined by previous speakers in this House, this bill amends the Right to Information Act 2009 to provide new disclosure log requirements which will require notification on a website of when an RTI application is made and then subsequently when the information is released.

I question why the government believes that placing the names of the individuals or entities that apply for an RTI and the contents of their request online will achieve any real benefit in relation to openness and transparency. What benefit, I ask, does it provide to the people of Queensland to know who is applying for the information? I understand that the information sought could be of interest to the people of Queensland. But the individual? Come off it! How does that contribute to openness and transparency in this great state of Queensland?

The second part of the bill relates to amendments to the Integrity Act 2009. Basically, the bill purports to extend the provisions of the act in respect of lobbyists. What in fact it does is limit those people who are lobbyists within the meaning of that legislation. However, it will extend the lobbying provisions of the Integrity Act 2009, which are currently applied to the government only, to the Office of the Leader of the Opposition. It places the onus for keeping details of contacts between lobbyists and ministers on the lobbyist. As previous speakers have mentioned, the opposition has nothing to hide and we in the opposition have no issue requiring lobbyists' contact with the Office of the Leader of the Opposition to be recorded. However, we have major concerns with the bill limiting who is covered by the regime.

Let me now turn to how this bill has come before us today and the drastic lack of consultation this piece of legislation has been subjected to. I can only conclude from this government's behaviour that they hate consultation. They in fact seem pathologically incapable of engaging in genuine consultation. They behave as if they have a life-threatening allergy to any form of consultation at all, and they have carried this behaviour right through to the Right to Information and Integrity (Openness and Transparency) Amendment Bill 2012. The Attorney-General crept in here in the dead of night to announce the Right to Information and Integrity (Openness and Transparency) Amendment Bill 2012 and demanded that it be passed before the House rises for the year. The explanatory notes, under the heading 'Consultation', state—

The community has not been consulted on the Bill.

Isn't that just the way of this government? No consultation with relevant stakeholders and no consultation with the community. The explanatory notes to the Right to Information and Integrity (Openness and Transparency) Amendment Bill 2012 do show that there has been some limited consultation with the Integrity Commissioner, but this has all happened behind closed doors. This bill has not gone to the relevant committee for consideration. There has been no avenue for the committee to question the Integrity Commissioner to ascertain his specific views.

I suspect that there are two reasons the Attorney-General has denied the committee the chance to review this legislation. The first is that this is a crisis management bill designed solely to get the government out of the hot water it has found itself in. Not one but two ministers tabled incorrect and misleading lobbyists registers. Sadly for this government, it is embroiled in yet more scandals that are not addressed by this legislation.

The second reason this bill is not going to the committee is that the Attorney-General is afraid of what the committee might uncover. He is afraid that it might call in relevant stakeholders such as the Integrity Commissioner and they might highlight the flaws in this legislation. We have already heard the president of the Government Relations Professionals Association, Mr Barton Green, accusing the government of 'outsourcing ministerial responsibility'. Mature governments do not need to hide from consultation. Responsible governments welcome community feedback. Decent governments listen to expert advice and make it available to the public. This bill shows that this government is not mature, is not responsible and is not decent.

Integrity is incredibly important. It deserves proper consideration. This government's idea of openness and accountability is to put a few things up on a website and say, 'Look at us! Aren't we clever?' But in reality, they are quashing openness and accountability in this state. To see this one only has to look at the actions of those opposite earlier this week when we saw the government use its massive majority to quash democracy in this state.

It used its massive majority, not once but twice, to first stop a member of this House from having his say and standing up for his constituents and second to truncate the debate and not allow any further speakers to speak against the motion.

Debate, on motion of Mrs Miller, adjourned.

## COMMITTEES

### Membership

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (5.59 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

- (1) That the member for Yeerongpilly, Mr Judge, be discharged from the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee and the member for Bulimba, Mr Dillaway, be appointed to the committee;
- (2) That the member for Ipswich, Mr Berry, and the member for Bulimba, Mr Dillaway, be discharged from the Health and Community Services Committee and the member for Redcliffe, Mr Driscoll, and the member for Gregory, Mr Johnson, be appointed to the committee;
- (3) That the member for Kallangur, Mr Ruthenberg, be discharged from the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee and the member for Cleveland, Dr Robinson, be appointed to the committee.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

## RIGHT TO INFORMATION AND INTEGRITY (OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY) AMENDMENT BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed, on motion of Mr Bleijie—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mrs MILLER** (Bundamba—ALP) (6.01 pm), continuing: It is appalling to think that this government is so arrogant that it believes that it can do what it likes. It clearly shows that democracy has well and truly died in Queensland. Those opposite have only been in power for less than a year and they think that they are experts in integrity and accountability. Well, as my colleagues have indicated, we on this side of this House know only too well the values of openness, transparency and accountability. The Australian Labor Party was the party which in government established the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission; ministerial guidelines and ministers' codes of ethics; the Criminal Justice Commission; enacted the original freedom of information legislation, now known as the right to information legislation; introduced and passed the Public Sector Ethics Act 1994 and the Whistleblowers Protection Act 1994; established the Office of the Integrity Commissioner; merged the Criminal Justice Commission with the Queensland Crime Commission to become what is now known as the Crime and Misconduct Commission; and established the Queensland Contact with Lobbyists Code and register of lobbyists, just to name a few. And I could go on and on.

I am proud to be a member of the Australian Labor Party with such a strong record of integrity and accountability reform. But what I am most proud of are my days as a public servant in the Queensland government in the eighties and nineties where I was at the forefront of integrity and accountability reform in this state. In the eighties I was a public servant who was charged with the responsibility of devising a strategy to implement the recommendations of the Fitzgerald inquiry report. These recommendations formed the basis and were the catalyst of our integrity laws as we know them today. During my time as a public servant, I was seconded to work at the Criminal Justice Commission under the guidance of the first chair, Sir Max Bingham, who tasked me with the important task of not only understanding and becoming an expert on the then freedom of information laws but also implementing a strategy for how the CJC would handle FOI applications, judicial review and other administrative law reforms.

Since that time and throughout the remainder of my Public Service career I was part of the implementation team for the FOI legislation right across the Queensland government in numerous departments, including the Queensland Police Service, Justice and Attorney-General, the housing department, Education and Transport, just to name a few. I was a career public servant who rose through the ranks at a young age—not through connections or jobs for the boys, like others have in recent times with this LNP government, but through hard work which saw me attend numerous FOI conferences right throughout Australia to ensure that our state was at the forefront of integrity reform. As many people in this House know, I also worked on the justice of the peace law reforms in Queensland and was a registrar for a number of years—legal and administrative reforms at the forefront of integrity and accountability in this state.

Whilst I enjoyed my job and the work that I undertook in relation to integrity reform in Queensland, it did get cut short with the election of the LNP conservative Borbidge government in 1996. I, too, was one of the unfortunate ones, just like many today under this LNP Newman government, who lost their job through a public sector purge and, like many public servants, I will never, ever, ever forgive the LNP for the way I was treated and I will never forget the impact on my family. My retribution to any LNP or conservative government is to be elected to this House, and I will fight tory LNP governments to the day I die. I provide this information to the House today to outline that not only does the Australian Labor Party have a strong tradition in integrity reform but so do I, professionally and personally, and fighting tory governments is what I believe will be the best in my life's work.

Integrity, openness and honesty are the cornerstones of any society and any changes to the current laws should be analysed closely to ensure that they serve the correct purpose in society. The explanatory notes indicate that the current disclosure log requirements do not oblige an agency to place an application and its findings on a publicly accessible forum such as a website. This bill, as previously stated, will require that applicant names and the entity that they are undertaking the RTI request for are placed on a website and the contents of what information they are seeking. Whilst I will not canvass this area again, I will point out that I find it absolutely bizarre that an individual's name and the information they are seeking will be required to be placed on a website for all to see to ensure openness and transparency! It is the government that has the burden to be open and transparent, not the applicant. But I digress.

What is more concerning is the fact that once the application has been processed and the appropriate fee has been paid then it does not just get released to the applicant; it will be released to the public at the earliest possible convenience, doing away with the usual 24-hour minimum embargo to ensure that the applicant—the individual who actually paid for the documents—receives sole use of them for a particular period of time. This in my view will potentially do the opposite to openness and transparency in Queensland as it will hinder news outlets from undertaking investigative journalism, getting to the bottom of potential stories, as the information they are seeking will be made public right from the beginning, thus diminishing the exclusive nature of a story which will ultimately be a negative to all Queenslanders. The Attorney-General in his introductory speech stated—

The bill allows for appropriate deletions to be made from the material to be published, including where it is prevented by law, may be defamatory or would unreasonably invade an individual's privacy. This allows an individual's name to be deleted if appropriate.

I suggest to the Attorney-General that he has a look at the provisions of the Right to Information Act, as I am sure the act already allows for material to be redacted in those cases.

