



RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Hansard Home Page: <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/work-of-assembly/hansard>
 E-mail: hansard@parliament.qld.gov.au
 Phone (07) 3406 7314 Fax (07) 3210 0182

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT

Wednesday, 30 October 2013

Subject	Page
ASSENT TO BILLS	3689
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Letter, dated 29 October 2013, from Her Excellency the Governor to the Speaker advising of assent to bills on 29 October 2013.....	
	3689
TABLED PAPERS	3689
MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS	3690
Member for Redcliffe	3690
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Bundle of letters to the Premier regarding the Redcliffe electorate.....	
	3691
Health Services	3691
Infrastructure Projects	3691
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Document titled 'Stopping the Australian Coal Export Boom: funding proposal for the Australian anti-coal movement'.....	
	3692
Property and Construction Sectors	3692
Gold Coast University Hospital	3693
North Queensland, Tourism	3694
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Foundation	3695
Litter and Illegal Dumping Action Plan	3695
MOTION	3696
Referral to the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee	3696
COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY	3696
Auditor-General's Reports, Referral to Portfolio Committees	3696
AGRICULTURE, RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE	3697
Report	3697
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee: Report No. 29, Subordinate legislation tabled between 5 June 2013 and 20 August 2013.....	
	3697
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE	3697
Separation of Powers	3697
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Extract of article in the <i>Sunday Mail</i> , dated 17 April 2011, titled 'Bligh slams judges as "out of touch"'.....	
	3697

Table of Contents – Wednesday, 30 October 2013

Separation of Powers	3698
Toowoomba, Community Cabinet	3698
Ergon Energy	3699
Darling Downs and Central Queensland Regional Plans	3700
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning: Darling Downs Regional Plan, October 2013.	3701
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning: Central Queensland Regional Plan, October 2013.	3701
North Stradbroke Island, Sandmining	3701
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Media release, dated 22 April 2011, by Dr Mark Robinson MP, titled 'Bligh Withers under Stradbroke Island heat'	3701
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Media article, dated 14 April 2011, titled 'Straddy sandmine stoush'.....	3702
Business Investment	3702
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Various Queensland government advertisements regarding business growth featuring Noel Robinson, Kees Weel, and Neil O'Sullivan	3703
National Parks, Cattle Grazing	3703
Hospitals	3704
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Statistics regarding Maleny Soldiers Memorial Hospital.....	3704
National Parks, Cattle Grazing	3705
Floods, Recovery Assistance	3706
Noosa on Weyba, Development Application	3706
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Extract from adjournment debate speech by the member for Rockhampton, Mr Bill Byrne MP, regarding deamalgamation of Rockhampton Regional Council.	3707
AusBiotech	3707
Hazard Reduction Plans	3708
Insurance	3708
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Media release, dated 27 August 2013, by the member for Mulgrave, Mr Curtis Pitt MP, titled 'Crisafulli raising false hopes over flood-proofing'.....	3709
SPEAKER'S STATEMENT	3709
School Group Tours	3709
APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2)	3709
Second Reading	3709
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Document titled 'Unforeseen Expenditure by Year—1999-2000 to 2012-13'.....	3710
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Document by Queensland Treasury and Trade: Queensland State Accounts, June quarter 2013.....	3715
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Document titled 'Investing in Queensland'.....	3715
Consideration in Detail	3719
Clauses 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.	3719
Third Reading	3719
Long Title	3719
RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AND ROOMING ACCOMMODATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL	3719
Second Reading	3719
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee: Report No. 35—Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013, government response.....	3719
<i>Table paper:</i> Document by the Department of Housing and Public Works titled 'Transfer on the management of social housing to the non-government sector, an overview'.....	3724
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Government of Western Australia—Department of Housing and Mental Health Commission: Memorandum of Understanding—Combined Capital Bid—Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol, and Disability, Mental Health Commission 2011-2012, dated 13 June 2011.....	3731
COMMUNITY SAFETY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT REGULATION (NO. 1)	3741
Disallowance of Statutory Instrument	3741
<i>Tabled paper:</i> News article from the <i>Tablelands Advertiser</i> , dated Friday, 18 October 2013, titled 'Levy fires up closure fears'.....	3742
<i>Tabled paper:</i> News article titled 'No fire in extra funding'.....	3742
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Page 14 of the Department of Community Safety Annual Report for 2012-13.	3748
Division: Question put—That the motion be agreed to.....	3757
Resolved in the negative.....	3757
RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AND ROOMING ACCOMMODATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL	3757
Second Reading	3757
Consideration in Detail	3768
Clauses 1 to 8, as read, agreed to.....	3768
Clause 9.....	3768
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013, explanatory notes to Hon. Tim Mander's amendments.	3768
Clause 9, as amended, agreed to.....	3768
Clauses 10 to 19, as read, agreed to.....	3768
Clause 20.....	3768
Clause 20, as amended, agreed to.....	3769
Clauses 21 and 22, as read, agreed to.....	3769
Clause 23.....	3769
Clause 23, as amended, agreed to.....	3769
Clauses 24 to 31, as read, agreed to.....	3769

Table of Contents – Wednesday, 30 October 2013

Clause 32—.....	3769
Clause 32, as amended, agreed to.....	3769
Clauses 33 to 45, as read, agreed to.....	3769
Schedule, as read, agreed to.....	3769
Third Reading.....	3769
Long Title.....	3769
ADJOURNMENT.....	3770
Glass House Electorate.....	3770
Comments by the Premier.....	3770
Wavell State High School; Health.....	3771
Gold Coast University Hospital.....	3771
Gold Coast University Hospital.....	3772
Scarth-Johnson, Ms V, OAM.....	3773
World Teachers Day.....	3773
Sentencing Advisory Council.....	3774
Kingaroy Rugby League Football Club.....	3775
Retrieval Services Queensland.....	3775
ATTENDANCE.....	3776

WEDNESDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2013



The Legislative Assembly met at 2.00 pm.

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

ASSENT TO BILLS

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to report that I have received from Her Excellency the Governor a letter in respect of assent to certain bills, the contents of which will be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*. I table the letter for the information of members.

The Honourable F. Simpson MP

Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

Parliament House

George Street

BRISBANE QLD 4000

I hereby acquaint the Legislative Assembly that the following Bills, having been passed by the Legislative Assembly and having been presented for the Royal Assent, were assented to in the name of Her Majesty The Queen on the date shown:

Date of assent: 29 October 2013

“A Bill for An Act to amend the Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008 for particular purposes”

“A Bill for An Act to amend the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000 for particular purposes, and to make consequential amendments of the Industrial Relations Act 1999 and other Acts as stated in schedule 1 for purposes related to those particular purposes, and to amend the TAFE Queensland Act 2013 for particular purposes”

“A Bill for An Act to amend the Nature Conservation Act 1992, the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 and the Vegetation Management Act 1999 for particular purposes”

“A Bill for An Act to amend particular Acts for matters relating to the liability of executive officers of corporations and to amend the Crime and Misconduct Act 2001 for particular purposes”

“A Bill for An Act to amend the Civil Liability Act 2003, the Motor Accident Insurance Act 1994, the Personal Injuries Proceedings Act 2002, the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 and the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Regulation 2003 for particular purposes and to make minor or consequential amendments of legislation as stated in schedules 1 and 2”

“A Bill for An Act to amend the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1945 for particular purposes”

These Bills are hereby transmitted to the Legislative Assembly, to be numbered and forwarded to the proper Officer for enrolment, in the manner required by law.

Yours sincerely

Governor

29 October 2013

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 29 October 2013, from Her Excellency the Governor to the Speaker advising of assent to bills on 29 October 2013 [[3902](#)].

TABLED PAPERS

MINISTERIAL PAPERS TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following ministerial papers were tabled by the Clerk—

Premier (Mr Newman)—

[3903](#) Overseas Travel Report: Report on an overseas visit by the Premier to the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, People's Republic of China and Japan, 15 September 2013 to 1 October 2013

[3904](#) Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee: Report No. 38—Review of the Auditor-General's Report to Parliament 13: 2012-13 Drink Safe Precincts Trial, government response

Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning (Mr Seeney)—

[3905](#) Report by the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning (Mr Seeney), pursuant to section 432 of the Sustainable Planning Act, in relation to the Ministerial Call In of a development application at Railway Terrace and Cribb Street, Milton—Annexure A

Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts (Mr Walker)—

[3906](#) Queensland State Archives—Annual Report 2012-13

[3907](#) Metadata Review Status Update—In response to the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee's Report into the Crime and Misconduct Commission's release and destruction of Fitzgerald Inquiry documents, Queensland State Archives, October 2013

REPORT TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following report was tabled by the Clerk—

[3908](#) Report pursuant to Standing Order 165 (Clerical errors or formal changes to any Bill) detailing amendments to certain Bills, made by the Clerk, prior to assent by Her Excellency the Governor, viz—

Directors' Liability Reform Amendment Bill 2012

Amendments made to Bill *

Short title and consequential references to short title—

Omit—

Directors' Liability Reform Amendment Act 2012

Insert—

Directors' Liability Reform Amendment Act 2013

Clause 7 (Replacement of s 115 (Executive officers must ensure corporation complies with Act))—

Page 25, line 16—

Omit—

- section 53(1).

Insert—

- section 53(1).¹

Clause 40 (Replacement of s 240A (Executive officers must ensure corporation complies with Act))—

Page 42, line 7—

Omit—

- section 89(1).¹

Insert—

- section 89(1).

Page 42, line 8—

Omit—

'executive officer

Insert—

executive officer

Clause 122 (Replacement of s 814 (Executive officers must ensure corporation complies with Act))—

Page 84, line 5—

Omit—

- section 813(2).¹

Insert—

- section 813(2).

* The page and line number references relate to the Bill, after amendments made in consideration in detail.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Member for Redcliffe




Hon. CKT NEWMAN (Ashgrove—LNP) (Premier) (2.01 pm): I was recently presented with 178 letters from constituents in the Redcliffe electorate expressing their concern at the lack of representation in parliament by their local member. I have made my views on this issue clear on several occasions. I take this opportunity today to again call on the member for Redcliffe to resign if he cannot or will not do his job.

For the benefit of members, these letters also acknowledge the work of the member for Murrumba, who is supporting Redcliffe constituents during the unacceptable and wanting performance of their elected member. Unfortunately, the petition is a non-conforming petition and does not meet parliamentary guidelines so it is not able to be formally lodged. However, given the significance of the issue and in support of the constituents of Redcliffe, I table the letters to place the concerns raised on the public record.

Tabled paper: Bundle of letters to the Premier regarding the Redcliffe electorate [\[3909\]](#).

Health Services

 **Hon. CKT NEWMAN** (Ashgrove—LNP) (Premier) (2.02 pm): After 20 years of Labor mismanagement, Queensland's essential services were run down and had lost focus. Our police did not have the resources or laws they needed to fight crime and keep communities safe. Our schools were being swamped with red tape and centralised bureaucracy. We had a health system that even former Premier Anna Bligh said had 'a sick administrative performance' and an 'unacceptable culture'. Queensland Health also came with an unsolved \$1.25 billion payroll debacle.

This can-do government was elected with a commitment to revitalise front-line services in Queensland. Since we were elected to government we have set about methodically repairing and rebuilding the Queensland health system. We have increased the Health budget by 11.6 per cent—that is over a billion dollars—and delivered an extra 40,000 specialist outpatient services in 2012-13. We doubled the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme. We established the Mums and Bubs initiative to help new mums at home, and we are bringing maternity services back to regional areas such as Emerald. We redirected ambulance bypass and we are tackling the dental waiting list, reducing it from 62,513 in February to 13,722 in September 2013.

We have also started a 12-month blitz on waiting lists for cochlear implants. We have \$327 million over four years to attack the maintenance backlogs in our hospitals and health services. We have reduced Queensland Health's bureaucracy and given control back to local communities through hospital and health boards. And we have managed to do all this while bringing Queensland Health back within budget for the first time in a decade.

Today Minister Springborg and I opened the new Gold Coast University Hospital. It will deliver a new level of improved health services.


Ms Palaszczuk: Who built it? Ten thousand jobs under Labor. Tell the truth.

Mr NEWMAN: I take the interjection from the Leader of the Opposition because today both the health minister and I acknowledged the decision of the Beattie and Bligh administrations to fund this hospital. This is more gentlemanly and statesmanlike than you will ever get from those opposite. I shall move on.

Importantly, it will house a number of new specialist services so that patients and their families will no longer have to travel to Brisbane. For example, radiotherapy cancer treatment will be available for the first time to public patients on the Gold Coast from December. This new hospital will be the catalyst for a whole new Gold Coast health precinct that will include a new private hospital as well.

Our Blueprint for Better Healthcare in Queensland sets out this government's plan to provide better front-line health services to all Queenslanders. It is about ensuring Queenslanders get the world-class, value-for-money front-line services they deserve. That is what we promised and that is what we are delivering.

Infrastructure Projects

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (2.06 pm): Our government is committed to developing the infrastructure our economy needs to grow in the future in a sensitive environment we are determined to always protect. In fact, our government has done more than any other to protect the Great Barrier Reef as we plan the export facilities that Queenslanders will need for the future.

Among our first decisions as a government was to put an end to Labor's massive expansion plans for the Port of Abbot Point. We brought an end to their plans for a multicargo facility which had proposals for 12 shipping berths and six new proposed coal terminal developments. That one decision eliminated the need to dredge 35 million cubic metres of seabed at Abbot Point. Instead, we

opted for a balanced incremental development—a sensible, balanced incremental development—that will require dredging of just three million cubic metres of seabed. That represents one-tenth of the dredging that was proposed by the Labor Party—one-tenth of the dredging that was proposed by a Labor government that was supported by the same green groups that are now criticising our proposals.

Similarly, with the Galilee Basin—the greenfield resource province that is vital to Queensland’s economic future—we overturned Labor’s haphazard management, which was prepared to countenance any and all mines developing their own rail infrastructure like a spaghetti jigsaw across that part of Queensland. To lessen impacts on landholders and, importantly, the environment, as a government we said that we would only support two rail corridors, where infrastructure must be shared.

Currently our draft Ports Strategy is out for public consultation. Its main thrust is to restrict future port development to Queensland’s five long-established major port precincts—exactly what UNESCO has been seeking and recommending. And soon we will be releasing the Great Barrier Reef coastal zone strategic assessment which, with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority’s assessment of the marine area, will provide for the first time an overall, comprehensive assessment of the reef’s value and how these values are being protected now and into the future. All of these actions are aimed at gathering the best information to inform the best science to make the best decisions to protect this natural wonder.


What is the comparison to the wild, unfounded, ill-informed claims made by the radical green movement that mining, ports and shipping are somehow killing the Great Barrier Reef—claims that always seem to get unwarranted attention from irresponsible media outlets? Protecting the Great Barrier Reef is not the goal of those radical greens; their real agenda is to close down the Queensland coal industry and close down the Queensland economy. That goal is outlined in this document called *Stopping the Australian Coal Export Boom*, and I table it for the benefit of members of the House.

Tabled paper: Document titled ‘Stopping the Australian Coal Export Boom: funding proposal for the Australian anti-coal movement’ [[3910](#)].

If any member of the House has any doubt about the real agenda of the green movement that is so strongly supported by members such as the member for South Brisbane, they should read that document. It is about shutting down the Queensland coal industry. It is not about protecting the Great Barrier Reef. Everybody supports protecting the Great Barrier Reef. Only one side of politics in Queensland supports the coal industry. That document outlines the strategies and funding needed to achieve that aim—closing the Queensland coal industry and putting so many Queenslanders out of work. So many Queenslanders represented by the member for Mackay would be unemployed if the strategies in that document were achieved. Many of these strategies are currently being put into effect—and the results can be seen nightly on the media reports—but they have possible grave consequences for our state and our nation.

The Great Barrier Reef is in fact one of the most protected natural wonders of the world. It is the best managed marine province in the world and will continue to be so under our government. It is not in imminent danger of total destruction as these green groups would have us believe, but it lies off our coast—off the coast of our state where we have to develop cities and mines and farms and ports. Stopping all of that development will condemn future generations of Queenslanders to a second-rate economy. Our government will not let that happen. Our government is committed to developing the infrastructure that we need for economic prosperity in a world-class environment that we will always protect.

Property and Construction Sectors

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade) (2.10 pm): The Newman government is building confidence in Queensland’s economy, and nowhere is confidence more important than in the property and construction sector. The latest Property Council-ANZ industry confidence survey paints a positive picture for the industry in Queensland. The survey of over 3,000 property and construction industry professionals saw Queensland jump 25 points in positive sentiment for the December quarter. Queensland is now tied with New South Wales atop the ladder, and I am sure it will not be long before we surpass the dreaded Blues.


Contrast that with the situation when the Labor Party was in government. In the three years to June 2010, residential building approvals declined by 2.6 per cent and by October 2011 building approvals had reached their lowest level in 10 years. Confidence was vanishing as the former Labor government taxed and regulated the industry into the doldrums. To put the significance of the industry into context, of the four pillars of the Queensland economy, property and construction is the largest employer and second only to the resources sector in terms of output. When property and construction is doing well, it has a major impact on growth in the economy and on jobs.

This can-do government understands how important the property and construction sector is. That is why upon coming to government we immediately reinstated the principal place of residence concession on transfer duty at a cost of over \$910 million. This means that for ordinary Queenslanders the cost of buying their own family home has dropped by up to \$7,175. We also introduced the Great Start Grant, the \$15,000 grant for first home buyers to stimulate activity by getting people into their new homes. I can announce that as at the end of September more than 3,000 grants had been taken up. Just as importantly, we have embarked on long-term reforms aimed at simplifying and streamlining the development process. We are delivering on our promises to cut red and green tape that stifles development while retaining the integrity of our planning and approvals system.

As the CEO of the Local Government Association of Queensland, Greg Hallam, said on ABC Radio yesterday, this is sensible, practical stuff—and it is showing real results. We have had 16 months of consecutive monthly increases in trend dwelling approvals. ABS figures show that employment in the property and construction industry increased by 12,000 jobs to the end of September compared to the same period a year ago. Lending data also showed that in August the value of finance commitments—a key indicator of investor confidence—was 6.1 per cent higher than a year earlier and non-residential construction in the year to the end of August was 28 per cent higher than the prior 12 months.

These are solid signs of improvement and are translating into the improvement in confidence being felt in the industry. The Property Council-ANZ survey shows optimism across a range of property types including residential, retail and, importantly, tourism here in Queensland. Respondents also gave the most positive government rating to this can-do Queensland government, and that is because the property and construction industry understands the can-do approach of this government is delivering real results for Queenslanders.

Gold Coast University Hospital


 **Hon. LJ SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—LNP) (Minister for Health) (2.14 pm): Today the Premier opened Australia's largest public hospital to serve the current and future needs of the people of the Gold Coast. At a cost of \$1.76 billion and with a 20-hectare site and 175,000 square metres of existing floor space, the Gold Coast University Hospital is a wonderful achievement. As I did earlier today, along with the Premier, I also acknowledge the contribution of previous Labor governments to this project. Today's celebrations marked the end of its construction and the successful completion of the largest planned hospital relocation project in Australia to date. At 8 am on 28 September, the doors of this brand-new hospital were opened to patients for the first time and the old Nerang Street facility at Southport was finally replaced as the city's major public hospital. This is a significant milestone for the people of the Gold Coast, their health service, the Gold Coast University Hospital project and Queensland.

To finally commission the Gold Coast University Hospital, a total of 219 patients were moved safely and efficiently in just two days and without the intervention of any unforeseen clinical events. This success arose from meticulous planning by the Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service and partnering with the local community, local and state government agencies and the managing contractors, Lend Lease. Full credit for the successful execution of the plan is shared by staff from across the Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service and those of its partner agencies. Indeed, it was absolutely pleasing to see health officials come to the decant and relocation of patients from the old site to the new site from as far away as Western Australia—they are planning a major decant as they move towards the new Fiona Stanley Hospital—and also officials from Queensland's children's health services and the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service. This went so exceptionally well that it exceeded expectations and they did not have to use all of the logistical backup that they had planned. Despite some out there saying that it would be a disaster, it went without a hitch and is an extraordinary credit to the planning of those who were involved in this amazing decant to a new facility.

In seven years \$12 billion has been spent on the Gold Coast to improve public health infrastructure in support of better local health services. The Gold Coast University Hospital shares the Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct with the co-located Griffith University. It is also the site of a new private hospital on which the Premier turned the first sod as part of official ceremonies this morning. In the field of health, this government is dedicated to the interests of patients who are at the centre of all we do. Staff at our Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service are justifiably proud of their achievements, having helped in the design of the new facility while at all times providing high-quality health care to the local community.

Already the Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service is working to advance its performance and the efficiency of service delivery on the new site, and it is achieving some amazing results. I congratulate the local hospital and health service board, its chair, Ian Langdon, and CE, Ron Calvert, for pioneering public-private partnerships to improve the range of services to benefit Gold Coast patients. Recently, an agreement with Radiation Oncology Queensland was announced for cancer radiation therapy services from this facility. One of five new services that will be delivered by the Gold Coast University Hospital, the agreement reflects the principle themes in the government's Blueprint for Better Healthcare in Queensland. Like all honourable members, I welcome this valuable new facility and look forward to watching the growth of the health precinct as it unfolds.

North Queensland, Tourism

 **Hon. JA STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games) (2.18 pm): The front pages of this morning's *Courier-Mail* and *Cairns Post* delivered great news for Queensland's tourism industry. After years of neglect by Labor, our proud tourism industry is rebounding as we return it to its rightful position as Australia's No. 1 tourism destination. Tropical North Queensland was the nation's best performing international destination last financial year. Research shows that one in five overseas visitors to Australia enjoyed the delights of tropical North Queensland during their stay. The international market is rediscovering its love for Queensland and her countless attributes. The sheer breathtaking beauty of the reef and our rainforest has made it a must-see destination for international visitors.


This government made the commitment to Queensland to prioritise tourism as one of the four pillars of the economy and restore the industry to its pre-eminent position. Today's news demonstrates that the Newman government's DestinationQ tourism policy is delivering for this key pillar of the Queensland economy. During 2012-13, Queensland saw an increase of six per cent in international visitors while international visitor expenditure increased by four per cent. These strong numbers have been spurred by growth in key markets including China, with a 24 per cent increase; the US, a 10 per cent increase; the UK, a seven per cent increase and Indonesia, a 32 per cent increase. Our friends up in tropical North Queensland experienced a bumper 2012-13, seeing an increase of 15 per cent in international visitors, an increase of 17 per cent in international holiday-makers and an increase of 12 per cent in international expenditure.

Honourable members, there is no one single Queensland tourism experience from Cairns to Coolangatta. Each region has something special that makes it unique. That is why this government has introduced a destination marketing approach, working with each region to emphasise their signature 'hero' experiences. Today's news shows that our approach is working. Almost one in two international holiday-makers are visiting Queensland and they are staying here longer than anywhere else. With the far-north tourism industry tipped to be worth \$4.4 billion by the year 2020, it is clear that to get Queensland back on track we need to tap into this economic potential. I congratulate Tourism Tropical North Queensland and its CEO, Rob Jason, for their work in leading the pack.

Although MPs representing North Queensland love to hear me continue to spruik the strength of the Cairns market, we must not forget that there is great news across other regions, such as my home, the Gold Coast. During 2012-13, the Gold Coast received a four per cent increase in international visitors while Brisbane saw a 10 per cent increase—a direct influence of this government's focus on attracting increased airline capacity to Queensland.

When the Newman government took office, the tourism industry told us that a new approach was needed. We set about implementing our DestinationQ plan to revitalise this sector. In responding to today's news, QTIC's Daniel Gschwind said it was obvious that Cairns had 'its mojo back'. I think it is safe to say that, under the Newman government, right across Queensland tourism has its mojo back.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Foundation


 **Hon. GW ELMES** (Noosa—LNP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs and Minister Assisting the Premier) (2.22 pm): Education and training are precursors to better job prospects and greater economic development opportunities. This is as true for Indigenous Queenslanders as it is for non-Indigenous Queenslanders. Having a job obviously means less reliance on welfare, but that is just part of the story. Of greater importance are the benefits of personal growth, family stability and community cohesion that come from people working and providing for their families. That goal underpins this government's commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. Welfare should be seen as emergency support to get back on one's feet, not a way of life that generation after generation becomes used to and comes to rely on. We want to break that cycle, as do many Indigenous leaders who condemn the insidious effect that welfare has had on their communities and their way of life. We want to give young Indigenous Queenslanders a chance to acquire the education and skills they need to compete equally for jobs in the mainstream workforce.

We also want to support Indigenous communities to generate jobs within their own communities through business development and entrepreneurship. An important way the government supports young Indigenous people to reach their potential is through the secondary scholarship program run by the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Foundation. Last week, I had the pleasure of attending a function to mark the latest graduation of QATSIF scholarship holders from year 12. The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who successfully complete year 12 and achieve the Queensland Certificate of Education is significantly lower than the proportion of non-Indigenous students. But the good news is that the number is increasing, as is the number of young Indigenous people going on to post-secondary study and training.

The completion of year 12 plays a major role in ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth are better able to access further education or training opportunities and a wider range of employment opportunities. Since the first QATSIF scholarships were awarded in 2009, the foundation has supported more than 2,400 young students throughout Queensland to achieve their Certificate of Education. Of course, that could not happen without the ongoing support of families, schools and communities.

I want to commend the foundation for providing opportunities that will assist not only current young scholars but also generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the future. The future for Indigenous Queenslanders is all the brighter for the role played by the foundation and for the determination of the young QATSIF scholars. I congratulate each and every one of them.

Litter and Illegal Dumping Action Plan

 **Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection) (2.25 pm): I am pleased to advise the House of the release of Queensland's first litter and illegal dumping action plan. Waste is everyone's responsibility. The choices we make every day as individuals in relation to our waste can have a dramatic impact on the environment. That holds true not only for recycling or trying to limit the generation of waste but also for littering and illegal dumping.

This action plan shows that the Newman government is serious about reducing litter across Queensland. We are committed to improving everyone's local environment the length and breadth of this state. Sadly, throwing a cigarette butt out of the car window, leaving behind tangled fishing line at the beach, depositing unwanted household goods outside a charity bin and dumping rubbish in bushland happens every day. These are all choices made by some individuals, yet all have a collective impact on the community, the environment and our economy. At the end of the day, we all pay to remove litter and illegal dumping from our urban and natural environments.


On Labor's watch, Queensland became the most littered mainland state. But the previous Labor government ignored calls for a campaign to reverse that trend. Instead, in true Labor form, it had a different way of handling it. You guessed it: a new tax. And guess what? That led to even more illegal dumping and littering. That was evident when earlier in the year I participated in the Clean Up Australia Day event held within my own electorate at HQPlantations at Beerburrum. I was shocked to see the amount of material that was being dumped in that forest. Approximately 26 tonnes of dumped material was removed from the forest in just half a day. It is a habit that we need to break.

The Newman government is a government that is determined to tackle these hard issues. We are a government that is committed to action, not rhetoric. This action plan is not just about strengthening our compliance activity and fining people for littering and illegal dumping; rather, it aims to prevent unacceptable behaviour occurring in the first place. The action plan has five key programs to address these issues: compliance, hot spots, education and awareness raising, data research and mapping, and capacity building of local governments and land managers. Funding of \$5.6 million has been committed over four years with some actions already being implemented, including the first round of equipment grants to assist local governments to purchase surveillance cameras; the training and resources for local governments to improve their investigation skills; piloting a hot spot program, incredibly successfully, with HQPlantations; community education partnerships with leading community groups such as Keep Queensland Beautiful, the Garage Sale Trail and Healthy Waterways; and making the reporting of litter and illegal dumping easier with the release of a mobile phone reporting app.

Rubbish dumped in our streets, at the local reserve or in the local creek is unacceptable. Encouraging more people to express community pride and take action to influence the few who damage our open spaces will be key to this plan. I look forward to announcing further successes of this action plan in the future.

MOTION

Referral to the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Leader of the House) (2.28 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That, the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee investigate and report on options to incentivise the agricultural and livestock industry to utilise rail.