I would now like to address that aspect of the bill relating to lobbyists registers. Firstly, it may come as a surprise to the Attorney-General that we in the Labor opposition have no issues with the government's plans to extend these provisions to the opposition. I would like to think that we will do a better job of keeping accurate registers than perhaps the member for Moggill, the member for Mudgeeraba and the Attorney-General himself have managed to do. However, one area that we disagree with is the government's change to the definition of 'lobbyist'. By changing the definition, the government is allowing the reintroduction of success fees into the world of lobbying. I just wonder how much influence that factional war lord Santo Santoro has had in the changes to the definition of 'lobbyist'. Given that the bill has been introduced in the final sitting week before Christmas—the week that the lights of the Christmas tree here at Parliament House were switched on—the connection became clear. The light bulbs started to flash. Off they went: flash, flash, flash. It is obvious that this is

the 'Santo' clause. What a lovely Christmas present the Attorney-General and the Premier have delivered to Santo and his lobbying firm. Everyone in this House knows the tune, "Santo' Claus is coming to town."

In conclusion, the bill purports to increase openness and accountability in this state, and I suppose to a degree it does. But overall, it is taking a backward step. It is placing the onus of recording accurate lobbyist contact not on the minister's office—where the decisions are, in fact, being made—but on the lobbyists themselves in a clear attempt by this LNP government to outsource accountability in Queensland. This bill requires individual names and what they are seeking to be placed on a website straightaway after an application becomes valid. As I have asked previously: how does this add to the integrity of the state? It does not.

As indicated by previous speakers, this bill is one of those smoke-and-mirrors bills. It is a bill to distract us from the daily soap opera that is this Newman LNP government. I think it is harsh to compare this government to a soap opera, because let me tell members that soap operas are better than those opposite. Good soap operas ensure that viewers want to keep tuning in day after day. But this sad excuse for a soap opera is turning people off in droves. The actions of the members opposite are akin to a circus, with the ringmaster, Premier Newman, at the helm juggling the heavy burdens of government with an unruly backbench. For the benefit of the House I table a copy of today's *Courier-Mail*.

*Tabled paper: Courier-Mail, dated 29 November 2012, pages 1 to 4, regarding the LNP government [1798].*

So I say cue the music, cue the popcorn, pull up a chair because the circus that is the Newman LNP government is coming to town—a circus with no lions and no tigers; just clowns.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Berry): Order! The member for Mulgrave.

**Mr Stevens:** Hard act to follow, Curtis.

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (6.13 pm): The Manager of Government Business is certainly on the money. That is a hard act to follow. I rise to contribute to the debate on the Right to Information and Integrity (Openness and Transparency) Amendment Bill 2012—or as I think it should be called, 'The Openness and Transparency on the Opposition and not the Government Bill'. This bill is one of the most politicised I have seen in this parliament. It is rather embarrassing for the Attorney-General that polling was released the day after this bill was introduced showing that most Queenslanders think that it is this government that is failing on openness and accountability. In announcing this legislation, the Attorney-General said that the lobbying firm that may have a financial interest in not recording a meeting will be responsible for recording contacts and meetings. That has nothing to do with best policy practice and everything to do with obscuring accountability for ministerial offices.

If this government is unable to commit to maintaining a simple contact register with the lobbyists that it meets with, how on earth can it claim to commit to openness or accountability? It is bizarre in the extreme that this government is incapable of basic administrative tasks. If this government cannot keep basic records, how can it govern effectively? These changes are purely political and are not based on any policy evidence. They are symptomatic of a government that is arrogant and is misusing the mandate given to them by Queenslanders. It is legislation to prevent future ministerial bumbles and to make the workloads of the LNP's ministerial offices lighter.

The OECD in a policy document released earlier this year titled *Lobbying rules: preventing state capture* recommended that governments keep a register of lobbying activities. But this government is not interested in other developed economies. Instead, it would rather take us back to a developing economy with the accountability frameworks of the past. The LNP will take any opportunity it can to hide from accountability while simultaneously bleating hollow platitudes that it is committed to openness and transparency.

When you read through this bill to see what it actually does, to insert these words into its title is a joke. It is legislation that strips away reporting and accountability for lobbyists unless there are upfront fees. To change the definition in this way by redefining a third-party client as an entity that has engaged a lobbyist for a fee or reward that is agreed before the lobbying services are provided is prescriptive and unnecessary. This is nothing more than a watering down of accountability following a series of embarrassing bumbles by this government. For example, how are we to know about prior contact between a lobbyist and a ministerial staffer to any fee or reward being agreed upon? It appears to me that this will allow gaming of the process. It will allow ministerial staff and lobbyists to profit from knowledge of the government's legislative agenda without any declaration of contact whether they seek to influence that legislation or not. This directly contradicts the recommendations of the OECD in its paper on lobbying rules, which I mentioned earlier.

The legislation also requires media organisations to declare upfront whether they are intending to publish information provided from an RTI application. That appears to be more about political spin management than about any commitment to openness and transparency. The government is yet to make it clear whether contact between ministerial staff and lobbyists will be made publicly available. Instead, the commitment, which is not in this legislation, is that ministers will release their diaries online.

These commitments do not go as far as that recommended by the opposition to release a complete lobbyists register that includes contact between ministers and their staff and lobbyists every six months. This is not surprising when we consider this government's track record on openness and accountability. To date, this government still refuses to release the costings of the LNP's election promises by Queensland Treasury—costings that would show that the LNP's election costings were grossly undercooked and undeliverable. Instead, all we have received is the selective leaking of quotes from incoming government briefs for political advantage.

This government has a Treasurer who believes that he is above accountability for the level of staffing in his own office let alone for the reckless budget decisions that he has made. At the estimates hearings this year we heard a strange outburst from the Treasurer as he refused to answer questions about why his office has four more staff than the previous Treasurer with one fewer portfolio responsibility in State Development. So much for ministerial accountability.

When the Treasurer released his highly political document authored by Peter Costello to justify his savage budget cuts, he refused to allow the opposition to be briefed by commissioners who he claimed were independent. Instead, the Treasurer insisted that it was only he who was capable of briefing the opposition as the document was self-explanatory, such was the political nature of this document. It was only when the Premier was ambushed on radio about not allowing a briefing with commissioners that one actually occurred. When we finally had this opportunity, of course, the Treasurer had to be present as a censor, such is this government's commitment to openness and accountability.

When Mr Costello was asked about the modelling that was used to justify his report's assumptions he indicated that he was willing to provide it. But not the Treasurer, who interrupted the meeting to prevent any public scrutiny of the figures in the Costello report. I think we know why this Treasurer has sought to remove this openness and transparency. Dr Doug McTaggart told the Industrial Relations Commission under oath that the assumptions in the Costello report were based on opinion and that the commission was not resourced to do economic modelling. Such is the mean and tricky nature of this government.

The Treasurer continues his attempts to shirk any responsibility for openness and accountability. We have not seen any detail released by the Treasurer of his plans to sell six office buildings reported to be worth up to \$700 million. Instead, we have to find out about it in the pages of the *Australia Financial Review*.

Earlier modelling by Queensland Treasury Corporation showed that there was no positive net present value for selling office buildings and then leasing them back. We will not see any public assurance from this Treasurer that the current transaction he is negotiating in secret does deliver a positive return to Queenslanders. Nor have we seen any guarantee that this transaction will not permit the Queensland Investment Corporation to on sell these buildings to the private sector. Let me make it clear: in February the Premier and Treasurer ruled out selling the government's office buildings. This represents a broken election promise which was very well covered in the *Australian Financial Review*.

Now we have the Treasurer withholding the update of the latest Costello report, a report that investigates the privatisation of government owned corporations including CS Energy, Energex, Ergon Energy, Powerlink, Stanwell Corporation, Far North Queensland Ports Corporation, Gladstone Ports Corporation, North Queensland Bulk Ports Corporation, Port of Townsville and Queensland Rail Limited. In 2006 the now Treasurer declared that the government should be selling all of the poles and wires. The Treasurer simply cannot deny that before the election he had a secret agenda to sell the state's electricity assets. This is relevant to this bill because this is about openness and transparency. The Treasurer has already sold part of the remaining stake of QR National without prior notice to the people of Queensland, a process that shut Queenslanders out just as he will shut Queenslanders out of his next process to privatise electricity assets.

Queenslanders will head into Christmas with a cloud hanging over the future of the state's electricity assets, a cloud of uncertainty that was not apparent before the election. It is a cloud that contrasts with the reforms on integrity and accountability introduced by the Labor government. These reforms included the establishment of Australia's first Integrity Commissioner, something we have very much to be proud of in the Labor Party. It was the Queensland Labor Party that led the nation in integrity reform. It was Labor that introduced right to information legislation that set the framework for other states and territories to follow. It was a Labor government that banned success fees for lobbyists. It was

a Labor government that introduced the proactive disclosure of cabinet decisions and it was a Labor government that lead legislative reform for the protection of whistleblowers. It was Labor that first enshrined the lobbyists code in legislation and it was Labor that banned cash-for-access events in Queensland, while the LNP continue to refuse to release details of a \$20,000-a-head dinner from three years ago. You will not see any guarantees from the LNP when it comes to cash for access.