That, in undertaking this inquiry, the committee should—

- identify opportunities to enhance coordination and collaboration across government, transport industry and primary producers about rail freight;
- provide future direction for enhancing the utilisation of the rail system for primary producers and their freight needs including the demand for freight, including future volume, nature, timing and frequency;
- identify the characteristics of the future transport system for primary producer freight needs;
- identify a broad range of options, including appropriate risk sharing amongst supply chain participants, for delivering freight solutions for primary producers;
- optimise the capacity and performance of the rail system for freight;
- plan a rail system that is positioned to exploit future freight, particularly export, opportunities; and
- develop sustainable long-term solutions for freight movement by rail for the agriculture and livestock industry.

Further, that the committee consult with key industry groups including AgForce, Queensland Farmers' Federation, Cane Growers Australia, Meat and Livestock Australia, GrainCorp, Cotton Australia and rail managers and operators including Queensland Rail, Aurizon and Pacific National.

Further, that the committee report to the parliament by 10 June 2014.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Auditor-General's Reports, Referral to Portfolio Committees

Mr STEVENS (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Leader of the House) (2.30 pm): I advise that the Committee of the Legislative Assembly has resolved, pursuant to standing order 194B, that the Auditor-General's report to parliament No. 3 of 2013-14: *Follow up—Acquisition and public access to the Museum, Art Gallery and Library collections*, tabled on 29 October 2013, be referred to the Education and Innovation Committee for consideration; and the Auditor-General's report to parliament No. 4 of 2013-14: *Follow up—Management of offenders subject to supervision in the community*, tabled on 29 October 2013, be referred to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee for consideration.

AGRICULTURE, RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Report

Mr RICKUSS (Lockyer—LNP) (2.31 pm): I lay upon the table of the House report No. 29 of the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee. This report covers the subordinate legislation tabled between 5 June to 20 August 2013 considered by the committee. The subordinate legislation has disallowance dates of 31 October and 21 November 2013.


Tabled paper: Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee: Report No. 29, Subordinate legislation tabled between 5 June 2013 and 20 August 2013 [3911].

The committee did not identify any significant issues regarding consistency with fundamental legislative principles or the lawfulness of the subordinate legislation. I commend the report and the committee's recommendation to the House.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Madam SPEAKER: Question time will go to 3.31 pm.

Separation of Powers

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (2.32 pm): My question is to the Premier. Does the Premier support the principle of the independence of the judiciary in Queensland?

Mr NEWMAN: I definitely do. I would like to talk about the matter in a bit more broader context this afternoon because I think it is important that some of the things that I have said are put on the record in this place. At the LGAQ conference on 23 October I said this—

We as a government we do everything we can to protect Queenslanders from criminal thugs, from paedophiles and sex offenders. What we need now is for the judiciary, those who run the court system, the insiders, to actually realise that's what Queenslanders want as well and they need to have a look at how they're operating and make sure they protect Queenslanders.

Subsequently in an interview with 4BC on 24 October I said this—

I mean, judges and magistrates don't actually have to go for re-election. They're there, appointed, they have tenure. They are there until the retiring age and I can't influence them and I don't try to influence them.

What I am saying to them though collectively—and some of them get it and some of them don't—is please listen to Queenslanders. It is interesting today because the Leader of the Opposition made a statement, and I understand the sense of it as this: that it is not for the government of the day to attack judges. That is very interesting. So I thought I would have a little look at the history of this. Yesterday I showed this article where it says—

Bligh slams judges as being out of touch.

Tabled paper: Extract of article in the *Sunday Mail*, dated 17 April 2011, titled 'Bligh slams judges as "out of touch"' [3912].

I will move on to July 2007. An article in the *Australian* stated—

Minister Judy Spence yesterday expressed frustration that the courts were being lenient towards sex offenders

...

Ms Spence said she believed the court held a different view about allowing sex offenders into the community from the general public.

What did Peter Beattie say? He said—

Paedophiles are in a different category. Many of them are incurable.

I just say to everybody, whether it is police, courts, government or whatever, we have to be tougher when it comes to paedophiles.

It is very interesting. There was another case in 2006 in the *Courier-Mail*. What did Peter Beattie say then? Mr Beattie said more pressure should be placed on judges to hand down harsher sentences to dangerous criminals. But there is more. What did Prime Minister Kevin Rudd say in December 2007? In relation to a judgement and referring to a judge, the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said he was horrified by her decision. He said—

I'm disgusted and appalled by the reports that I've seen in today's newspapers on this case,

But the final bit is very interesting. This is 30 January 2005—

A jailed sex predator will be set free tomorrow in a bureaucratic blunder that has the state government and a senior judge arguing over who's to blame.

It is about Justice George Fryberg. What did Attorney Rod Welford say? He blasted Judge Fryberg's decision as nonsensical and said he would consider changing the law to prevent such an incident happening again. How interesting.

Honourable members interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order, members! Before I call the Leader of the Opposition I am listening very intently as I am aware that there are some current issues that are before the courts. I also remind members of the parliamentary convention in respect of not referring specifically to judicial officers. I appreciate some matters may be being quoted, but members are to be aware the convention of the parliament is we do not refer to specific judicial officers, their character and their decisions. I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Separation of Powers

Ms PALASZCZUK: My question is to the Premier. I want to talk specifically about your comments, Premier, that you have made recently. I ask: does the Premier acknowledge that his comments in relation to the courts, specifically 'that the courts start realising what the community wants and act accordingly', have the potential to undermine the judicial system here in this state?

Mr NEWMAN: Well, well, Madam Speaker, once again they are like lemmings driving over the cliff. I have read my comments back into the record today and I have then demonstrated that Peter Beattie had had a tougher go at the judges, that Judy Spence had had a bigger go at judges, that Anna Bligh had had a bigger go at judges, that Peter Beattie had had a bigger go at judges, that the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia had had a bigger go at judges. My comments are reflecting what the people of Queensland are saying and thinking. My comments are backed by Queenslanders who want the judiciary to listen to them. That is what we are asking them to do.

I have not commented on any specific case whatsoever. I have commented on what the community is saying and what the community expect and I have demonstrated today that members of the Australian Labor Party in senior positions—colleagues of the current Leader of the Opposition—made specific, derogatory, direct, personal attacks on judges. How dare the Leader of the Opposition come in here with this hypocrisy. How dare this Leader of the Opposition who has no position on anything come in here today and say those things. How dare this Leader of the Opposition go and do a press conference and have the gall to say that governments should not criticise judges because she has sat there and allowed that to happen.

May I return to something said yesterday about the separation of powers. It was interesting. I should have recalled it at the time. It was the member for Bundamba who asked the question of me. The member for Bundamba was here in this place on another occasion and what had happened? This is what had happened: the DPP had recommended the prosecution of one Gordon Nuttall. That is what had happened. The independent statutory organisation within government that prosecutes criminals had recommended that Gordon Nuttall be prosecuted. That is what happened first. Honourable members, what happened next? That is right, the member for Bundamba and her colleagues came in this place and changed the law to circumvent a criminal prosecution against Gordon Nuttall. That shows not only a lack of understanding about the separation of powers but also a complete contempt for the separation of powers. It shows a wilful desire to protect criminality, as we have seen. It shows that the Labor Party has no standards, no integrity, and we saw that again from the Leader of the Opposition's questions and her efforts outside in a press conference before. Hang your heads in shame—through you, Madam Speaker—because you have no credibility.

Toowoomba, Community Cabinet

Mr WATTS: My question without notice is to the Premier. Can the Premier please advise the House about the upcoming community cabinet to be held in the beautiful garden city of Toowoomba and how it will benefit my region?

Mr NEWMAN: I thank the honourable member for Toowoomba North for his question. I agree totally: what a beautiful and lovely city is the City of Toowoomba. On many occasions in the past, I spent many long hours there working at Grainco Australia. Our headquarters were at 693A Ruthven Street, Toowoomba. I have stayed many times at the Burke & Wills Hotel. We will be there on 24 and 25 November. It will be a great opportunity for locals from Toowoomba and the Darling Downs to talk to the government about issues of concern.

We think that the future of the Darling Downs and Toowoomba is bright. It is incredibly fertile farmland. There are other great aspects to the economy in Toowoomba and, of course, the coal seam gas export industry is critically important. However, we acknowledge that there are pressures on services and infrastructure right now. We are easing those pressures with the Royalties for the Regions program with \$10 million injected into an upgrade of the O'Mara Road and Warrego Highway intersection. That will help with increased traffic through the Charlton Wellcamp Enterprise Area. There is also pressure on lifestyle services. I am proud to say that the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service is already delivering more surgery and shorter waiting times for local residents. Labor had 20 years to deal with those problems, but it did not work hard enough. This is a can-do government that is working hard to fix up those services in regional areas.

In the first year, the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service, led by Chairman Mike Horan, has met national standards for emergency department and urgent and semi-urgent waiting times at Toowoomba Hospital, and they have overseen the opening of the new adolescent mental health unit and cancer centre for the region. Mike Horan was a great health minister, so was there ever any doubt? I happen to think we have an even greater health minister here, no offence to Mike. It was clear that Mike Horan and his team would do a great job in Toowoomba.

We value regional areas such as Toowoomba and the western and inner Darling Downs. We are looking forward to the community cabinet in Toowoomba. We are looking forward to having discussions to work out how we can better serve the people of the area. I thank Minister John McVeigh, the member for Toowoomba South, and Trevor Watts, the member for Toowoomba North, who are strong advocates for the area. I thank them for helping with the community cabinet, for getting the invitations out and for inviting us to Toowoomba in the first place. We are looking forward to the weekend and Monday. We are looking forward to seeing how we can better serve the people of Toowoomba and surrounding areas.

Ergon Energy

Mr PITT: My question without notice is to the Premier. I refer to a recent Ergon Energy teleconference regarding the restructuring of regional depots, when it is alleged that a senior manager falsely claimed the support of a recently deceased worker in an attempt to speed up the consultation process, a process likely to lead to the loss of regional jobs and services. I ask: will the Premier take action to ensure that this unacceptable behaviour never happens again?

Mr STEVENS: I rise to a point of order. That is a hypothetical question. It is a reported speech that he wants the Premier to answer to. I rise under standing order 115.

Madam SPEAKER: The question that I heard was referring to a specific matter and asking for action. The Premier is able to answer it as he sees fit.

Mr NEWMAN: I would ask that the honourable member repeat the question.

Madam SPEAKER: I ask the member to repeat the question. Thank you, Manager of Opposition Business.

Mr PITT: I will repeat the question for the Premier. I refer to a recent Ergon Energy teleconference regarding the restructuring of regional depots, when it is alleged a senior manager falsely claimed the support of a recently deceased worker in an effort to speed up the consultation process, a process likely to lead to the loss of regional jobs and services. I ask: will the Premier take action to ensure that this unacceptable behaviour never happens again?

Honourable members interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order, members! I call the Premier. The Premier is able to answer the question as he sees fit.

Mr NEWMAN: What an extraordinary question about an alleged teleconference and alleged comments in a teleconference. There are no minutes. Where are the minutes of the meeting? Where is the documentation? Where is the tape? Where is the transcript? Come on! What rubbish we see from the most well-resourced but inept opposition in our nation! They each have three members of staff. Young people were in the gallery before and it is a pity that they are not here now to see an opposition that is so inept. They have three members of staff for every one of them. There are three members of staff to prop each one up. When we were at school we used to cross our hands and lift up people and then race. They have enough people to carry them into and out of parliament and to carry them out to press conferences. There are two people to carry them and the other one can fan them to keep the sweat off their brow.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr NEWMAN: I take the interjections. I will take these things seriously when they start operating professionally, like an opposition. I will treat them seriously and with respect when they show they are worthy of it.

Mr PITT: What a disgrace!

Honourable members interjected.

Mr NEWMAN: No, Madam Speaker. I take that interjection.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! I ask for the clock to be paused. There are too many interjections across the chamber. I appreciate there is an exchange occurring on my left and my right and that people are responding to that, but it is getting out of hand. I call the Premier.

Mr NEWMAN: I would be delighted to respond to their question if they could provide details of the date, the time, some of the participants, a transcript, some minutes, some sort of record, a memo referring to it, a fax, an email. Where is that?

Mr Nicholls: We call that evidence.

Mr NEWMAN: Yes. Where is it? If the member wants an answer and can provide more details, I will be delighted to get it. If he could provide a written—

Mr Pitt interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! I now warn the Manager of Opposition Business under standing order 253A. I remind members that when people have personal exchanges I understand that there will be responses and that flows both ways. However, I am listening to the Premier answering the question. I call the Premier.

Mr NEWMAN: I would be delighted if they want to put it on notice or ask a question later in this question time with some detail. I would like to refer to that interjection about 'a disgrace'. What is a disgrace is what we saw from the Leader of the Opposition in two questions. We saw a lemming-like disgrace when, once again, she has asked questions and today I have delivered a complete and total rebuttal. I have demonstrated that Peter Beattie, Anna Bligh, Rod Welford and Kevin Rudd have all been very pointed and very critical of specific judicial decisions and specific cases, and it shows that the Leader of the Opposition has no credibility and neither do the six others who sit in this House. That is the definition of 'disgrace'.

Darling Downs and Central Queensland Regional Plans

Mr SORENSEN: My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning. Can the Deputy Premier please update the House on the Darling Downs and Central Queensland regional plans?

Mr SEENEY: I thank the member for Hervey Bay for the question, which is a good question about an important issue. It follows what I would have to say is the stupidest question I have heard asked in 15 years in this House, asked by the member for Mulgrave. I thank the member for Hervey Bay for the question.

Mr PITT: I rise to a point of order.

Madam SPEAKER: Please take your seat, Deputy Premier. Pause the clock.

Mr PITT: Having asked a question about a sensitive issue, I take personal offence at that and ask for it to be withdrawn.

Madam SPEAKER: I ask the Deputy Premier to withdraw.

Mr SEENEY: Madam Speaker, my comment was about the question; it was not about the member. This business of asking for withdrawals is—

Madam SPEAKER: Please take your seat! I warn the Deputy Premier under standing order 253A. For the good order of this House I say to members on both sides of the House that there have been too many personal reflections that lower the tone of this House and affect the standing of this parliament. I also remind members that it is easier for the chair to provide them with protection when they do not engage in exchanging personal reflections upon those in the chamber. I call the Deputy Premier to continue answering the question, but firstly I ask you to withdraw.

Mr SEENEY: I withdraw. I will start again. I thank the member for Hervey Bay for the question because it follows what I believe was the most stupid question I have heard asked in this parliament in 15 years. The member for Hervey Bay has asked a question about statutory regional planning.

Statutory regional planning was a commitment that we gave to the people of Queensland from opposition. We promised the people of Queensland that we would introduce statutory regional plans to resolve the land use conflicts that had beset areas such as the Darling Downs and Central Queensland under the inept administration of the previous Labor government.

Friday, 17 October was the culmination of 18 months of effort—18 months of effort from a range of people representing a range of different stakeholders and interest groups across the Darling Downs and Central Queensland. On Friday, 17 October the regional plans for the Darling Downs and Central Queensland were gazetted. I table a copy of those for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper: Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning: Darling Downs Regional Plan, October 2013 [\[3913\]](#).

Tabled paper: Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning: Central Queensland Regional Plan, October 2013 [\[3914\]](#).

Queensland has had regional plans before, but these are the first regional plans which address those land use conflict issues that were not just causing angst and aggravation in the community but were threatening the development of two of the major industries that underwrite our economy—the agriculture and resources industries. The statutory regional plans have been a terrific example of consultation and cooperation between people holding differing views, to come to a situation where we now have a way forward. We have agreement on areas that are classified as priority agricultural areas, where agricultural land uses will be protected. They will be protected forever from constraints and from dislocation from other land uses. We have priority living areas defined in those plans—that is, where living areas will be protected from the creep of resource industry intervention.

It has been a crusade for me to oversee the implementation of these statutory regional plans. They are the first two of what will be a series of such plans rolled out across Queensland to clean up the mess left by the previous Labor government and to resolve the conflict between those two major industries that should never have occurred in the first place had a government been in place that was able to administer the situation properly.

North Stradbroke Island, Sandmining

Ms TRAD: My question without notice is to the Premier. I refer to revelations this morning from the Sibelco CEO that he has met directly with the Premier on one or two occasions, and I ask: will the Premier advise whether electoral—

Madam SPEAKER: I will ask the member to start her question again. My concern was that if there were matters given in private evidence before a committee she not refer to them. I also remind the member that if her question is referring to matters pertaining to a bill before the House she not anticipate debate. I call the member to repeat the question.

Ms TRAD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. If I can finish my question, you will see that it is not. So I will start again.

Madam SPEAKER: Member, that could be interpreted as a reflection on the chair. I ask you to please understand that I was giving you the courtesy of seeking advice. I would ask you to apologise.

Ms TRAD: I apologise, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you and please repeat the question.

Ms TRAD: I refer to revelations this morning from the Sibelco CEO that he has met directly with the Premier on one or two occasions, and I ask: will the Premier advise whether electoral support provided by Sibelco to the 2012 campaign in Ashgrove was ever discussed at these meetings?

Mr NEWMAN: I am delighted to answer the question. I have a few thoughts about it, but I need to provide some background. That is that it was a longstanding position of the LNP that mining should be allowed to continue. I table, for example, a press release from Dr Mark Robinson dated 22 April 2011.

Tabled paper: Media release, dated 22 April 2011, by Dr Mark Robinson MP, titled 'Bligh Withers under Stradbroke Island heat' [\[3915\]](#).

I can tell members right now that I had never met Sibelco in those days. This was when the former Premier went for holidays—everyone recalls this—on Straddie. Local—

Ms Trad: You go to Canberra.

Government members interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Members! I call the Premier.

Mr NEWMAN: That was an interesting interjection. That says more about the character or the lack of character of the member who said it. I table this press release titled 'Bligh Withers under Stradbroke Island heat'. I know the member for South Brisbane has that special friend the former member for South Brisbane. Remember how the former Premier got heat because she had announced that mining would end. Back then we were saying that we did not agree with that decision. I will table another one—

Ms Trad: He's not answering.

Mr PITT: I rise to a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: Pause the clock! What is your point of order?

Mr PITT: With a little bit of latitude the question related to meetings the Premier may have had with a firm, it was not to do with—

Madam SPEAKER: Your point of order?

Mr PITT:—a bill that is before the House. Currently, I think the Premier is treading into anticipating that bill.

Madam SPEAKER: Premier, I ask you to address the question and to take care in respect of the bill before the House.

Mr NEWMAN: I am most definitely answering the question. I will table another document titled 'Straddy sandmine stoush' by Tony Moore dated 14 April 2011.

Tabled paper: Media article, dated 14 April 2011, titled 'Straddy sandmine stoush' [\[3916\]](#).

It reads—

Mr Newman said the LNP supports the ending of sand mining on North Stradbroke Island, but promised a more consultative approach.

Mr Newman said he was shocked at the decision to end mine leases without properly consulting the mining company.

"People in industry are looking aghast in an appalled manner saying will they rip aside my—

Ms TRAD: I rise to a point of order, Madam Speaker. The Premier is anticipating debate on the bill. He is not answering the question.

Madam SPEAKER: Please take your seat. I am ruling that point of order out. I do stress that care needs to be taken because there is a bill before the House on this subject. There has also been some degree of latitude in respect of the question that was asked. I ask the Premier to conclude his answer with respect to the question.

Mr NEWMAN: Madam Speaker, it is difficult when they keep interpreting. It continues—

"People in industry are looking aghast in an appalled manner saying will they rip aside my property rights tomorrow, my mining rights, my approvals"

The point is that our position was clear. We said we did not support the decision and that was made perfectly clear. I cannot even recall when I met the head of Sibelco, but I simply told him what was in the public domain, that we had made that decision. If he chose to support my election campaign, it was all declared and properly done. It is also their opportunity, just like unions—just like the member for South Brisbane poured union members' money into the Ashgrove campaign.

But what happened on Stradbroke island? These are the votes in the booths: at Amity Point, the vote went from 41 per cent in 2009 to 67.2 per cent for Mark Robinson in 2012; Dunwich went from 31 per cent to 58 per cent; and Point Lookout went from 29 per cent to 55.6 per cent. The people of Straddie spoke loudly.

Business Investment

Mr MINNIKIN: My question without notice is to the Treasurer and Minister for Trade. Can the Treasurer please update the House on why businesses continue to invest, employ and grow in Queensland and if there are any alternative views?

Mr NICHOLLS: I thank the member for Chatsworth for his question, a member who is vitally interested in what is happening with the economy here and particularly with small business and, in reference to my ministerial statement, is also interested in the property and construction sector. So it is indeed a pleasure to get a question of relevance to the state of Queensland's economy from the member for Chatsworth, because the question goes to the heart of our pledge to Queenslanders, part of our contract with Queenslanders, to build a stronger four-pillar economy.

The most recent economic data illustrates that this can-do government and its policies are delivering for Queensland and having a real impact. By 2014-15, Queensland will have the fastest growing economy of any state in Australia. We are leading the way in business investment. That is not us saying that; that is CommSec's State of the States report, showing that we are out in front on business investment with a 37 per cent increase on the decade-long average.

But the member also asked whether there were any alternative views. Of course, members will recall that I am keen to see if there are alternative views. I am very broad minded. I look around to see if there are other alternatives to the right one that I put forward, and I also often look across at those opposite to see if there is anything that they put forward. I am conscious, however, that the shadow Treasurer in his statement to ABC earlier this year said, 'I'm not going to take any suggestions that the LNP government is doing one thing and that we should have to provide an alternative.' So we have a so-called alternative government who actually do not believe they need to provide an alternative anyway. So I thought I would have a look around and see if there were any alternatives or anything that the opposition was saying in relation to the economy, because we know that our campaign to invest, employ and grow is taking effect.

For those who are unaware, I table a series of advertisements that have been placed in papers.

Tabled paper: Various Queensland government advertisements regarding business growth featuring Noel Robinson, Kees Weel, and Neil O'Sullivan [\[3917\]](#).

There is the big one there with all the correct figures on it. We have Neil O'Sullivan from NOJA Power—the Premier and I visited NOJA Power—a real person behind a real program. We have Kees Weel, whom I visited last week, from PWR Performance Products—another real person with a real business exporting to the world. And we have Noel Robinson, CEO of Noel Robinson Architects—another real person who is out there telling the true story. I do contrast that, of course, with the Labor Party who at their most recent federal election used paid actors. I think one of them was the actress Susannah Hardy. She played a concerned mum. However, she was not filmed in her own house. The kids were not hers and she is married to a lawyer, and she was living with her parents while their Paddington house in Sydney was being rebuilt. There was also the fake law lecturer who played the concerned health worker, telling us all about the—

Madam SPEAKER: The Treasurer's time has expired.

Mr NICHOLLS: I have run out of time, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: You have indeed. Please take your seat.

(Time expired)

National Parks, Cattle Grazing

Mr HOPPER: My question is to the Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing. Can the minister explain why cattle graziers making use of national parks for emergency fodder to keep their cattle alive will not be offered a two- to three-month extension in the absence of any rain before 31 December?

Mr DICKSON: The Newman government takes the drought that is affecting Queensland very seriously, as we did some months ago when we did open up five of our national parks for grazing purposes. Remember that these national parks had been used for cattle grazing in the past. But we did draw a line in the sand as at 31 December this year. That is when it would come to an end. Remember that we have 400,000 hectares of reserve opened up for cattle grazing and that will still continue to be used. But let us look at the overall problem and how we got to where we are today.

There were two geniuses in Australia—one was called Bob Katter and the other one was called Joe Ludwig. What they did was destroy the cattle export industry in this country, with the great help of Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard. They kept the Labor Party in power at a federal government level and they kept them there until they were defeated soundly by Tony Abbott and the coalition. What we can guarantee now is a bright future in this country. What we have done in Queensland is the right thing—looking after the cattle industry, and I know it extremely well. Bob Katter was not the only one born on

the land. My family was forced off the land in 1968. We know what it is like to be affected. We are graziers as well and we care for that industry—not like Bob Katter. All he cares about is his self-image and looking after Labor. He may as well join the Labor Party. That is the sort of bloke Bob Katter is.

We believe in assisting the cattle industry and we will continue to do that from now in perpetuity, as we will look after all of our national parks. That is what we are about. Unlike those opposite, we have gone to a lot of trouble. We have just rewritten the Nature Conservation Act so we can actually care and maintain and look after those areas, to cut the red tape, to cut the green tape, to do what Labor did not do. They might not be aware but our national parks and forests have been devastated for a long time under the Labor government. They did not care for them. They did not maintain them. What we are doing is actually getting money together so that we can look after and care for our national parks. That is what we are about on this side of the House.

There is not one member of the LNP who would not be greener than that whole lot over there and that lot up the back. We want to do the right thing by the people of Queensland. We are a grown-up government who will deliver great outcomes, who will build a great foundation, who will deliver jobs in this state. That is what our government is all about. We are about delivering on behalf of all Queenslanders, not just Labor mates. That is what that lot did and that is what Bob Katter did—delivered for Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard. May the big white hat fit the wearer.

Madam SPEAKER: I call the member for Nanango.

Mr Hopper interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Condamine under standing order 253A. I was speaking and I remind members that when the chair is speaking you don't. I call the member for Nanango.

Hospitals

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. Minister, are you aware of what efforts the Labor Party is desperately stooping to find just one person to back its false claims about our hospitals?

Mr SPRINGBORG: I can assure the honourable member that I am. It really does follow a long line of low stooping from those members opposite because they have been stooping low for a very long time. If it is not factual then they will make it up, and they are very, very good at making it up. We heard from the honourable member for Mulgrave earlier on that he is prepared to talk about rumour and innuendo and supposition as the basis for a question.

But one thing my attention was drawn to was a flyer which was sent out by the Sunshine Coast branch of the Labor Party—that would be an outback branch for them, I would imagine, an outback branch of the Labor Party—which indicates that the Labor Party luminary Jo-Ann Miller will be attending an emergency meeting up there on the weekend to 'talk about the Maleny Soldiers Memorial Hospital'. It says—

This public hospital has been a significant asset for the hinterland community, servicing the residents of the Maleny district for almost 100 years. Now negative rumours abound that the future of this integral hinterland facility is under threat.

Did they actually manage to find one single local to back this up? No, they did not. Did they actually manage to find a union hack to back this up? Well they could not find one of those either because even they have some degree of integrity when it comes to these sorts of rumours. So what they have done is turn to one of their own employees—a Mr Greg Fowler, who actually works in the opposition office for four days a week. He is considered the luminary! But he is not billed as a Labor Party employee. He was probably told under a sanction of sacking to turn up there. He is actually billed as a 'Lecturer of Health Systems and Policy at the University of Queensland' which he does one day a week and he works for the honourable member for Bundamba under sufferance for the other four days of the week.

Honourable members interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members!

Mr SPRINGBORG: He is a lecturer for one day a week and he works for the opposition for the other four days. We see an opposition that has gone from an outsourced model to an insourced model to a partially outsourced model but more of an insourced model when it comes to the validation of their particular rumours. The other thing I would like to do to assist the honourable member for Bundamba is table pages 17 and 18 from the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Services plan.

Tabled paper: Statistics regarding Maleny Soldiers Memorial Hospital [\[3918\]](#).

The plan states that it intends to expand services at the Maleny Soldiers War Memorial Hospital, increasing medication services from category 2 to 3, increasing rehabilitation services from category 2 to 3 and increasing palliative care services as well.

(Time expired)

Honourable members interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! I am waiting for silence.

National Parks, Cattle Grazing

Mr KATTER: My question without notice is to the Premier. The estimated 25,000 head of cattle in national parks for emergency fodder may be either in too poor condition or in calf and therefore unable to move in midsummer conditions and therefore likely to perish if forced to move. Given the dire nature of this situation for both animals and their owners, is the Premier willing to step in and make an extension available for these desperate people in the absence of any rain prior to the 31 December cut-off?

Mr NEWMAN: I think the honourable member should have listened to the answer given earlier by the Minister for National Parks. He should have also listened to the minister's statement. I urge him to do his homework before he comes into this place because we have provided an explanation. I, therefore, need to spend some time on what caused this crisis. Frankly, the honourable member's father was a key person who created this crisis. That is right: he created the crisis and we have done a lot of things to try to help people on the land.