It was a Labor government in this state that changed the law to allow the Crime and Misconduct Commission to investigate government owned corporations. Labor placed restrictions on former MPs and staffers conducting lobbyist activities for up to two years. This was based on the fact that these people have access to confidential information, unlike opposition staffers. We certainly did not hear any complaints from the LNP in opposition about not having these reforms imposed upon them. Under Labor the government agreed to allow the Leader of the Opposition to appoint the chair of the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee, a reform stripped away by this government.

It was Labor that oversaw the largest reform of the parliamentary committee system in Queensland's history, reform that I know the current Deputy Premier has high praise for, reform that he supported as a member of the parliamentary Committee System Review Committee. It was Labor that brought back direct questioning of public servants by the opposition during estimates committee hearings. I commend the government for at least not stripping this accountability reform away. It was Labor that placed restrictions on political donations to prevent the perception of the purchase of privilege. Labor's reform agenda was all about ensuring that the wealthy are not privileged in the democratic process. It stems out of recognition that maintaining a strong and open democracy necessitates ongoing reform. It was based on a principle of having our electoral system based on fairness, transparency and integrity.

Contrast this with the record of this government so far. This LNP government that professes so often to be about openness and accountability has stacked parliamentary portfolio committees—the very same committees that the Deputy Premier spoke so highly of in opposition. On so many occasions, and as we have seen again with this legislation, the government has bypassed committee examination of significant legislation. The LNP has refused to ban cash for access events and instead has set up a means by which the parliamentary organisation can seek maximum financial benefit from being in office. This government has opposed the CMC's independent review of political donations, a level of political interference in the CMC that I have not seen in my time in this parliament. This government has taken an axe to the CMC's resourcing against the advice of the CMC. This is a direct undermining of the capacity of the state's corruption watchdog to hold this government to account. With the way this Attorney-General has framed his comments in this matter, he has seemed to imply that this is a form of retribution for investigating political donations: that if the CMC can find time to do this then it should have its resourcing cut. Queenslanders should justifiably be very concerned about this. It harks back to the arrogant style of government of the Joh Bjelke-Petersen era—a style of government of 'don't you worry about that' and of cronyism that eventually led to wide-scale corruption.

It is not just the opposition that holds these concerns about cuts to the CMC. These concerns are also shared by the Independent member for Nicklin, a long-standing member in this parliament known for his ethics and integrity. The way in which this government has politically attacked this member for merely voicing genuine non-political concerns is, frankly, disgraceful. It is also a symptom of a government that is arrogant and drunk on power.

 **Miss BARTON** (Broadwater—LNP) (6.24 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the debate this evening. I start by saying that I think that this is an incredibly important measure. As a candidate I signed a pledge, alongside all of my colleagues, that said that if we won government we would be open and accountable. This is the Newman government honouring its commitment to the people of Queensland that we will indeed be an open and accountable government. There are many things that we have seen that indicate that we are going to be an open and accountable government, but I would certainly like to particularly commend the open data revolution that is being so ably led by the Leader of the House. I think it is incredibly important that government information is available to the people. The people choose the government of the day and they need to have faith in our ability to make decisions. They should have a right to understand what it is that guides the decisions that we make. Conversely, I think it is incredibly important that they should also have the right to understand what it is that is influencing the decisions of those who aspire to form government, however remote a chance that might be. I think that is only appropriate in an open and accountable democracy. I believe that we need an effective opposition in Queensland, but I think in order for people to judge the efficacy of that opposition they need to understand exactly what it is that is guiding the decisions that they are making.

I think that the people of Queensland truly respect the moves that we are taking as a government to ensure that we honour the pledges and the commitments that we make to Queensland. I said during a debate in this House a few months ago with regard to the reintroduction of section 57 of the Criminal Code, lying to parliament, that as members of parliament, as members of government and as individuals that we have integrity. That the opposition is supporting this bill is also indicative of their expectations of

integrity for themselves and I commend the opposition for their support of this bill. I think it is important that we show to the people of Queensland that we have integrity as members of government, as members of the opposition and as individual members of parliament, and that we are going to set the bar high for ourselves because it is the appropriate thing to do.

The people we serve are entitled to understand the information and the lobbying that we might receive that will guide the decisions that we make. We make incredibly important decisions in this House that affect the lives of Queenslanders. We make decisions that will make the lives of Queenslanders better every single day that we sit. As I said, I think it is incredibly important that the people we serve and who put us in this place understand that we are making the right decisions for them and not being led astray, receiving false information or being manipulated in any way shape or form, but that we are people of integrity, honest people who are here to serve them, because for us it is a vocation and something we feel called to do to help all people.

I commend the Attorney-General and the government for again honouring its commitment to the people of Queensland and its pledge that we would be an open and accountable government so that the people of Queensland can trust the commitments that we make to them. Thank you.

 **Ms TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (6.28 pm): It is opportune that I rise after the member for Broadwater. I was not in the chamber earlier today when she extended her apology to me in relation to the debate that was held last night. I acknowledge and thank the member for Broadwater, in her capacity as Acting Deputy Chair presiding over that debate for a short while last night, for the apology and acknowledge that the late hours were certainly evident in some of the acrimony being exchanged last night.

I rise to contribute to the Right to Information and Integrity (Openness and Transparency) Amendment Bill 2012. As previously stated, the opposition will not be opposing the bill in general, but we do have serious reservations with regard to some elements of it and we will oppose particular elements of it. I note the Premier's comments earlier today in relation to knee-jerk legislative responses to political problems. With all due respect, here we have one of the biggest knee jerks from one of the biggest political problems that this state has ever seen. This bill purports to give effect to the government's commitment to openness and transparency. For the benefit of the House, I can tell members that the protest that is occurring outside is in relation to uranium mining. I think there is an element of secrecy in relation to how the government made the decision to allow uranium mining in Queensland after committing time and time again to the people of Queensland that it would not lift the ban on uranium mining. What people see outside is a response to the lack of transparency and openness in relation to how that decision was made.

It seems that most of the provisions of this amendment bill are directed at everyone except the government. For example, provisions regarding lobbyists registers are extended to the opposition and to lobbyists themselves, as has previously been canvassed. I believe that this provision should be retrospective, like some of the bills that have been introduced into this House. But hold on, why don't we keep going? Let's not stop there. Let's expand it to those people who are presiding over dodgy political campaign financing schemes such as the Forward Brisbane Leadership fund. This hardly seems like a move to improve public scrutiny of the government, but, then again, at this rate maybe the government does not think it will be governing for very much longer.

**Government members:** You wish.

**Ms TRAD:** I refer the honourable members to the *Courier-Mail* article that was tabled earlier today.

**A government member:** Seventy-five members.

**Ms TRAD:** At the rate we have been going this week, it will not take very much longer. Nevertheless, we accept that there is some merit in some of these changes. Integrity and accountability are always areas ripe for review and ready for reform. I want to relay a few case studies that highlight that the Newman government's attention and commitment to openness and transparency is cursory at best. The first case study relates to this parliament's most bungle-prone minister, the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts, and her office.

On 15 June this year, the office of the opposition leader lodged a right to information application with the office of the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts, requesting—

Any material or correspondence held within, sent by or received by the Office of the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts, in regards to staffing and appointments made to CITEC.

The requested materials were defined as—

External and internal emails, letters, advice, briefing notes, file notes, memorandums, meeting minutes and/or other correspondence.

One can see that this right to information request was specific in target but broad in regard to the documents to be searched. On 20 July 2012, a decision letter was signed by the director-general, Phillip Reed, and sent to the opposition leader's office, stating that 28 pages of material were found. As members would already be aware, those 28 pages consisted of mostly redacted material, which raised suspicions. What was the minister trying to hide? On 7 August 2012, an application to the Information Commissioner was lodged for an external review of that RTI request. Now, some 3½ months later, we have received an outcome by the Information Commissioner dated 22 November 2012. For the benefit of the House, I table a copy of that decision.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 22 November 2012, to the Office of the Leader of the Opposition from the Office of the Information Commissioner regarding an external review of a decision under the Right to Information Act 2009 in relation to an application relating to staffing and appointments made to CITEC [1799].

As the letter indicates, there was no problem with the original 28 pages of material that were released in July. However, there was a problem with the searches that were undertaken under the statutory leadership of the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts in relation to the right to information request. As is outlined in the letter, in August the Information Commissioner requested an officer with the responsibility for CITEC matters within the office of Minister Bates to conduct further searches for documents that relate to the RTI request. The officer undertook those searches and the Information Commissioner formed the view that the searches had not been exhaustive. Further searches needed to be undertaken. Those further searches found additional documents that had not been uncovered in the two previous searches by the minister's office staff. The Information Commissioner reviewed those extra documents and deemed that 35 pages were relevant to the original RTI request, not the original 28 claimed by the director-general of the department.

Why have I outlined that case study? On the one hand, in his introductory speech to this bill the Attorney-General stated—

This government is embarking on an open data revolution—seeking to release as much government information as possible to the community.

But on the other hand, this government is basically hiding information by not undertaking the appropriate groundwork required when right to information applications are made.

For the benefit of the House, I will recap. The opposition lodged an RTI application with Minister Bates's office, which was received and accepted on 15 June. Due to the suspect incomplete nature of what was returned, the matter was referred to the Information Commissioner on 7 August and a subsequent investigation was undertaken, requiring the Information Commissioner to go backwards and forwards with the minister's office and her department in order to obtain the full records releasable, with an ultimate decision being handed down just last week. That is a time delay of more than 162 days. That is five months and nine days that the opposition had to wait and actively pursue Minister Bates's office for information that should have been released right from the start. Those opposite come in here and preach and parrot on about openness and accountability, but when they are forced to stand up and act they make qualifications, excuses and more qualifications. Hiding documents for more than 162 days does not amount to openness, timeliness, transparency and accountability.

The bungles do not stop with Minister Bates. Let us not forget the debacle that occurred with the former minister for housing and public works, the member for Moggill. Obviously, I will not be giving the House a detailed recount of what has occurred and what is already on the record in relation to this soap opera. All I will say is that what occurred was far from the words contained in the title of the bill. It was far from open, it was far from transparent and it was far from displaying integrity. We saw a ministerial staffer signing off right to information applications after the office of the minister for housing and public works had received a directive from the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice that this power should be divested to a departmental staff member. We saw a lobbyists register—a register that contains important public information in relation to who the minister and his or her staff met with—that was not kept up to date. Indeed, as Mr Hallett, a former senior confidant of the minister, stated in the document, the register was, in fact, grossly inaccurate and misleading. We have since seen the outcome of that episode, with two ministerial staff members being sacked and the minister being forced to resign.

The legislation before the House today does not introduce any extra requirements or legislate that ministers or their officers be more accountable. It does not lift the bar for the ministers or this government. Rather, this bill puts the onus on lobbyists and not the minister or his or her office.

This might be all well and good for those opposite, but it does not instil a high level of confidence in the people of Queensland when the government cannot and will not keep accurate records but instead divests itself of responsibility.

I also take this opportunity to talk about openness, accountability and transparency in relation to an issue raised by the Speaker in the House earlier today. From the outset let me state that I am not reflecting on the Speaker's ruling, rather placing on record my side of the story. On 22 August this year the member for Stretton accused me of swearing at her in this House. This did not happen and is blatantly untrue.

I wrote to the Speaker asking that the member for Stretton withdraw her statement. The members for Logan and Sandgate then wrote so-called supporting letters to back up the member for Stretton's claims. Forget openness and accountability, there was not one skerrick of information, there was not one single piece of detail to particularise this event in any way, shape or form. There was no date, there was no time, there was no idea when this incident allegedly occurred—nothing. But the members remarkably wrote that they both shared exactly the same reaction and they were both extremely shocked. These letters would not have stood up in a court of law. They would not have stood up in any sort of mediation or arbitration process. Rather than being open and accountable, these members chose to push a story manufactured to reflect poorly on me. But indeed I think it says more about their character than mine.

Since taking office in March this year, this government has been plagued with a raft of accountability issues and the people of Queensland are clearly far from impressed. This has resulted in quite chaotic and shambolic activities, as we have seen this week. A galaxy poll published in the *Courier-Mail* yesterday showed that almost 50 per cent of voters believed Mr Newman, the Premier, has not lived up to his election commitment to run an open and accountable government. Some 63 per cent of voters polled thought the LNP's ethics were worse or no better than the previous Labor government's.

The case studies I have raised in my speech as well as the backlash from the public, which has been so clearly evident this week, are further evidence of this government's failure to meet its promise of open and accountable government. From the minister for bungles—Minister Bates—to the low rent acts from the member for Stretton, this government has not been accountable for their shambolic and deceptive actions, and there is no doubt that the people of Queensland are already judging them harshly.

 **Mrs MADDERN** (Maryborough—LNP) (6.42 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the debate on the Right to Information and Integrity (Openness and Transparency) Amendment Bill 2012. The bill is in two parts—the right to information issues and the integrity issues relating to lobbying.

In relation to the right to information issues, it has been necessary in the past to use this mechanism to find out such basic information as the number and cost of ambulance trips between the Maryborough and Hervey Bay hospitals. This information was used by the Maryborough Hospital Lobby Group to build a case to lobby the previous Labor government to increase services to the Maryborough Hospital, including more services in the emergency department, allowing patients to be admitted to the Maryborough Hospital rather than be transferred to Hervey Bay to be admitted and then returned to Maryborough Hospital.

This information was straightforward and factual and was not open to misinterpretation or bias. There are instances where information is sought and obtained under existing right to information regulations and then used to present a case, often in the media, and unless the information is directly factual, as in the number of trips or something similar, it can be subject to bias in the presentation.

Currently, the general public do not have the option of drawing their own conclusions from the source information immediately. As a community we expect and demand from our researchers that the publication of information or theses can be independently verified at the point of publication. This bill, which calls for the publication as soon as practicable after the RTI is released to the applicant, will allow the general public to scrutinise and verify for themselves the accuracy or otherwise of any case based on the information provided by the RTI. Further, the bill calls for the name of the applicant, the actual documents accessed and whether the applicant seeks the information on their own behalf or on behalf of a third party to also be published.

This government has a policy of openness and accountability and the bill contributes to the implementation of this policy. I am also of the belief that the continuing development of the [data.qld.gov.au](http://data.qld.gov.au) website will reduce the need for the public to use the RTI processes to obtain basic data. This will reduce the expense of dealing with RTI applications.

In relation to the second matter dealt with under this bill, I have listened with interest and read comments which put forward the view that almost everybody is a lobbyist and almost everybody who has contact with a member of parliament is seeking some kind of positive outcome for themselves or for family, friends, community groups or other third parties. Every electorate office would have, on an almost daily basis, constituents who could be called lobbyists, and this is as it should be. As members we are there to serve our electorate.

This bill clarifies who is required to be registered as a professional lobbyist and the difference between a constituent and a professional lobbyist is a 'fee or other reward agreed to before' the lobbying activity takes place. This rules out the very large numbers of everyday constituents lobbying their local member or through their local member, ministers.

I have listened to so many questions without notice by the opposition relating to lobbyists registers, all of it taking time away from matters of substance in government. I note with interest the comments of the Integrity Commission, Dr Solomon, in today's *Courier-Mail* where he supports the move for lobbyists to keep a register.

This bill is one more step in this government's moves to openness and transparency and to reducing red tape and waste. I thank the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice for putting forward this bill and I commend it to the House.

 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (6.46 pm): I rise to speak quickly to the Right to Information and Integrity (Openness and Transparency) Amendment Bill 2012. There are two elements to this bill. I will just speak quickly on each one.

The changes to the Right to Information Act will allow for more information to be placed in the public arena in relation to access applications. In particular, it will identify if applications are made for third parties and clarify who those third parties are. It will also ensure that information that is released is available to the public in a timely manner.

I can remember under the previous government changes to the Freedom of Information Act and there was a lot of reaction from journalists and media outlets who were most disturbed by the changes. Those amendments were passed on the numbers in this chamber. I know that this bill has only been laying on the table of the House for a couple of days, but I have had no feedback from the media outlets to say that they are particularly concerned about it. It could be that members of the opposition have had feedback from the media, but certainly I have not. That would certainly inform my consideration of these amendments.

To give people access to additional information about an issue about which there will be either media coverage or public debate to me can only be a positive thing. A person sufficiently interested to investigate the basis upon which an article is written or a statement is made will find that more information will be available in the public arena for them to assess and balance the comments that are made by the person prosecuting the argument. To that extent, and in the absence of other criticisms, I support that part of the legislation.

In relation to the disclosure logs, I have been listening tonight to those who have spoken in favour of them and also to those who have spoken against them. Whilst it is probably not a wise thing to inform one's decision making always or only on articles that are in the media, I read with interest the article in today's *Courier-Mail* titled 'Luggage in the lobby'. The by-line to be complete is Sarah Vogler and Kelmeny Fraser. I am not going to quote the lot because of time and relevance. It in part states—

Mr Newman said the changes meant ministers would record lobbyist meetings in their diaries rather than on a lobbyist register but he insisted they would still need to ensure those meetings were recorded accurately.

He said it would increase accountability by boosting the regulation of lobbyists.

However lobbyist group Government Relations Professionals Association president Barton Green accused the Government of "outsourcing ministerial responsibility".

I note that ministers are paid by the people of Queensland and lobbyists are paid by the company that hires them to lobby the ministers of Queensland. So both are paid and both equally can share and, one could argue, should share the responsibility of accountability. The article goes on—

"The State Government's intention to flip responsibility for reporting on lobbyist meetings away from ministers and on to registered lobbyists is an ineffective response to recent sloppy government administration," Mr Green said.

However, my understanding is that now the community will have two documents to compare one with the other: there will be the minister's diary that sets out when they have talked to lobbyists and there will be the lobbyists register and the members of the community can compare the two and see whether there is an accurate reflection of contact between the two. I think it is a fairly good balance. The article goes on—

Queensland ethicist Bill De Maria also lashed the Government for placing the onus on unelected businessmen.

"It seems like the Government has been caught on the back foot with certain allegations made and is doing the completely amateurish thing of delegating its responsibility," Dr De Maria said.