Mr Hopper: He is asking you to step in.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Premier, take your seat. I have already warned the member for Condamine. I now ask you to leave the chamber under standing order 253A for one hour.

Whereupon the honourable member for Condamine withdrew from the chamber at 3.12 pm.

Mr NEWMAN: Madam Speaker, the questions have been answered and made crystal clear. The crisis in no small part is due to either the actions or the lack of actions of the federal member for Kennedy, who talks big, can always tell you the problem but can never give you an answer. We are into answers. We are into can-do. That is why the cattle got there in the first place. How much backing did we get from the Katter party in South-East Queensland? How much advocacy did we see with environmental groups and the National Parks Association, which, frankly, had quite a go at us? Not much; I venture to suggest zilch. If I am wrong, wheel it into the chamber and I will apologise to the honourable member. They did nothing. There was no advocacy whatsoever.

We have been very clear that this is an emergency measure. But we said that we were not going to hurt these national parks which had been grazing properties. I am surprised the honourable member who comes off the land would even ask. The cattle have been there for some months. The drought conditions have continued. The cattle have eaten the feed. It is getting down to a point where if we go further after 31 December the advice is we will damage these national parks, and we said at the beginning we would not do that. I am sorry for the people concerned but that was always the deal. A deal is a deal is a deal. Maybe in future the honourable member will stand up and be counted in public debate on these issues. He can stand up and be part of explaining why the people on the land needed that support. He said nothing. Maybe the honourable member for once will come in here and explain what the Katter party was thinking in terms of its silent inaction on live-cattle exports. They held the balance of power—

Mr KATTER: I rise to a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. Member for Mount Isa, what is your point of order?

Mr KATTER: Those comments are untrue. I find them offensive and I ask them to be withdrawn.

Mr STEVENS: In speaking to the point of order, Madam Speaker, there was no personal reflection; it was the Katter party—

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Please take your seat. I did not hear any personal reflection and I rule that point of order out. I call the Premier.

Mr NEWMAN: They need to come into this place and explain one day why they did not use their leverage in the time of the divided federal parliament to stop the mad federal government decision and the sell-out by Senator Joe Ludwig of the hardworking men and women on the land. The

Katter party are sell-out people. They are shonks. They are shysters. That is why they were pummelled in the federal election recently. He is all hat and not a lot of head. That is what the bloke is—all hat and not a lot of head. He is a fraud, and it is about time he left the federal parliament and let a decent, honest person like Noeline Ikin represent the people of Kennedy.

Floods, Recovery Assistance

Mr COX: My question without notice is to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. Can the minister please outline to the House how this Newman government is getting on with flood recovery works so our regions can get back on their feet?

Mr EMERSON: I thank the member for the question. I know the member is very much committed to getting on with the flood recovery, as are all LNP members. Since we came to office and have had to deal with the disaster of Oswald, I am pleased to say that we have fast-tracked this work, in marked contrast to what happened in 2011. About \$900 million of damage was done to our road system from the impact of Oswald, but I am pleased to say that we are past the halfway mark in terms of construction, contracts out there or completion of projects. That has been a great result. There is more to be done. About 5,000 kilometres of our state roads system was impacted by Oswald, but we are getting on with that job.

Some projects were completed very early—for example, as my colleague the member for Bundaberg and police minister would know, the Don Tallon Bridge. An important link for that community was completed quickly and well ahead of schedule when talking to Mal Forman in those very dark days after Oswald. With regard to other projects like the Neerkol bridge, work on the Peninsula Development Road and other work across the state, we have got on with the completion of that work. While completing those jobs due to the impact of Oswald, we have continued with other road projects, especially the election promises we made.

It was very pleasing the other week to join colleagues in Townsville including the member for Thuringowa, the member for Townsville, the Minister for Local Government and the Minister for Natural Resources at Blakeys Crossing. For those who do not know enough about Blakeys Crossing, this is a road that is notorious in Townsville. It does not take much rain at all to see it closed and, when it closes, it closes for weeks after weeks after weeks, paralysing the city. The reality is this problem has been known about for years and years, and it was significant. The former main roads minister came from Townsville and did nothing about it. It took members like the hardworking member for Thuringowa, the hardworking member for Townsville and my colleague the Minister for Local Government to make sure this project was achieved. It was a great pleasure to join them in turning the first sod on this project. We expect this project to be completed by the end of next year. Mayor Jenny Hill, who joined us at the turning of the sod, understands how important this project is for the community. Again, it took an LNP government to do it. Despite the ALP having had a Labor main roads minister from that town, they ignored the problem like they ignored so many problems across the state.

Noosa on Weyba, Development Application

Mr WELLINGTON: My question is to the Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience. I understand the developer behind the Noosa on Weyba development proposal wants the state government to decide the future of this application, and I ask: what assurances can the minister provide to local governments in Queensland that the state government will only take matters out of the local council's hands when there is an overriding state interest?

Madam SPEAKER: Order! I did not hear the name of the development in question. Did the minister hear that or does he want the question to be repeated?

Mr CRISAFULLI: No, that is okay. Whilst there is a bill before the House, I am delighted to answer the question. First of all, I will give honourable members 18 months of history and 18 months of a changed approach. I start by thanking the member for the question. It is in stark contrast to what we have seen this afternoon from those opposite. Today we have had a session of sleaze, one of the most appalling performances. I must acknowledge that the member has raised matters on deamalgamation not only in the House but also with me personally. Again, that is in stark contrast to those opposite. I have sat here time and time again as we fix a disaster created by them and not once have I had a question. In fact, my memory is that there has only been one statement from those

opposite about deamalgamation, and I carry it around with me. It was from the member for Rockhampton. In it he said that these decisions, referring to the deamalgamation process, are probably the only consequential matters that go across his desk. I will table that. It was from a speech in an adjournment debate from the member for Rockhampton.

Tabled paper: Extract from adjournment debate speech by the member for Rockhampton, Mr Bill Byrne MP, regarding deamalgamation of Rockhampton Regional Council [\[3919\]](#).

I am not sure how the community he represents feels about that when it comes to flood recovery, but let us hope they hear that message in Rockhampton. I am not sure about that.

Let us go back to the beginning briefly while I answer the honourable member's question. It is a contrast about a government that says something and then delivers verses one that does not say something and then sneaks in grubbily and sleazily tries to put things through the back door. We made a commitment to communities that we would give them the opportunity to pursue deamalgamation. We said that there would be two communities we would focus on. One was Noosa and the other one was Douglas. Unlike those opposite, we did not have any preconceived ideas; we went in with a broad sheet. As a result, the process was run, four communities went to a vote and those four communities will be deamalgamating. It is, indeed, a hard road. It is an example of what happens when you actually say something and deliver it. It is about being 'can do'. It is about saying something to people and then actually delivering.

The member has asked what assurances can we give that there will be local input. The question is opportune today because in the opinion pages of the *Courier-Mail* there is an article under the title 'LNP leaves it to the locals'. In conclusion, I would like to read the last two paragraphs of Robert MacDonald's opinion piece. It states—

But there is a strong philosophical underpinning to the LNP's strategies that many would find refreshing—the idea that local communities will always have a better idea of their own needs and solutions ...

And that is a pretty revolutionary idea after years of George Street deciding what's best for us.

AusBiotech

Mrs RICE: My question without notice is to the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts. Will the minister outline some of the activities that are happening this week around the AusBiotech national conference?

Mr WALKER: I thank the honourable member for the question. It certainly gives me pleasure to update the House on the AusBiotech 2013 national conference, which is being held from today until Friday just across the river at the convention centre. In fact, I have just come from officially opening the conference. It is an important annual industry event for the life sciences sector in Australia. It has earned a reputation as one of the leading biotechnology conferences in the Asia-Pacific region. This year's conference has a theme of bioeconomy in transition. That has a focus on the transformation of the Australian industry as it evolves and adapts to current global forces and looks for new opportunities to grow the bioeconomy in Australia into the future. The Newman government is proud to be the state host partner for this major event which aligns with our election commitment of science and innovation for economic success.

Over 700 delegates from around the world and nationally are attending this year's conference. Throughout the week Queensland is hosting a number of international delegations from Canada, New Zealand, India and China. The Premier, the Treasurer and I were pleased to be able to host an international alliances networking event on Monday evening which brought together a number of our distinguished international guests. It is Queensland's chance to shine and showcase the state's globally competitive life sciences industry, the sector's capability to meet international challenges and deliver new commercial opportunities. A first-class program is on offer for visiting national and international delegates. Highlights include discussion on the emerging trends in the treatment of tropical diseases, the role and integration of manufacturing with the sector and the influence of social and digital media in developing biotechnology.

Delegates are going to hear from Professor Charlie Teo, a leading neurosurgeon from the Prince of Wales Private Hospital in Sydney on innovations he is pioneering in his field. Delegates will have the opportunity to visit Queensland's world-class facilities and institutes including the new Translational Research Institute at the PA Hospital and the QIMR Berghofer cancer research centre on the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital campus. I am also honoured to be involved in officially

opening DSM Biologic's new biopharmaceutical manufacturing facility adjacent to the TRI this afternoon. This facility is the first facility of its kind in Australia. It gives Queensland's life sciences sector a global advantage and brings major economic benefits for this great state.

It was also fitting this morning that I was able to launch the Newman government's Science and Innovation Action Plan. This plan will see up to \$8.75 million injected into the Accelerate Queensland Science and Innovation Program. The program will focus on funding people and projects which have direct outcomes to benefit Queensland. Honourable members will recall that that is what we said in our election commitment; we would turn science innovation towards economic benefit for Queenslanders. We are doing that. We are a can-do government which follows these plans through to their conclusion. It is an exciting time for the sciences sector in Queensland.

Hazard Reduction Plans

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: My question without notice is to the Minister for National Parks and Recreation. With significant rain over the past three years the fuel load in national parks poses a significant risk to both the integrity of the parks as well as adjoining landowners. What hazard reduction plans are in place to reduce this significant risk?

Mr DICKSON: I thank the member for Gladstone for the question because this is a very important question. At the moment Queensland, just like New South Wales, is facing a huge threat as far as fire is concerned. I know the Minister for Police and Community Safety has his department ready to go, as I have with my department in terms of our rangers. We have just under 700 rangers within my department who have worked extremely hard over a number of years to be prepared and ready. Recently they created a booklet called *Bioregion planned burn guidelines*, which covers 13 regions throughout the state. They have a great understanding of the build-up of the fuel load, what sorts of grass and trees they are dealing with and how they will burn in different regions. That experience, combined with the department of emergency services, will deliver great outcomes. The national parks are going to be great neighbours to farmland owners and those people who live near national parks. That is the way it should have been; it has not always been like that.

I can guarantee the member for Gladstone that we are conducting pre-emptive burning. We have spent millions of dollars over the past few months out there getting ready for this fire season, and that has been done in many areas throughout the state. We are not going to cover every piece of land because you have to get the season right. Just before dark you light those fires so that they do not burn everything to ground. Common sense will prevail and our department has some fantastic people on board who have a great understanding of fire management.

On some of the islands in North Queensland they do a thing called mosaic burning in which they burn particular areas out like a checker board. Then when a fire does start to burn through these areas, it burns to the edge of the area that has been burnt out and it stops. That has been extremely successful working in the Rockhampton area recently. I am sure the member for Rockhampton would be very much aware of that after his drive along a road not so long back. The wheel had come off his trailer and some sparks set fire to the bush. He did the right thing; he stopped and helped people put out that fire. We do not always know how fires start, whether due to lightning strikes or some other way. We need to be prepared and ready to stop these things. All Queenslanders must work together.

As I said earlier, the department of emergency services and my department are ready to go. I am sure that the people of Gladstone will all work hand in glove if the need arises to put out any fire that occurs throughout the state of Queensland. I say to all people of Queensland: be prepared. We are going into a very hot summer. Make sure you remove the leaves from your gutters. Make sure that your area is prepared for a fire. You just never know when it will strike. We always need to work together as Queenslanders. I thank the member for the question.

Insurance

Mr RICKUSS: My question is to the Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience. We have heard stories of people being denied insurance or being charged exorbitant rates, especially in regional Queensland. Can the minister advise the House what steps the government has taken to address this issue?

Mr CRISAFULLI: I sincerely thank the member for Lockyer for his question.

Madam SPEAKER: There will be two minutes.

Mr CRISAFULLI: There is no-one more appropriate than the member for Lockyer to ask that question. In fact, I have been with the member for Lockyer in businesses in towns like Laidley and heard stories from business owners of simply not being able to get insurance and of seeing their premiums hiked. It is a matter that needs action.

I will start by saying that regional Queenslanders are not a soft mob. They do not cry in their milk. They are tough. They stand up to things. But what we have seen happen with insurance premiums has really cut to the bone. When you talk about increases of at times up to 1,000 per cent, you know that there is an issue that needs action. Under the imprimatur of the Premier—someone who is a great friend to regional Queensland—and chaired by the member for Cairns, we met yesterday to discuss a way forward.

As I see it, there are two courses of action here. Firstly, there is no doubt that insurance is regulated by the federal government. We need the federal government to embark on a process that was put in the too-hard basket by the last parliament. There are recommendations that are on the table that I do believe can net real results, but at a state level it is not acceptable for us to say that we cannot do our bit as well. The greatest gift that a state government can give its community is by working with councils to deliver infrastructure to protect them; and when you rebuild, you rebuild to a higher standard.

Nothing upset me more than to see a press release from the member for Mulgrave—and I know he believes it because it is still on his website and he has not taken it down—

Mr Nicholls interjected.

Mr CRISAFULLI: It is still there, Treasurer. It is entitled 'Crisafulli Raising False Hopes ...', and in it he says that our desire to build infrastructure is a 'con' and a 'trick'. I will table that.

Tabled paper: Media release, dated 27 August 2013, by the member for Mulgrave, Mr Curtis Pitt MP, titled 'Crisafulli raising false hopes over flood-proofing' [3920].

That is as disgraceful as what we have seen this morning. We are a government that gets it. This is a state bigger than Brisbane. We will continue to fight for regional Queenslanders, unlike the mob opposite who went AWOL—

(Time expired)

Madam SPEAKER: Question time has finished.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT


School Group Tours

Madam SPEAKER: Before I call the next order of the day, I would like to recognise McGregor State School from the electorate of Sunnybank which is visiting today as well as Emmanuel College, Carrara, from the electorate of Mudgeeraba.

APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2)

Resumed from 12 September (see p. 3055).

Second Reading

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade) (3.32 pm): I move—
That the bill be now read a second time.

I would like to start by thanking the Finance and Administration Committee for its report tabled on 22 October 2013 regarding Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2013. I note that the committee supports the bill and recommends that it be passed. While the committee made no additional recommendations, I would like to take this opportunity to respond to some of the committee's comments and issues raised in its report.

The committee supported the principle that unforeseen expenditure be approved via a separate appropriation bill as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year. The committee agreed that the principle underpinning this is that the parliament should authorise the expenditure and, even though it is after the event, there is merit in debating the expenditure in order to understand how the expenditure was incurred. Basically, the parliament deserves to be informed.

In their report the committee has identified the key benefit of introducing Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2013. The introduction of a separate bill, aligned with the tabling of the Consolidated Fund Financial Report, CFFR, which provides detailed explanations of appropriation adjustments, including unforeseen expenditure for each agency, enables timely scrutiny and debate of this expenditure.

As I indicated when introducing this bill, this is all about increasing openness and accountability, which was one of the Newman government's pledges to the people of Queensland—part of our 'can-do' commitment. There can be no doubt that the previous Labor government's decision in 2008 to combine supplementary appropriation with the annual appropriation bills was purely a political one. It was an attempt to avoid scrutiny of the budget blowouts that were a hallmark of the former government. It meant that there was a serious delay between an expenditure being incurred and when approval is sought for it.

I raised the matter at the time with the Speaker of the day, the Hon. John Mickel, who thought the matter serious enough to refer it to the Ethics Committee. My contention, as summarised by the Speaker, was that the action was a significant departure from previous practice in terms of the time frame for this approval being sought and given; this new approach had been implemented based on an extended time frame and different method for seeking and gaining parliamentary approval for unforeseen expenditure incurred during a financial year; and that the parliament was not advised of, nor did it approve, the changed approach to its introduction.

The committee reported to this House that it was unanimous in its view that the new process for seeking parliament's authority for the appropriation of unforeseen expenditure in 2007-08—that is, incorporating it into the appropriation bills for 2009-10—was a significant departure from past practice in Queensland at least dating back to the mid-1980s. Further, the committee noted that the 2007-08 process was the first time parliament's authority has been obtained for expenditure more than 12 months after the relevant financial year in August 2009. Imagine that, Madam Speaker: 12 months after the expenditure had been incurred, the Labor Party thought that it was okay to report back to the House and include that appropriation in the prospective year's appropriation bill. However, the committee noted that this practice is not unprecedented in other states—which does not make it right—and there is was no impediment in the relevant Queensland legislation to incorporating the 2007-08 unforeseen expenditure into the appropriation bills for 2009-10.

The point should be made that the former government decided to lower the financial management standards adopted in Queensland. Whilst there may not have been a legislative barrier to delaying the consideration of unforeseen expenditure, the practice is not consistent with high standards of financial management or open and accountable government. No-one should have been surprised that the Labor government took the easy way out. It was this type of approach to budgeting by Labor that put Queensland in the fiscal position we are now in, and this bill that we are debating today is another example of the Newman government prudently and methodically increasing accounting standards to ensure that taxpayers' money is being put to the best use.

I noted with interest the shadow Treasurer's statement of reservations to the Finance and Administration Committee's report on Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2013. What first struck me was the fact that the member for Mulgrave did not raise any objections with the bill itself. The bill, as I indicated when I first began, was supported by the committee. It is interesting that indeed the committee supported the principle that unforeseen expenditure be approved via a separate appropriation bill as soon as practicable. The committee agreed that the principle underpinning this is that the parliament should authorise the expenditure even though it is after the event. The committee decided that that was the way that it ought to be. The member for Mulgrave, failing to raise any of those issues, now writes a subsequent letter and puts that into the report. It appears the shadow Treasurer does not consider that the introduction of this bill increases transparency and accountability. He also asserted that 'a number of dubious claims were made in the introduction of this bill about previous unforeseen expenditure'. Yet again it shows that the member for Mulgrave misses the point. He was content to let business go on as it had been under Labor with the lack of scrutiny and all that entailed.

For the benefit of the House, let me outline how business was done under Labor. The facts and numbers speak volumes, and I table the document highlighting the unforeseen expenditure by year from 1999-2000 to 2012-13.

Tabled paper: Document titled 'Unforseen Expenditure by Year—1999-2000 to 2012-13' [[3921](#)].

I could go through the years separately, but the numbers are self-explanatory. When Bligh and Fraser were at the reins from 2005-06 onwards, unforeseen expenditure blew out by at least \$1 billion every year. In fact, those opposite would have viewed unforeseen expenditure of \$1 billion as an achievement. In the final term of the Bligh-Fraser administration, unforeseen expenditure averaged around \$4.4 billion a year. Is it any wonder Labor changed the goalposts in 2008? Is it any wonder the books were in the shape that they were when we got into government? Is it any wonder Queensland lost its AAA credit rating when those opposite were in charge? Is it any wonder that debt continued to skyrocket despite the rivers of gold that were flowing in?

Under the approach introduced by the previous Labor government, I had to include supplementary appropriation for 2010-11 with the annual appropriation bills for the 2012-13 budget. Unforeseen expenditure in 2010-11 under Labor was more than \$9 billion. Labor's changes meant we were not debating this budget blow-out until more than a full year after the expenses were incurred. Only the member for Mulgrave would argue that this is a right and proper approach. The approach used by those opposite was not good for accountability and it inhibited good governance.


In contrast, I introduced Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2013 for supplementary appropriation for 2012-13 on 12 September 2013. This is approximately nine months before supplementary appropriation would have been sought under the previous government's approach and just under three months after the end of the financial year for which it is sought.

The change in timing and introduction of a separate bill for supplementary appropriation as soon as possible after the end of the financial year increases transparency and accountability. It does this by enabling the timely scrutiny of the supplementary appropriation requirement. It also allows the introduction of the bill to be aligned with the tabling of the Consolidated Fund Financial Report, which, as I have already said, provides detailed explanations of appropriation adjustments for each agency. So you have the bill seeking the unforeseen expenditure authorisation matching up with the report that tells you what it is all about. They come together. It enables proper process, proper scrutiny and proper debate by this parliament. If those opposite wish to query or question it, they have the opportunity to do so in a timely fashion, immediately after the financial year to which it relates. The change also responds to the issues noted in the independent Commission of Audit's final report around the process for supplementary appropriation and reduces the extended delay between when the unforeseen expenditure was incurred and when it is approved by parliament.

I am proud of the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2013, which seeks supplementary appropriation for 2012-13 of just over \$63.4 million. That is required by a single department—Treasury—in relation to additional payments made to employees, predominantly for superannuation. I again point out that this is the lowest level of unforeseen expenditure in more than 15 years. It again demonstrates this government's commitment to fiscal discipline.

As I have shown, the budget blow-outs that were a hallmark of Labor's time in office will not continue under this can-do government. We are determined to respect the public's money. This bill ensures future governments will have to explain and outline supplementary appropriation in an open and accountable way. This can only be seen as a win for the people of Queensland and a responsible and transparent approach to government.

As I said when I introduced the bill, this is not the achievement of any one person. This is the achievement of a whole government—my colleagues in the ministry, the assistant ministers and their departments—working together with a common aim: to deliver better services for Queenslanders. I thank them for their assistance and I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (3.42 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2013. From the outset, let me say that the opposition is extremely disappointed by the way in which the Treasurer introduced this bill. His introductory speech is certainly something to behold. This bill has been introduced as an act of political communication under the guise of transparency. The Treasurer made much in his introductory speech of having met his existing obligations under the Financial Accountability Act 2009 to table the Consolidated Fund Financial Report within 14 days of receipt of the Auditor-General's report. Congratulations, Treasurer, for meeting your existing legislative obligations! Gold star!

The Treasurer went on to claim that by introducing this bill he was somehow increasing transparency. When this bill was then referred to the parliamentary committee, the opposition requested that transparency. We asked for a breakdown of high-level lapses in appropriation,

acknowledging that there would be some work involved—even asking only for those of a high dollar amount. The request was clear and achievable. The Treasurer refused this request from Queensland Treasury to provide this information back to the committee. So let us just call it for what it is.

The Treasurer cannot come into this parliament and claim that he is introducing a bill to improve transparency and then refuse to release additional information—even part thereof—than that contained in the Consolidated Fund Financial Report. What is the point of having a debate in the absence of all of the information? This is not about having a fair debate. If the Treasurer believed in having a fair debate or if he really believed in transparency, he would not have been instrumental in shutting down and gagging the budget debate earlier this year—gagging the budget debate which may or may not have allowed him to leave parliament early to attend a black-tie function.

The shutting down of the budget debate was an act that is symptomatic of the complete lack of respect that this government has for the parliament and for democratic process. This government's arrogance simply knows no bounds. It operates like it is not accountable to anybody or to the truth, which is clearly of no consequence to the government. It is a government that makes it up as it goes—manufacturing crisis after crisis to suck up political oxygen from the real and long-lasting damage it is doing to this state.

It does not matter to them if lives are changed for the worse in the process of manufacturing a crisis. The members of this government sleep well at night, seemingly oblivious to the lives they have damaged and oblivious to the dollars they will waste as a result of their decisions including \$750 million in their fire sale of seven office buildings in the CBD—a \$226 million loss on sale in addition to more than half a billion dollars in new rent costs. This is arguably of a greater scale than the previous government's issues with the Health payroll implementation, I say again, albeit less than the dubious headline figure touted by the health minister ad nauseam which includes the necessary operating costs. Worse still, the CBD sell-off fiasco was money the Newman government wasted by design, not from unforeseen circumstances.

In his introductory speech the Treasurer made wild claims that unforeseen expenditure of \$9 billion in 2010-11 was an act of 'incompetence'. I have heard some good ones in my time but this was outrageous. This unforeseen expenditure and the reasons for it have been on the public record since late 2011, yet the Treasurer tried to make out that it was some kind of a revelation. Of this unforeseen expenditure, approximately \$2 billion was related to the establishment of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority and Commonwealth payments to respond to the largest year of natural disasters in our history.

The Treasurer says that not anticipating the largest year of natural disasters in our history is an act of 'incompetence', yet when the Treasurer went about his tax hikes earlier this year—these have contributed to taxes per family rising by \$1,000 or more—what did he blame? He blamed the flooding that occurred earlier this year. So apparently the previous government not anticipating the largest year of natural disasters in our history is an act of 'incompetence', while his—I say it tongue in cheek—'failure' to anticipate disasters that were smaller in scale and dollar terms earlier this year is okay.

It is a bit like the Treasurer and the global financial crisis. In opposition he consistently blamed Labor for not seeing it coming. He said that it was being used to wipe the blackboard of history—not that we ever received any warnings from the then shadow Treasurer. The same Treasurer earlier this month said, as he ran away from his four per cent jobs target—

I can't tell you what will happen. Who predicted the 2008 global financial crisis in 2007?

This Treasurer's unadulterated hypocrisy knows no bounds.

I move back to unforeseen expenditure in 2010-11. What was the explanation for another \$6.85 billion of this unforeseen expenditure? It was unforeseen debt repayments from the proceeds of the sale of QR National and the Port of Brisbane. These debt repayments were unforeseen because under accounting standards at the time the government was required not to anticipate the proceeds from asset sales prior to receiving the money. So, according to the Treasurer, not budgeting for sale proceeds prior to receiving them and then using those proceeds to pay down debt is 'incompetence'. This from a Treasurer who, when it comes to electricity assets—the power stations—wants to flog off the poles, the wires, the lot. So, once again, it is okay for the Treasurer to want to sell what Infrastructure Partnerships Australia tallies at up to \$48 billion in assets that we all rely on, but when

the previous government repaid debt from smaller asset sales that did not directly service Queenslanders he labelled it 'incompetence'. This Treasurer believes his own hype so much that I sometimes wonder if he really remembers what is going on around him.

I will now address the lower unforeseen expenditure last financial year that the Treasurer so proudly boasted about in his introductory speech and again today. As the notes of the Consolidated Fund Financial Report set out, many agencies avoided unforeseen expenditure because budgeted pay rises for public servants were not delivered. This applied for the departments of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services; Education, Training and Employment; the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service; the Office of the Governor; the Queensland Audit Office; and the Queensland Police Service. I am sure the Treasurer is extremely proud of not having delivered pay rises for public servants after recently providing himself and his colleagues a nice top-up.

The notes in the Consolidated Fund report also detail many other areas where there were deferrals to infrastructure projects and the provision of services. The total amount of these deferrals was \$4.4 billion in four departments—Transport and Main Roads; Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience; Housing and Public Works; and Education, Training and Employment—which allowed \$3.1 billion of appropriation to lapse. But we have no breakdown of what services were not delivered or which projects were not undertaken by this government. Once again, this appears to be a source of personal pride for the Treasurer. When the opposition requested through the Finance and Administration Committee a headline breakdown of these deferrals, we were not properly furnished with this information. Based on this nonprovision of information, you just cannot trust this Treasurer when he utters the words 'transparency' or 'accountability'—or 'economy' or 'finances' for that matter.

The Treasurer also selectively excluded mention from his speech that unforeseen expenditure was lower for Treasury because of \$493 million in payments from the former government's Queensland Future Growth Fund. Nor did the Treasurer mention an unexplained \$627 million equity withdrawal, which also reduced supplementary appropriation.

This Treasurer is the master of spin and cherry picking figures. With three more political staff and fewer ministerial responsibilities than his predecessor, he goes about looking at economic releases working out how best to confuse people rather than actually lead or think of policies for our future. The Treasurer was no doubt very proud of himself in his second reading speech trumpeting his made-up \$100 billion debt figure from his mate Peter Costello and coming up with the percentages as to how his unforeseen expenditure was low but all the while refusing to provide details of significant deferral of services and infrastructure that have assisted to deliver this result. The Treasurer may well need to get out of the hallowed streets of Clayfield and those cash-for-access lunches in order to take a long walk down the street and talk to some real people. I have been out there talking to real people—people who have had their elective surgeries cut by this government who live with pain and discomfort every day not knowing when they will receive treatment. The deferral of surgeries is not something to be proud of or to arrogantly boast about in this chamber. However, this Treasurer clearly thinks it is.