Can I say again that the lobbyists are paid to do that job and they should keep appropriate records. I am most persuaded, however, by a comment by Dr Solomon—and again I acknowledge it is in the media, in the paper, and I have not got access to all that Dr Solomon said. The article states—

Dr Solomon said he supported the move to make lobbyists keep a register and admitted there were problems with the current system.

He said the Act did not require government to provide him information, such as records of contact with lobbyists.

"There are some problems with it and I haven't been able to check the records, for example, of some local governments," he said. "This (the changes) will mean there will be a proper record of contact."

Dr Solomon has worked for the previous government and he is carrying over in his responsibilities to this government. I am persuaded, although with the caveat that I do not know that this is all of Dr Solomon's comments, by his support for the changes and I will be supporting the legislation.

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (6.52 pm), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their contribution this evening. In the joys of the Christmas spirit, I am going to refrain from speaking at length tonight in reply because we have many parliamentary staff members who have done an excellent job all year. It has been a big year for them and they ought to be able to be celebrated at the celebration tonight. So I will depart from my usual practice, and I will contain my comments to brief. So I shall only go for 29 minutes and not 30—just kidding!

I thank all honourable members for their contribution. The bill introduces changes to the current disclosure log requirements under the Right to Information Act 2009. Departments and ministers will be required, as soon as practicable after a valid right to information application has been received, to publish on a disclosure log the date of the application and the details of the information being sought. Some honourable members raised issues about this, and I guess it is probably easier for me to explain it this way.

When an RTO application is received by a department after this bill passes, the information will go on a disclosure log about the type of information requested, but the person's individual name will not be known in the first instance. When the information is released at a later date then the identity becomes known. So when people put in applications there will still be privacy around those applications. They will have a number attached to them and they will not become known unless documents are released in the future. We are getting rid of the 24-hour rule. But it is basically opening it up for whenever government releases information to these individuals, if it is not personal or private information, then all Queenslanders will have immediate access to those government documents.

Where the access is sought for the benefit or use by an entity other than the applicant, then the name of the entity is also to appear on the disclosure log once the documents are revealed. This will be known to departments and ministers because the amendments also require that right to information applications are to indicate whether access is sought for the benefit of, or use by, another entity other than the applicant.

The bill importantly requires agencies and ministers to delete certain information from the documents or information on disclosure logs. This will have resource implications for government agencies because they will have to do a second set of processes to make sure that, because we are releasing more information to the world at large, private and personal legislation of an individual is not released. This requirement applies where publication of the information is prevented by law to be released, if it may be defamatory, if including it in a disclosure log would unreasonably invade an individual's privacy or cause substantial harm to an entity, and where certain confidential information is involved.

The Integrity Act amendments contained in the bill make sure the opposition is open and accountable in its dealings with lobbyists. Despite the fact that the opposition is not making decisions and so forth, we just thought that in the spirit of Christmas and openness and transparency we all should share in the spoils of the Integrity Act. So we are saying to the opposition they will be open and accountable in their dealings with lobbyists. I note they are not opposing it and I thank the opposition for that. This will mean that unregistered lobbyists will be prohibited from attempting to influence those all important opposition decisions that they make up there on level 9.

This bill will also make sure the Integrity Commissioner is informed of the full picture of lobbying activity being undertaken in Queensland by requiring lobbyists to report to the Integrity Commissioner on their lobbying activities. This information, which the Integrity Commissioner has indicated he intends to release publicly, will contribute to a more transparent system of lobbying regulation in Queensland.

The bill also clarifies the way the current lobbying regulations operate by removing confusion about whether lobbying activity can occur when the lobbyist is not paid for their services. The amendments will also provide that there must be a clearly defined and paid professional relationship between a lobbyist and a third party client, agreed prior to the conduct of the lobbying activity, in order for the Integrity Act to apply.

Again, I thank all members for their contributions tonight. This is about being more open and accountable. I thank the member for Gladstone for her contribution tonight. She is right in that ministers from next year will be releasing diaries, similar to what the UK government have been doing. In fact, I think the Labour and the Tory UK governments have been doing that for some time. So ministers will be releasing their diaries. The Premier released his diary today.

Also, lobbyists will be required to have their registration with the Integrity Commissioner. So in fact we will be more open than what we are now. The reason we are getting this through at a fast pace is that, when you look at the old system under the Integrity Act and the amendments that were made,

the system obviously has not worked because, with all respect to the opposition, they cannot find their lobbyists registers. Since 2009 there were meant to be lobbyists registers kept but we now cannot find the lobbyists registers. That is why I think it is important that the person who is making the money out of the lobbying activity is the lobbyist. Therefore, they should have the responsibility to keep the register, and it is going to be combined in the code of conduct with the Integrity Commissioner.

I think from next year, from when this bill is enacted, we will have a better system of integrity and accountability and openness and transparency in Queensland than we have today. We will have a better system because lobbyists will have to tell the Integrity Commissioner what they are doing for their paid profession and the ministers will be releasing their diaries. We have made amendments to again make it illegal to lie to parliament. So I think this government has shown, if anything, that we are serious about this. We are putting information on the open data website. As much information as humanly possible will go up on that open data website, and all ministers and all departments are actively engaging in that.

The opposition leader raised a question, and rightly so—and I thank my departmental staff here tonight and from DPC for the briefing they gave the opposition today. The question that was asked by the opposition leader in the briefing today was about the new definition of ‘third party client’: will lobbyists be able to get around the lobbying regulations by agreeing to receive payment after the lobbying service has been provided? Honourable colleagues, what the opposition leader is talking about here is with respect to changing the definition of ‘third party client’ to include when a fee is paid. The concern is that a lobbyist may meet with someone but not have a contractual paid arrangement and then get a fee later on down the track after the meeting has taken place.

I think it is very important that I read into *Hansard*, if I can, my response to that question so I can give the opposition leader the full answer that she deserves because this is an important question. My response with respect to that question was as follows—

The Bill will insert a new definition of “third party client” into the Integrity Act 2009. This definition will provide that a client has to engage a lobbyist to deliver lobbying services for a fee or other reward agreed to before the service is provided.

The requirement for the fee or reward to be agreed prior to the delivery of the service ensures that there must be a clear professional and commercial relationship between a lobbyist and a client for lobbying to occur.

This addresses current confusion with the very wide application of the current subsection 41(2) which states that lobbying activity can occur whether or not fees are payable for the service.

It will not be necessary for payment be made prior to a lobbying service being provided, just for there to be an agreement that there will be a payment or reward for services rendered.

If a lobbyist or client was to decide to make a payment after the lobbying services were provided in order to avoid the requirements of the Act, this could be considered to be a “success fee” under section 69 of the Act.

This section prohibits the payment of a success fee, which is money or other reward which is contingent on the outcome of a lobbying activity.

The penalty for payment of success fees is 200 penalty units, with the fee forfeited to the State.

This will provide a strong deterrent to any attempt to get around the lobbying regulations by paying fees after lobbying services have been provided.

I hope that reassures the opposition leader.

In conclusion, may I say thank you to honourable members as we move forward with openness and transparency in Queensland. One of the members of the opposition raised the issue of whether we are putting this obligation on the lobbyists because we are going to prosecute them instead of ministers. No, that is not the case because there are no offences in the Integrity Act. The only offences in the Integrity Act are with respect to success fees, not if someone does not keep a register. The Integrity Act does not say that anyone has to keep a register. It is a code of conduct and those DPC guidelines were developed under Ken Smith under Anna Bligh, and they essentially had a lot of contradictory information.

The Integrity Commissioner recommended that the lobbyists registers be kept and he offered ministers the opportunity to meet with him. I met with the Integrity Commissioner and he had access to my lobbyists register and he said there seemed to be no issue with it. What we do now is we let the Integrity Commissioner work with the government and the lobbyists to make sure they are required to keep registers, and our diaries will be released. We are hoping that from next year onwards, if the lobbyists have it on their registers, you will see it concurrently in the ministerial diary and note that that was the case as well. I thank the members who spoke on the bill. 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

Clauses 1 to 13, as read, agreed to.

Clause 14—

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (7.04 pm): The opposition did have concerns in relation to clause 14. I would like to thank the Attorney-General for providing the briefing to my staff today. I believe the Attorney has given a very detailed answer to my concerns and he has read that into the *Hansard*. We accept that, and the opposition will now not be dividing on this clause.

Clause 14, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 15 to 24, as read, agreed to.

### Third Reading

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (7.05 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a third time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

### Long Title

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (7.05 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.

## REPORT

### Overseas Visit

 **Mrs FRANCE** (Pumicestone—LNP) (7.06 pm), by leave: I lay upon the table of the House my report on Commonwealth Parliamentary Association travel from 28 to 31 October 2012.

*Tabled paper:* Report on an overseas visit by the Assistant Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Mrs Lisa France MP, to Vienna, Austria, 28-31 October 2012—Report to the Queensland Legislative Assembly: Global Seminar on the Role of Parliaments and Extractive Industries, hosted by the Commonwealth Parliament Association [[1800](#)].

## PARLIAMENT OF QUEENSLAND (REGISTERED POLITICAL PARTIES) AMENDMENT BILL

### Introduction

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (7.06 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 for a particular purpose. I table the bill and the explanatory notes.

*Tabled paper:* Parliament of Queensland (Registered Political Parties) Amendment Bill 2012 [[1801](#)].

*Tabled paper:* Parliament of Queensland (Registered Political Parties) Amendment Bill 2012, explanatory notes [[1802](#)].

I am pleased to introduce the Parliament of Queensland (Registered Political Parties) Amendment Bill 2012. The bill amends the definition of a registered political party in the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001. The act currently provides that a registered political party under the Electoral Act 1992 can be a recognised political party in the parliament in either one of two ways. Firstly, a registered political party is a recognised political party if the party has at least 10 per cent of the total number of members of the Legislative Assembly. This is not being altered by this bill.

The second way that a registered political party can be a recognised political party under the act is if the party has at least three members of the Legislative Assembly and the party has received at least 10 per cent of the primary vote at the most recent general election. This is provided for under section 112(3)(b) of the act. This provision was introduced in 2003 through amendments brought before the parliament by the then Premier, the Hon. Peter Beattie. I well remember the discussion and the debate at the time.

It is generally accepted by those of us who were here in the parliament when these amendments were passed in 2003 that a minimum of three members would have had to have been elected at a general election, even though the wording of the current act is somewhat ambiguous. This bill is to clarify the meaning of the act and to ensure that its reading accords with the generally accepted intent of the amendments introduced by Peter Beattie in 2003. It is important that the act be clarified now to make it clear that it refers to members elected under the party's banner at the last election, rather than those changing party allegiances in an opportunistic way to form a recognised political party.

The scenario that we currently have in this parliament—where we have two members who were elected in March representing Katter's Australian Party and one member who was elected in March representing the Liberal National Party who is now joining to form a three-member party—was not anticipated in the 2003 amendments introduced by Peter Beattie. The three Katter's Australian Party members are now claiming recognised political party status under the act and the receipt of the relevant salary and other benefits afforded to a recognised political party under the act and the *Members' Entitlements Handbook*. I table for the benefit of the House a copy of a letter that the Clerk wrote to Mr Katter, the member for Mount Isa, in response to a request by him for those additional salaries.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 29 November 2012, from the Clerk of Parliament, Mr Neil Laurie, to the member for Mount Isa, Mr Rob Katter MP, regarding the Katter's Australian Party [1803].

The salaries requested were for the leader of a recognised political party under section 3.13 of the handbook, the whip of a recognised political party under section 3.14 of the handbook and the secretary of a recognised political party under section 3.15 of the handbook. Had these requests been acceded to, every member of the so-called Katter's Australian Party would have received additional benefits because of this opportunistic move. The request from the leader of the party was also for one-third of the opposition funding, and the Clerk has advised that this is a matter for the Premier.

One of the views that I shared with former Premier Beattie when he introduced the original amendments to this act was the benefit of this parliament and all parliaments having a well-funded opposition. Standing here now in government, I am in the same position that Peter Beattie was in when he introduced those amendments. I sat over there when these original amendments were introduced and I was gratified by the fact that the then Premier understood that for a parliament to operate properly there needed to be an efficient opposition. I would say to every one of my members in this government that we will be a better government for having a better opposition. That is the way it works. Whether or not you understand that fully now, given that there is a whole lot of new members in this parliament, it is the way that parliaments work. Parliaments generally work better when the government is able to be tested by a well-funded opposition. There is no way that this government is going to accede to a request from Katter's Australian Party to opportunistically claim a third of the opposition's funding. That is not something that is good for the parliament or good for us as a government.

The government does not believe that any of the claims that have been made by Katter's Australian Party or the member for Condamine are in the spirit of the 2003 amendments. The government believes that if a registered political party is successful in getting enough Queenslanders to elect at least three of their candidates at an election, be it a general election or a by-election, and those people are elected under the party banner and they garner at least 10 per cent of the first preference votes for all candidates, then the party should be entitled to a recognised status and the additional salary and other allowances that accompany that status. If the people of Queensland democratically decide such an outcome at an election, then fair enough. If Katter's Australian Party were to achieve that at an election or a by-election, then they should be recognised as a party within this parliament. However, the government does not agree with an artificial scenario that has not been derived from an election where various members of the Assembly who were elected under different banners may well get together to form a microparty and then claim additional salaries, allowances and a proportion of the opposition budget.

This bill, therefore, amends section 112(3)(b) to provide that the minimum of three members must be party members who were party members at the most recent election at which the members were elected. This is what the government believes was intended by the parliament in 2003. It was certainly my individual recollection, and I think the other members who were here at the time share that recollection. This is what the government believes was intended by the parliament and this bill will now clarify the situation. I commend the bill to the House.

### First Reading

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (7.12 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.

### Declared Urgent; Allocation of Time Limit Order

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (7.12 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That, under the provisions of the standing order 137, the Parliament of Queensland (Registered Political Parties) Amendment Bill be declared an urgent bill to enable the bill to be passed through all stages at this day's sitting.

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

Resolved in the affirmative under standing order 108.

### Second Reading

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (7.17 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Very briefly, I want to expand on the comments that I made earlier with regard to the position that I shared with Peter Beattie. I have here quite a lengthy quote. When Peter Beattie introduced the bill in 2003, the last time that this issue arose—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Miss Barton): Order! Deputy Premier, my understanding is that you do not speak to the motion but you may speak in reply.

**Mr SEENEY:** But I can speak to the motion. I would dispute that, but I am prepared to accept that. The motion is that the bill be read a second time.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** My apologies, you have the call.

**Mr SEENEY:** The then Premier, Peter Beattie, said—

I want to set out the principle behind this and the reason why I believe it is important that we fund oppositions effectively and appropriately. It is well known and it is true if governments do not have effective oppositions then that can in the long term affect their performance. I believe we have checks and balances in place internally to make sure that we continue to perform well. I would not accept lesser standards, but it is important that there be an effective opposition to keep us on our toes and, without resourcing, that is impossible.

That is what Peter Beattie said in 2003. It applied then and it applies now. He went on to say— and this is the bit that I agreed with him about, because there is a role in this parliament for the opposition, irrespective of the numbers, irrespective of whether the opposition has seven, as it does now, or 37. The opposition plays a role as the alternative government that the people who sit on the crossbenches never have the responsibility for and never get involved in. They get the easy ride. The people who constitute the opposition have to do the hard work. Having sat for so long where the member for Inala now sits, I know how onerous that job can be, but it is an essential job for this parliament and it is work that the crossbenchers never have to do. Peter Beattie went on to say—

Think of the complicated bills that come before this House. The reality is that the Leader of the Opposition is the alternative Premier. He has to respond to every one of them, or one of his shadow ministers does. If he does not have the firepower behind the scenes to properly resource either his own argument or his shadow minister's argument, he cannot do his job competently. It would not matter who occupied that role. That is why it is so important.

That is what Peter Beattie said in 2003; that is what I say tonight. Those of us who knew Peter Beattie know that he probably would have said it a whole lot more eloquently than I could, but I agreed with him then and I agree with him now.

**Government members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Miss Barton): Order! Members, it may come as a surprise but I am actually struggling to hear the Deputy Premier.

**Mr SEENEY:** I agreed with him then and I agree with him now. I commend this bill to every member of the House.

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (7.21 pm): I will be brief. I think what the Deputy Premier and the government have presented is fair and reasonable and we will not be opposing the bill.

 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (7.21 pm): The process that has occurred here tonight is disappointing. I am not going to say that I disagree with the sentiments of the bill. Katter's Australian Party had two members from the election. It achieved the status of three members through 'attrition'— that is probably the kindest way of saying it—rather than anything else. I have to express disappointment that at this early stage it would apply for a financial reward for the change in its status. Having said that, I do not believe that this process lends respect to this institution, either.

The bill, I note, says that it will be in force from—now I have lost the page because it is such a big bill! The bill states—

This Act commences, or is taken to have commenced, on 29 November 2012.

The retrospectivity sting is taken out of it—you have introduced it today and the date is today, so any prospective or retrospective claims by the members of Katter's Australian Party are effectively relinquished—because you have placed in the bill the commencement date. We could have more properly, and certainly in a more seemly way, debated this when we came back in the new year.

I am not making apologies for members who are or are not here—each of us takes responsibility for our attendance in this chamber—but it is a bill that has been introduced and it is a matter of some division. I am sure it will be for the Katter's Australian Party members. I believe that we could have done this in a more appropriate manner and I will be opposing the bill on that basis, not necessarily because I oppose the contents of the bill.

**Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (7.23 pm): I also believe that this could have been done more appropriately. We have a committee system so that bills can be scrutinised. The LNP was elected with 78 members. The member for Callide knows and understands that governments with a massive majority can be quite arrogant and they need an effective opposition. To see an opposition that is increasing in numbers—from two to three—

**Government members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Dalrymple has the call.

**Mr KNUTH:** Seeing the party start to deteriorate, seeing that their membership is slowly waning, they are asking themselves, 'What is going on?' Are they living in a delusion? Should they be afraid that the numbers leaving might go from three to four, five, six, seven or eight? Are they having a good look at the reasons their members are starting to leave? Have they looked at the election promises they made—that they would be public servant friendly? Did they tell their backbenchers that they were going to sack nurses? Did they tell their backbenchers that they were going to sack ambos? Did they tell their backbenchers that they were going to kick the elderly out of their nursing homes?