The Treasurer in his second reading speech also made an interesting comment when he said—

... a debt is just a tax on future generations because it always has to be paid.

This just shows how naive the Treasurer is when it comes to understanding macroeconomics. The Treasurer seems to believe that investment to support economic growth is some horrific socialist abomination, a suggestion that investment in infrastructure is some horrible tax on future generations. He had better not tell that to West Australian Premier Colin Barnett, who has acknowledged his priority is infrastructure projects rather than his AAA credit rating, or mum's the word around Tony Abbott, who said he raised the debt ceiling by \$200 billion so that he can lead what he calls an 'infrastructure government'. Does the Treasurer really believe that investing in infrastructure to support population growth cannot possibly support higher revenue to the state into the future or improve the productivity of the economy? There are very few people out there who can afford to buy a house without a mortgage, yet there are not people accusing all homeowners with a mortgage of 'living beyond their means'—a phrase we hear all too often from this Treasurer.

I make this point because this framing of the discussion—that any debt for infrastructure is bad—only stands to undermine investment and growth in Queensland. The Treasurer makes out that the previous government was living in some dreamland while ignoring its response to the worst global

economic conditions since the 1930s and the largest natural disasters in our history. Labor's stimulus based policy response involving \$60 billion in infrastructure investment over just the last four years of the government has reshaped Queensland. The Treasurer talks about interest repayments on the debt used to fund this infrastructure. However, we never hear about the revenue and the growth that would be foregone without this investment. Revenue under the Newman government is set to grow by \$11.42 billion per year over five years, yet all we hear from the Premier and the Treasurer is doom and gloom about the finances, and nor is it considered that unemployment would also be substantially higher without Labor's investment. Unemployment is already higher under the Newman government. No amount of spin, bluster or rhetoric can cover this up.

Without Labor's infrastructure program, we would not have the second Gateway Bridge today; the Gold Coast University Hospital, which the Premier opened today—a great Labor project that will benefit another generation of Queenslanders; and nor would we have the redevelopment of the Cairns Base Hospital in my region of Far North Queensland. The Douglas Arterial Road on the Townsville ring-road would never have been widened, nor the Rockhampton Hospital expansion, the Calliope range deviation, the berth 10 terminal at Townsville port where the Treasurer recently cut the ribbon or the Gold Coast rapid transit project that the transport minister now proudly stands next to. These are just a handful of examples. Queensland today would be a vastly different place and the Treasurer would have far less revenue to rely on than he does today without these investments.

We could also have made the decision during the GFC to cut off Brisbane City Council from borrowing from QTC under the now Premier. I note that nearly half of the increase in local government debt since 2009 has been at Brisbane City Council—an increase of \$1.9 billion. The current Premier wrote to the previous government encouraging the former Premier to raise more debt and to disregard the AAA credit rating. His letter said—

There is a strong case that ... revenue gains (or at least a portion of them) should be allowed to flow through to additional spending, rather than speeding the path to a AAA rating.

I suppose this means that the Treasurer believes the Premier is living in some socialist fairyland as well!

While the Treasurer spends most of his time trying to rubbish his predecessor, he has no policy for the future beyond a mass sell-off of services and assets to LNP donors and mates. We never hear the Treasurer mention that in 2010 ratings agency Standard & Poor's flagged an upgrade to Queensland's credit rating to AAA and nor do we hear him quote Standard & Poor's from September 2011 when it said in relation to natural disasters—

Although the government continues to demonstrate excellent financial management through its revenue and expenditure measures, external factors continue to make it difficult for the State to regain its AAA.

We will never hear those words from this Treasurer's mouth, and nor will we hear the Treasurer repeat the statements in the Queensland Treasury Corporation investor booklet that he provided to overseas investors prior to his budget which stated—

Strong investment and growth in recent years have accelerated Queensland economic activity relative to the rest of Australia ...

or that—

Queensland's ratio of financial assets to total liabilities indicates its relative financial strength compared with other Australian states ...

or—

Queensland has a far lower level of General Government net debt, relative to operating revenue, compared to other similar international semi-sovereign issuers ...

or that Queensland had—

... Excellent Financial Management on very positive liquidity ...

In January last year the Treasurer was calling the Queensland economy a 'basket case'. At that time business investment was tracking at a record 40.3 per cent growth, private investment was at 25.8 per cent, household consumption was at 4.1 per cent and dwelling investment was still weak after the GFC, contracting by 2.2 per cent. Compare this with the growth figures that the Treasurer is now boasting about and hailing as the signs of an economic recovery. Business investment has fallen to 9.4 per cent, private investment is down to 5.2 per cent, household consumption is down to 2.9 per

cent and dwelling investment is even weaker, contracting by 6.8 per cent. Overall gross state expenditure—a measure of domestic demand—fell from 8.3 per cent in 2011-12 to 2.5 per cent last financial year. I table a Queensland Treasury document that summarises all of this for those opposite.

Tabled paper: Document by Queensland Treasury and Trade: Queensland State Accounts, June quarter 2013 [3922].


The headline growth result that the Treasurer boasts about was propped up by a continued recovery in coal exports following the 2010-11 natural disasters. The economic measures that matter to real people—household spending, dwelling investment, private investment and business investment—are all lower under the Newman government, not to mention that unemployment is higher. He may not be hearing it in Clayfield or at his cash-for-access lunches, but it does matter to real people. While the recovery in coal exports is great for BMA, Rio Tinto and Glencore Xstrata, it has no impact on the lives of ordinary Queenslanders to the same extent. Real people care about whether they can find work, about retail activity and about broader investment in the economy. This is just more evidence of the arrogance and how out of touch the Treasurer really is.

Similarly, the recent investing in Queensland advertising campaign makes for interesting reading. The Treasurer boasts about Queensland having retail turnover of four per cent, which of course was where Labor left it. It is now lower under the LNP. The Treasurer's ad boasts about a record \$60 billion in business investment—the record set under Labor, with business investment now declining under the Newman government. The ad boasts about Queensland's competitive tax status—a tax system that was even more competitive under Labor before the Newman government increased taxes per household by more than \$1,000. The ad boasts about strong employment growth that was being recorded under Labor. In the first full financial year of the Newman government, employment growth in Queensland was 0.3 per cent—the worst result in more than two decades and down from 1.3 per cent under Labor. Finally, on economic growth, it boasts about an average growth rate of four per cent. This was where Labor left the economy and the Treasury forecast growth to slow this year to three per cent. For the Treasurer to have called an economy that was in a stronger position under Labor a 'basket case' and a 'mess' from opposition and then turn around and try to sell Labor's record as his own just shows how wrapped up in spin he really is. I table for the benefit of the House an overlay of what this ad is really saying.

Tabled paper: Document titled 'Investing in Queensland' [3923].

We saw this again just last week as the Treasurer went out boasting about the October quarter CommSec *State of the states* report. On the economic growth ranking, Queensland was ranked second at the election. To send us back to fourth and then hail as an LNP inspired recovery a movement back up to third can only be described as spin. Similarly, on the overall rankings, Queensland went down from fourth to then recover back to fourth in the October quarter report. Apparently this is great and somehow a recovery from a stronger economy with lower unemployment that the Treasurer labelled a 'mess' and a 'basket case'. The Treasurer will likely stand up in this parliament again—and of course being top and tailed on the speaking list with just him today is a pleasure I do not usually have—and he is going to suggest that I am talking down the economy. This juvenile stunt is the bread and butter of a politician who believes that apparently what is said in opposition stays in opposition. I believe that the Treasurer is capable of better than this. However, he arrogantly believes that it does not matter—that reality is disconnected from his fate and that he can just say whatever he likes. The Treasurer might disregard the facts now, but he cannot run away from them forever. John Howard once said that in politics you need to be 80 per cent pure, and this would be a lofty aspiration for the Treasurer to reach. It would certainly be an improvement on the current form.

Of course, the opposition will not oppose this legislation to approve expenditure that has already been incurred. The point must be made, however, that the timing of this bill has been all about a political stunt with no connection to transparency or accountability, unless you join the dots by a very highly political second reading speech. If the Treasurer was genuine about transparency and accountability, he would not have spent his second reading speech attempting to make cheap political points and cherry picking figures, as we have seen time and time again. But I am responding to his disingenuous claims. Quite frankly, I have had enough of the juvenile political games. Queenslanders will fast grow tired of his repetitious spin as well. The government might well think it is getting away with this for the time being and it might think it is getting away with an Orwellian narrative, but Queenslanders know that it is hard to find work and that spending has slowed. They do not appreciate the Treasurer's deception.


 **Dr FLEGG** (Moggill—LNP) (4.00 pm): I intend to make an extremely brief contribution to the debate on this supplementary Appropriation Bill (No. 2). During my years here I have spoken to quite a number of these bills. Sometimes I have given the government a little more leeway than at other times. But there is something that absolutely stands out about this appropriation bill as opposed to all the other ones that I have spoken to. There is something missing. What is missing is a huge number of dollars. There is a very distinct difference between this bill and those that we saw presented by the previous government.

I want to support the Treasurer in his assertion that the parliament should scrutinise this sort of appropriation bill. It does not matter that expenditure may have already occurred; it is the job of this parliament to scrutinise that sort of appropriation. We may well have a convention that swirls around not voting against appropriation bills, but that does not mean that the bill should not be put before the House and scrutinised. If there was something unacceptable in this bill, we would expect to be discussing it. Of course, it was appropriation bills in previous years that had unacceptable things in them. Whilst I am speaking about the convention of not voting against appropriation bills, I seem to recall that this year those opposite voted against the budget, which I do not think I have seen a great deal of comment about.

It is no accident that the lack of scrutiny applied to supplementary legislation coincided with the period during which we lost our AAA credit rating. It is no accident that the lack of scrutiny applied to supplementary expenditure coincided with the explosion of debt in Queensland. Much of that debt that Queenslanders will have to pay off over coming years related to the massive amounts of supplementary expenditure that the previous government had: approximately \$3 billion in 2008-09 and \$9.3 billion in 2010-11.

Following on from what the shadow Treasurer said, certainly, if you miss one year and there is a substantial amount of unexpected expenditure because things have happened, you might understand that in the setting of a natural disaster or the like. But to miss every year has to be regarded as something completely different and something very careless. I note particularly two things that the shadow Treasurer said that I really cannot allow to go without some sort of comment. One was the excuse, 'It's the natural disaster.' This was something that Labor presented to this parliament every year. I spoke to it most years over the past decade: billions of dollars in a lot of cases of unforeseen expenditure from the former government. It was not related to one-off things; it was the way they did business and the way they managed the finances.

The other thing that was said by the shadow Treasurer that rang in my ear was his comparison of the debt of this state to somebody having a mortgage. I think that is a great comparison, because the person who has a mortgage has something to show for it. This state has a debt heading towards \$80 billion, most of which was either wasted on things such as the water grid or related to areas of recurrent expenditure and we have little or nothing to show for it. So in actual fact, the shadow Treasurer has unwittingly highlighted that there is good and bad debt. Good debt supports an asset that gives you a return, where you have something to show for it—like the homeowner investing in his home. Bad debt is when you either waste the money or it is simply because you cannot control your expenditure and it is wasted on recurrent expenditure. I am pleased to speak to the supplementary Appropriation Bill (No. 2).

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade) (4.03 pm), in reply: Firstly, I thank the member for Moggill for succinctly outlining the exact problem. Despite the comments of the member for Mulgrave, we lost our AAA credit rating because the scrutiny of parliament was not applied and the questions were not asked at the right time. So when the bad habits of the former Labor government started snowballing, as they did, what happened? We lost the AAA credit rating.

The member for Mulgrave can talk about his government's investment. He can talk about that wise expenditure that went into the Tugun desalination plant that is not being turned on. He can talk about that wise expenditure that went into Traveston Dam that was never built. He can talk about that wise expenditure that went into the recycled water grid that has never been used. He can talk about that wise investment that went into borrowing to pay for the fuel that went into the police cars, that turned the lights on, that paid the recurrent expenditure. All of that was done under Labor and that saw us lose our AAA credit rating and saw debt go from just over \$20 billion heading towards, according to the member's own government's last budget papers, north of \$85 billion and

conservatively by 2019-20—conservatively—heading towards \$100 billion. That was stratospheric debt and a business-as-usual unchanged circumstance. When you ask what was going to happen in the future with this government, you only have to look at what happened in the past. When you look at what happened in the past, you see that the debt went from \$25 billion to towards \$85 billion.

What have we managed to do in the meantime? We have managed to reduce recurrent expenditure to the lowest level since accrual accounting was introduced into Queensland in 1998-99—1.1 per cent general government increase. We have managed to contain wages growth to one per cent—again, the lowest level since accrual accounting was introduced in 1998-99. We have been able to reduce the call on debt by over \$5 billion so that now debt will no longer be as crippling as it would otherwise have been. It is still a serious issue, but it will not be as crippling as it would have been under Labor at over \$85 billion heading towards, on a conservative estimate, \$100 billion.

We have been able to reintroduce fiscal discipline into the accounts of the Queensland state government. We have done that while also recording, much to the shadow Treasurer's chagrin, only \$64 million in unforeseen expenditure. He can talk about all the events that occurred but, when you look at the history, the numbers speak for themselves. I outlined in my explanatory notes the unforeseen expenditure since 1997-98. Let me recount it. I was not going to, but I will read it into the record now.

In 1997-98, what was the unforeseen expenditure? \$2.9 billion. It was \$3 billion in 1997-98. Fifteen years ago it was still nearly \$3 billion because they could not manage the books—sorry, that was us. In 1999-2000, the first full year, the outstanding unforeseen expenditure was \$295 million. If we go all the way through each year during the golden years of the economy—the resources boom mark I, the property boom—what do we see? In 2001-02, \$1.5 billion; in 2002-03, \$2.3 billion; in 2004-05, \$77.5 million; in 2005-06, \$1.8 billion; in 2006-07, \$3.99 billion.