**Mr STEVENS:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member has shown no relevance in his speech to this point in time. I ask him to return to the subject.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Dalrymple, your comments are not relevant to the bill. I ask that you return to the bill.

**Mr KNUTH:** As I was saying, the opportunity should have been given for this bill to go to a committee so that the bill could be talked about and thoroughly investigated to ensure we have an effective opposition. There are seven members of the Labor Party, three members of Katter's Australian Party, four independents and 75 government members. But there is a great fear that their numbers might be reduced to 74, 73 or 72. So they deny a party that might have a chance to play a part to get the resources so they can research and get information to keep the government honest.

**Mr Cox** interjected.

**Mr KNUTH:** Check *Hansard*. I feel that this is a disgrace. This bill has been brought in at the last minute. All the parliament is asking for is a bit of honesty and integrity.

**Government members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Members, I am struggling—

**Mr KNUTH:** That is why—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Dalrymple, I have called order. I am struggling to hear the member for Dalrymple and he does deserve to be heard. Please cease your interjections.

**Mr KNUTH:** This is exactly the reason people are slowly walking out of this party—pulling stunts like this. I oppose the legislation.

**Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (7.27 pm), in reply: I note the comments that have been made by various members in the second reading debate on this bill. I say again for the record that this was an opportunistic grab for cash that first became apparent in this parliament this morning. The government has moved as quickly as is physically possible to ensure that the proper workings of this House are not disrupted by the opportunism of a small number of people who sit at the back of the chamber and do not really participate in the hard work of this chamber.

I refer again to the comments that Peter Beattie made, and that I endorse, about the role that the opposition plays in this place, irrespective of their numbers. Irrespective of their numbers, the opposition plays a role that is essential for the proper operation of this parliament. The bill we have introduced tonight is a move to ensure that this House continues to fulfil the role that it should fulfil for all of the people of Queensland and there is not an opportunity for three members of Katter's Australian Party to opportunistically enrich themselves.

**Mr KNUTH:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I dispute the position of the leader—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** That is not a point of order, member for Dalrymple.

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

Resolved in the affirmative under standing order 108.

Bill read a second time.

### Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 4, as read, agreed to.

### Third Reading

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (7.34 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a third time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

### Long Title

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (7.34 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.

## SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (7.34 pm): I move—

That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 am on Tuesday, 12 February 2013.

## VALEDICTORY

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (7.35 pm): I am pleased to make a contribution to the traditional valedictory debate at the end of the parliamentary year. As members in the House are well aware, the Premier is on his way to India as part of an important trade mission and because of that the traditional valedictory address that is normally delivered by the Premier as the House rises at the end of the parliamentary year was in fact delivered by the Premier immediately after question time this morning. The address that I will make will be a much foreshortened one, taking into account that the normal observations have been made in the address given by the Premier this morning.

It is a great honour for me to have the opportunity in this valedictory to first of all acknowledge the input and the efforts of everybody in the parliamentary precinct, everybody who has played a role in this parliament over the last 12 months. It was a year that will be long remembered in the life of the Queensland parliament. Governments do not change often in Queensland political history. If you look back across the records, governments do not change often. In 2012 the government in Queensland changed, and it did not just change in a normal way, for the sake of a better description; it changed massively, and this parliament for the remainder of the year—for the last two-thirds of the year—has become a parliament unlike any other in Queensland's history simply because of the numbers and the way the numbers are accommodated in this parliament. That has brought challenges for all of us. It has brought challenges for us in government, it has brought challenges for our colleagues in opposition, it has brought challenges for the parliamentary staff and it has brought challenges, Madam Speaker, I suspect for you and your deputies and your staff, because it is a rather unique situation but it is a situation that all of us have been honoured to be part of.

So tonight as we conclude the parliamentary sittings and we return to our electorates right across Queensland—we return each of us to our family homes to celebrate the Christmas season—can we all acknowledge within ourselves that we have all been part of something special this year. We have all been part of something rather unique. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge and congratulate everybody who has played a role in that rather special and unique occurrence here in the Queensland

parliament in 2012. To all of the new members who have given such delight to those of us who worked so hard in here in opposition to see so many people come in here—so many wonderfully qualified people—a whole new generation of Queensland MPs came into this parliament in March this year—a whole new generation—and it has been an enormous personal delight for us in the leadership team and the Premier to watch each of you come to terms with the fact that you are part of the most exclusive club in Queensland. Eighty-nine people sit in this parliament. Eighty-nine people sit here as of right once they have won that right at the behest of the constituents that they represent. Each of you have come in here and acquitted yourselves remarkably well given the challenge of making that transition. I extend those comments as well to the new members of the opposition, because despite our political differences, despite the huge gulf in our political philosophies at times, at the basis of our role we all perform the same task: we are all members of the Queensland parliament and we all represent our constituencies.

Madam Speaker, I extend to you and your staff congratulations on the roles that you and they have played in the parliament in the past year. I extend to the Clerk especially and his staff congratulations and thanks on behalf of all members of the parliament for the great roles that they played. To all of the parliamentary staff, for whom you and the Clerk are responsible and for whom you represent in this parliament, could you express to them the gratitude and the recognition of all the members of the parliament for the roles that they play.

Members, at this juncture we also need to reflect on the roles that our electorate office staff play. Each of us spend an enormous amount of time in this chamber, but the real work of representing our constituents goes on. Whether it is in Logan, whether it is in Biloela, whether it is in Cairns, whether it is in Mulgrave or down on the Gold Coast, the real work of representing our constituency goes on and that real work is done by the staff who work in our electorate offices. As we come to the end of the parliamentary year I think we should acknowledge their efforts. I know in most cases they take the opportunity to have holidays over the Christmas period as well. One thing that I have always said to my staff is that the Christmas period is a time when our electorate office closes for a couple of weeks so that everybody can have that well deserved holiday.

But most importantly, members, I think at the end of each parliamentary year we should recognise the contribution that is made by each and every one of our family members. As we leave this place and go back to our respective homes to spend that festive season with our family members, we should recognise the enormous contribution they make to ensure that we are able to sit in this chamber and fulfil the roles that we play on behalf of the people we represent. That is the same for me as it is for the opposition members. Each electorate and each particular circumstance brings with it its own particular challenges, but for those of us who represent electorates in regional Queensland that challenge can sometimes be particularly acute. Tonight, I want to recognise in the gallery a person who knows well those challenges. She is not here very often, so I am not going to miss the opportunity. I recognise my wife, Therese, who has put up with me fulfilling this role for 14 years and who I think knows better than most the challenges or the burdens that family members carry. That is not for one second to suggest that the role that Therese plays is not replicated over and over again in different circumstances in this chamber.

I conclude by wishing each and every member of this parliament a very merry Christmas and a very relaxing festive season. I look forward to seeing you return to this parliament in the new year to continue to participate in the great democratic institution that is the Queensland parliament.

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (7.43 pm): As parliament concludes for 2012, it is my great honour to rise to reflect on the year that was—a year of challenge and change for Queensland. From the outset, let me say that we are all aware of the events of 24 March, when Queenslanders went to the polls. Although those of us on this side of the House are small in number, we are abundant in spirit. It is the role of the opposition to hold the government to account and with such a large majority in this place those members on the other side can be assured that we are determined to do that.

In many ways parliament is designed to bring out the best in people. I take this moment to thank and pay tribute to the huge efforts of my six colleagues on this side of the House who have in the past eight months carried an enormous workload. Each of the members who make up the Labor caucus are strong advocates for each of their local communities. At the same time, they carry out the critical work that makes for an effective opposition. I want to thank my deputy, the member for Mackay, Tim Mulherin; the Leader of Opposition Business, the member for Mulgrave, Curtis Pitt; the member for Bundamba, Jo-Ann Miller; the member for Woodridge, Desley Scott; the member for Rockhampton, Bill Byrne; and the member for South Brisbane, Jackie Trad. Each of those people have risen to the considerable challenge over the past eight months, but I make particular mention of Bill Byrne and Jackie Trad, who are both in their first term in this place and who are doing a remarkable job.

The role of the Speaker is of pivotal importance to the smooth operation of the parliament and I extend my thanks to the chair for her performance over the past several months. The role of the Speaker is not an easy one. It often involves walking a delicate tightrope and in that regard I acknowledge the efforts of the Speaker.

I want to pay tribute to Queenslanders. I want to thank the good people of my electorate of Inala. They are hardworking people. They are always giving. It is a wonderful community and they always put the needs of others ahead of their own. This year my travels have taken me from Logan to Ipswich, to the Gold and Sunshine coasts, to Rockhampton, Mackay, Cairns, Emerald, Barcaldine, Longreach, Mount Isa, Gladstone, Townsville, Proserpine and Bowen and next year I will continue an extensive program of travel, along with other members of my team—

**Mr Pitt:** Collinsville.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** And Collinsville. Wherever I go, I cannot but be impressed by the sheer resilience of people in this state, our great state of Queensland. For many Queenslanders, 2012 was not an easy year for a range of reasons. But everywhere I go in regional Queensland I have been struck by the uncanny ability of people to pick themselves up, dust themselves off and get on with it. I applaud that resilience. I applaud that unique character. I hope that it will see all Queenslanders through times good and bad. I make particular mention of that because even though our summer of natural disasters is now almost two years behind us Queensland is still experiencing the fallout. Many towns in the north are still being rebuilt. Much infrastructure remains under construction and Queenslanders in many areas are holding on in typical fashion while their lives are rebuilt. For many others, the memories of that terrible time will not easily fade. As the anniversary of these disasters approaches, my thoughts are with them and may the memories further fade with time.

In a similar light, I also pay tribute to those in the armed forces who gave their lives for their country this year. The tragic parade of soldiers lost overseas, in particular Afghanistan, has continued this year as we help that country rebuild. My thoughts go out to those Queensland families who have this year lost their cherished sons.

I also pay tribute to Mr Eric Deeral, the first Indigenous member of this parliament, who died at the age of 79 in September. He was a fine politician, a fine spokesman for his people and a resilient man.

I pay tribute to the resilience of such people as the women and men and families I met just this week who have fought a decade-long battle for the restoration of their dignity and their life-altering experiences with forced adoptions. I was proud to be part of a democracy that this week offered a formal apology to those brave families and I was moved by their stories and, once again, their resilience in the face of unimaginable trauma.

Running this place takes something akin to a small army, focused with military-like precision. I want to take this moment to thank the hardworking men and women who make each of our lives easier each and every day in this place. I thank the Clerk, Mr Neil Laurie; the Deputy Clerk, Michael Ries; and the First Clerk Assistant, Leanne Clare. Mr Laurie is someone who can always be depended upon to keep the operation of the parliament moving smoothly and can always be relied upon to provide accurate and sensible advice. I acknowledge the work of Kevin Jones, this parliament's Sergeant-at-Arms, and Michael Watkin, the acting Sergeant-at-Arms.

Some of the most important people in this place are those who record our words for history and for accuracy. I thank the Chief Hansard Reporter, Lucinda Osmond, for keeping us all on the record this year. I make mention of the hardworking Hansard reporters: Annie, Mandy, Janine, Leah, Megan, Jenny, Jenny, Annette, Giacinta, Melissa, Tania and Nicole. Sincerely I thank the Chief Librarian, Katherine Brennan, and her team of librarians and researchers. Thank you to Theresa Johnson, the Parliamentary Counsel. I thank everyone behind the scenes for keeping this place working and acknowledge that there are now fewer of you than in the past. Thanks Jaakko, the manager of Catering Services, and our wonderful head chef for keeping us all well fed. Thanks Darryl, the manager of Property Services, for providing each member with office space. Thanks to Chris King, the head gardener, for keeping the precinct green. And I thank Azra and Sanja, the parliament cleaning supervisors, who do a fantastic job. And a big thankyou to our parliamentary attendants who keep us on our toes at all times.

There is another group of people who also play a crucial role in this place—the media. The members of the parliamentary press gallery are extremely important in keeping Queenslanders informed about the workings of this House. We may not always see eye to eye, we may not always agree, we may not always be happy with what is printed or what is broadcast, but I acknowledge the television, radio, print and online reporters who strive for fairness and accuracy each and every day. I look forward to working with you again in the new year.

I could not carry out this job without my family. I thank my family and my extended family and make special mention of the two latest additions to our family, my nieces Lucy May and Evelyn Rose, who arrived this year. I and the other Labor members could not do our jobs without a team of the best staff around us. I thank my electorate staff, Mel and Charles, who probably have one of the most demanding jobs in Queensland. These are the people who day to day deal with all of the issues in my electorate. I know each member in this House would acknowledge the hard work of all of their electorate officers and the tremendous work that they do. To do the best job you can, you must surround yourself with good, solid, professional staff.

We are lucky to have a group of people working with us who are among the best in the business—the best and the brightest. I thank our senior staff, Angela, Lindsay, Peter, Kate, Chris and Jimmy. I also want to make special mention of Donna and Darren who stay here very late at our parliamentary sittings and all of my team. These are the people who keep us clicking over like clockwork, who help prepare speeches, who ensure we get wherever we are going on time and on schedule—and a special mention to Jackie Hughes for that. I am looking forward to returning to this House next year to continue the job of holding this government to account. It is critical for the people of Queensland that we continue that job.

In conclusion, I want to share the best wishes for the forthcoming season. As mentioned by the Deputy Premier, we all have very difficult jobs but we are all human beings and we all have hearts; we all have families and we strive each and every day to do our best not just for our electorates but for all of Queensland. With those few words, I wish everybody in this House and the staff the best for the Christmas season. May you enjoy the time with your family. It is a very special time. As members of this House we know that it becomes harder and harder to spend time with your family. There is nothing more important. Enjoy the Christmas season and I look forward to seeing everybody in the New Year.

 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (7.53 pm): Previous speakers have referred to the amazing team here in the parliamentary precinct who ensure that the work of this House continues in an unfettered manner. These include your office, Madam Speaker, the Clerk's office, security, attendants, catering, IT, HR, administration, assets management, here and for our electorate offices, and committee staff—and I apologise if I have missed someone out. On behalf of the crossbenches, thank you most sincerely for your kindness and effort.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge our wonderful, dedicated and energetic electorate office staff. Thank you for your protection, organisation and compassion to all in our electorates. Where would we be without the love, patience and support of our families. To parents, wives or husbands, partners and beautiful children and grandchildren, thank you is not enough. You stand by us, cry with us and wait for us. We can only show our gratitude to and affection for you as words are insufficient.

Not everyone in this chamber and their extended families in the Queensland parliament have enjoyed 2012. Some have faced significant health challenges, some publicly and others very privately. Our thoughts and prayers for a speedy recovery are with you. Others have faced personal and work challenges. May you stay true to your values and have courage to meet your time ahead. To all we wish you a time of rest and restoration with those you love. Have a safe, happy and holy Christmas as we celebrate Jesus' birthday.

 **Madam SPEAKER:** In the tradition of our valedictory speeches at the end of the parliamentary year we pause to reflect on the year, to thank all who have supported us and to celebrate our common humanity. This year we have seen an election with 51 new MPs, a change of government, an apology to those who suffered due to forced adoption and also the sad passing of Eric Deeral, our state's first and only Indigenous MP. There is much in Eric Deeral's story that can instruct us as to how lucky we are to serve in this place, to have the right to vote, the right to agree or to disagree and to strive for a better future. His story is an inspiration: overcoming significant disadvantage to win a seat by popular election only nine years after Indigenous Queenslanders were allowed to vote.

This year, with Mr Deeral's permission before his passing, we named the Indigenous youth parliament after him and were privileged to have him present for the youth parliament in this very chamber. I am proud that together with the community engagement section of the parliament we could film this event and capture it for prosperity to perhaps inspire other young people about a true servant leader.

I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to all who have contributed to the workings of the Queensland parliament this year in what has been a busy and an interesting year. I wish to thank our electorate office staff, Hansard, the Clerk and Table Office staff and senior management, cleaning and all House staff—property services, catering, gardening, our sergeant-at-arms, security, attendants, community engagement, library, IT, committee staff. As people know, so many more help us do our jobs as members of parliament, not least of all, as has been mentioned, our families—the people who know us best and still support us.

I particularly want to thank the Premier and the government members, the Leader of the Opposition and ALP members for their cooperation in regard to the operations of this place; the Independent members—I particularly acknowledge Liz Cunningham; and also the Katter Australian Party and other Independent members. We have the privilege of serving in an extraordinary workplace. It is an honour to serve with you in this parliament.

As we look to Christmas I wish each member and all those listening my very best wishes for this season of peace and goodwill. I also acknowledge the parliamentary media gallery. While they are not staff of the parliament, they do play a very important role. We work extraordinary hours, and they

sometimes get to experience the crazy hours that we tend to enjoy. I trust that each of us will have moments in which we can pause and reflect upon the opportunities that we are fortunate to experience in this great state of Queensland. I also trust that we will look forward to the New Year with a heart to help those around us, particularly those in need.

As the sitting year draws to a close, we have a tradition where members help serve Parliamentary Service staff at an end-of-year function in order to thank them for their work throughout the year. This function will begin after the valedictory speeches and the adjournment and will be held in the Speaker's Hall. I invite members, parliamentary staff and members of the parliamentary media gallery who are still present to this evening's function.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

## ADJOURNMENT



**Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (8.00 pm): I move—  
That the House do now adjourn.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 8.00 pm.

## 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, Grant, Grimwade, Gulley, Hart, Hathaway, Hobbs, Holswich, Hopper, Johnson, Judge, Katter, Kaye, Kempton, Knuth, Krause, Langbroek, Latter, Maddern, Malone, Mander, McArdle, McVeigh, Menkens, Millard, Miller, Minnikin, Molhoek, Mulherin, Newman, Nicholls, Ostapovitch, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Powell, Pucci, Rice, Rickuss, Robinson, Ruthenberg, Scott, Seeney, Shorten, Shuttleworth, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Symes, Trad, Trout, Walker, Wellington, Woodforth, Young