I ask the member for Moggill: was there a better year in the Queensland economy than 2006-07? It is hard to remember when property prices were more resilient, when consumer growth was higher, when the rivers of gold from the mining boom were rolling in at a faster rate. I think land tax was coming in at almost \$1 billion a year. Even then the profligate Labor government, spending like sailors on a spree in town after six months at sea, could not get their budget figures right. Who was the Treasurer at that time? Anna Bligh. She got her hands on the levers and she said, 'Yeeha! Let this one rip, boys. We are going to spend, spend and spend some more.'

What also happened is former Premier Peter Beattie—that supposed doyen of financial rectitude, the Scotsman; God help the Scots if ever Peter Beattie went home—spent over his budget by over \$3.99 billion. There were no natural disasters that occurred in that year. The only natural disaster that occurred in 2006-07 was Peter Beattie and Anna Bligh and a river of gold that they could not escape. They were like addicts. They were mainlining. They could not get it up their nostrils fast enough. That is what was happening. That was the natural disaster that occurred in 2006-07. Then in 2007-08, \$2.152 billion; \$2.95 billion in 2008-09 and so it goes.

In all of those instances there is only one common theme, and that is it was under the ALP that this occurred. It was only under the ALP that that unforeseen expenditure ever occurred. After 2008-09 you could not even ask questions about it because there was not a debate on an appropriations bill that allowed one to say, 'It says this in the Consolidated Fund Financial Report. Mr Treasurer, will you explain what is going on?' Because what happened is the unforeseen expenditure for the prior year was not included until prospectively the budget for the further year was put through. There was a question period that allowed, I think, 10 questions for the opposition at any one time so one could not ask questions about it. That was the way in which it was done.

Andrew Fraser made not one mention of it in this chamber. He did not have the courtesy to explain to the parliament or the people of Queensland that he was behaving in such an underhanded fashion. When one adds the complete failure of his government to tell us about these things until a year after the event to the number of things that the ALP did not tell Queenslanders about—cutting the fuel subsidy, the sale of assets, jacking up car registration to make it the most expensive in Australia—one can see why the people of Queensland so comprehensively rejected the Australian Labor Party as a government of this state and will continue to do so, in my view.

The member for Mulgrave made a number of claims in relation to statements that I have made regarding the Invest Employ Grow program that is currently underway. Mr Pitt, in his somewhat university style—perhaps he has a university lecturer working for him as the shadow health minister does—claimed that, under the LNP, Queensland growth is forecast to slow to three per cent from

four per cent. The member for Mulgrave has previously claimed that the LNP inherited an economy—believe this, fellow members—growing at 7.9 per cent. That is what he said on ABC Radio on 13 April 2013: the economy was growing at 7.9 per cent. He has obviously been in China recently.

Mr Langbroek interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: I thank the member for Surfers Paradise. China is not even growing at 7.9 per cent now. China would like to be there. Here are the irrefutable facts: in the last three years of Labor, economic growth averaged just 2.1 per cent. Economic growth over the next three years under the LNP is going to average four per cent.

Mr Pitt: You are cherry-picking figures.

Mr NICHOLLS: He says 'cherry-picking'. Here are the facts: the final state accounts—not prepared by me—report growth for 2012-13 of four per cent. Yes, we have predicted growth of 3.5 but we actually achieved four. That is not good enough for the member for Mulgrave. He needs to go back to a prediction we made a year ago. I would be happy to be wrong, as we were wrong last time, to have growth at four per cent a year.

Mr Pitt interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: Every other state in Australia would love to have growth at four per cent. Here is the irrefutable fact: over the last three years of Labor, growth was 2.1 per cent a year; under the LNP growth will average four per cent a year. Here is another claim he made. He said retail turnover since the election has fallen. In both real and nominal terms retail turnover has risen around about five per cent since March 2012. Under Labor, by comparison, retail turnover either fell or was flat in two of the last three years of the Bligh-Fraser government. Two out of three flat or fell; under us in 18 months five per cent growth in both real and nominal terms, something the member for Mulgrave will not tell us.

Mr Pitt interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: He also makes a claim in relation to taxes. I heard him make the claim in relation to taxes, and he makes it in his university prank in terms of his mythbusters—actually, it is a myth not a mythbuster—that we have raised taxes. What he fails to tell us is that under the previous Labor government tax per person almost doubled between 2001 and 2012. It went up from just over \$1,200 per person to over \$2,340 per person. There are the facts. They are the facts that are provided that show just how badly Labor mismanaged the state's finances.

Mr Pitt interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: All he does is continue to carp, whine and whinge. We are yet to receive, after 20 months, an alternative plan. We heard him say on the ABC that just because the LNP government has a plan does not mean that he has to have an alternative. There it is, the lack of an alternative plan—the lack of a desire for an alternative plan. I think we can probably get closer next year in terms of the unforeseen expenditure because obviously the member for Mulgrave does not need the staff that he has because he does not need to have an alternative plan. Despite the fact that he has three people carrying him around emperor like, as the Premier said, fanning his brow, they are obviously not doing anything to deliver policy. So what are they going to do? I think the people of Queensland might genuinely ask the question what are those 22 members of staff, some of them moonlighting obviously at the University of Queensland, doing to provide an alternative policy platform? That is the great shame of what we see and hear today. There was not one question in relation to what the actual appropriations were. Here we are serving it up. There is the consolidated fund financial report. Here is the Appropriations Bill. Here is a day of debate. We could have a day of debate, we could have two days of debate over it. Have we had one question in relation to it? Was there one question in relation to the veracity of the accounts? Was there anyone saying that should not have been spent, that you haven't done the right thing? Was there any question about it?

Mr Pitt interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: I hear the member for Mulgrave saying, 'We asked the question. We asked the question.' Mr Pitt, the member for Mulgrave, asks for something he never saw fit to deliver in his own government. He was a member of a government and a cabinet that for three years rolled in the previous year's unforeseen expenditure a year later and he complains, when we do give them the full details, that it is still not enough for him. I think I could invite the member for Mulgrave to come and sit in my office each and every day and get a full briefing from the Under Treasurer and it would still not be enough for him, he would want me to explain that to him as well.

Their opposition rings hollow. They have been caught out doing the wrong thing. This government is doing the right thing. We have reintroduced the practice, cancelled by the former Labor government and the prior Labor treasurer Andrew Fraser in 2008, of producing an appropriation bill that appropriately and in conformity with the Westminster tradition enables the parliament to scrutinise the expenditure authorised by the previous year's budget resolutions and under the control of the executive. Still the member for Mulgrave is unhappy. If there was one particular issue that shows that the ALP has heard everything and learned nothing it is the member for Mulgrave's response to the Appropriation Bill 2013.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Hon. TJ NICHOLLS (Clayfield—LNP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade) (4.19 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. TJ NICHOLLS (Clayfield—LNP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade) (4.20 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.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AND ROOMING ACCOMMODATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 10 September (see p. 2879).

Second Reading

 **Hon. TL MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works) (4.20 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

In opening I thank the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee for its prompt consideration of the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. In particular, I thank the committee and its chairman, the member for Warrego, for their deliberation and report on the bill. The committee tabled its report on 22 October 2013. I also acknowledge those who made submissions on the bill to the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee including the Housing Industry Association, the HIA; the Queensland Mental Health Commission; the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland; the Tenants Union of Queensland Inc; the Canine Helpers for the Disabled Inc; and the Brisbane Housing Co. Ltd. I acknowledge and thank those individuals who took the time to make submissions and those who presented their arguments before the committee at the hearing held on 1 October 2013. I have given careful consideration to the committee's recommendations and am now pleased to table the government's response to the committee report.

Tabled paper: Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee: Report No. 35—Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013, government response [\[3924\]](#).

The main purpose of the bill is to amend the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008; the Queensland Building Services Authority Act 1991; and the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009. Recently the government released its Housing 2020

Strategy, which sets out this government's vision for a flexible, efficient and responsive housing system. One of the key elements of the strategy is to transfer the tenancy management of up to 90 per cent of public housing to the community housing sector by 2020. Community housing organisations are better able to provide a more personalised service and are also better equipped to engage the sort of ancillary support that many high-need social housing tenants require. Harnessing the expertise of the non-government sector also allows us to revitalise existing public housing stock and add some much-needed new housing, without placing an additional burden on taxpayers. The government also wants to ensure that our policies apply consistently across the social housing sector regardless of whether the tenant is in government managed housing or community housing. Planning and development for the transfers is well underway, with Logan expected to be the first significant management transfer likely to commence from mid-2014.

The proposed amendments in this bill will streamline the transition of tenancies to community housing providers in a number of ways. Unlike tenants of government managed social housing, tenants of community housing providers are eligible to receive Commonwealth rental assistance. The proposed amendments will enable community housing providers who take on the management of transfer tenancies to access CRA as soon as the transfer takes effect. Secondly, community housing providers will be able to levy a bond or service charges on tenants who are transferred to them. Again, this is a standard practice in community managed social housing. The committee made some observations about this and I stress that the government has steps in place to minimise any impact that this might have on some tenants.

Tenants who are transferred to community housing providers will not be required to pay a bond for at least two years from the time the first significant management transfer takes place, which as I just mentioned is likely to be mid-2014. During this period, the department will give community housing providers a guarantee equal to the value of the bonds. Transfer tenants will then be assisted to put their own bond in place during the following 12 months. In practice, this will mean tenants will have up to three years to save for a bond. We also need to remember that the value of those bonds will be significantly lower than they would be for an equivalent property in the private market, since the bond is based on the heavily reduced social housing rent. Based on average public housing rent of around \$120 per week, the average bond is likely to be around \$500.

To provide further protection for existing tenants, new community housing providers will also not be able to levy service charges for using excess water, for example, for at least two years from the time the first significant transfer takes place. Again, applying service charges for excess water use is nothing more than common sense and in any normal tenancy if you use excessive amounts of water you will pay an additional cost. Those standards should apply to social housing tenants as well. To keep things fair and consistent across the sector, the same requirements and the same support will be offered to existing social housing tenants. In some cases, tenants in community housing already pay a bond and service charges. Our vision is that wherever possible social housing should be transitional; a temporary stopping point for the duration of need along the road to independence, rather than a destination in itself. These changes are about normalising the process of renting so it more closely resembles the private market, albeit still at a heavily subsidised rate.

Community housing providers will continue to be able to require tenants who are transferred to them to provide regular household information. This is necessary to ensure that government policies on rent setting, underoccupancy and ongoing eligibility can continue to be applied consistently throughout the community housing sector. The provisions of the bill also mean transferred tenants do not have to sign a new tenancy agreement since the amendments deem existing tenants to have a new agreement in place. This minimises the interruption to tenants and relieves community housing providers of the administrative burden that would naturally flow from having to individually resign thousands of tenancy agreements.

The bill will also strengthen the ability of the government and of community housing providers to respond appropriately to antisocial behaviour and illegal activity taking place in our properties. While only a small minority of tenants do the wrong thing, those people have the ability to make life an absolute misery for those unlucky enough to live nearby. The government's new antisocial behaviour policy, otherwise known as the three-strikes policy, has been in effect since the start of July. It is still early days, but the initial data suggests it has been a great success, with most people pulling their socks up after receiving their first strike. However, there is still room for improvement. One of the great challenges in this area is what to do when, for whatever reason, the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal adjudicators refuse to terminate a tenancy despite repeated and persistent antisocial behaviour from a tenant. I will give a very topical example of what I am referring to.

Just this week I received word of one particular case involving a tenant on the north side of Brisbane who had been issued with a notice to leave after roughly six months of tormenting the neighbours with ongoing fighting, swearing and blaring music. The matter made its way to QCAT in September. The adjudicator decided the tenant should be given another month to get their act together. That very same day, the department received another complaint from a neighbour that she and her partner had been assaulted by three teenagers from the same property. The complaint was subsequently verified by police and a number of witnesses. The matter made its way back to QCAT. This time the adjudicator decided that the family deserved another three months to get a handle on the situation. Can members imagine how badly the neighbours are feeling right now?

The tenants also have a track record of failing to pay their rent. Between July and September this year they went six weeks without paying any rent, paid for the next month and then have not paid anything since. The matter has been relisted with QCAT where, with a bit of luck, we might finally be able to move these people on. So while the policy has been a great success so far, I believe the legislation needs to be amended to require QCAT to take a firmer stance in cases like the one I just mentioned.

I am mindful of some of the concerns that have been expressed by the community to the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee in relation to vulnerable people, including those with mental illness. In response, I can say that the antisocial behaviour policy is about helping tenants modify their behaviour, not just about kicking them out.

Obviously there will be cases, like the one I just mentioned, where people have been given numerous opportunities to get their act together and have simply refused to do so. In cases where we have no choice but to remove people, households are given referrals to alternative types of accommodation. However, I am extremely mindful of the needs of our most vulnerable and have requested my department liaise with the Mental Health Commissioner and the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commissioner to ensure we have adequate support and protection in place.

I note the committee's interest in making sure people understand their obligations. Whenever a prospective tenant is about to sign a tenancy agreement, we have departmental staff available to talk them through their rights and responsibilities. Through this process new tenants will have a clear understanding of what is and what is not acceptable, as well as what they can expect from the department. The three-strikes policy also allows tenancy managers to use their discretion and issue warnings instead of strikes for some minor antisocial behaviour.

In cases where antisocial behaviour may be attributed to a mental illness or other form of disability, the policy also provides for alternative responses, including referrals for additional support, consideration of a transfer to another public housing dwelling and more closely monitoring the tenancy. Where required, the department will enter into an acceptable behaviour agreement with a tenant to make it absolutely clear what needs to change.

The three-strikes policy also makes it perfectly clear that the government has zero tolerance for illegal activity like running drug laboratories in social housing. This kind of behaviour is not only illegal but also can seriously jeopardise the health and safety of tenants and neighbours. There is also a significant cost involved in rectifying and decontaminating a dwelling which has been used as a clandestine drug lab to make it ready for the next tenant. These costs typically run upwards of about \$75,000, which is a completely unacceptable burden on Queensland taxpayers.

Tenants still have recourse to the principles of natural justice and complaints are thoroughly investigated before action is taken, including a right of reply as part of the department's investigation process. Existing appeal rights will be maintained and if they believe they have been unfairly treated tenants are free to put their case to QCAT.

The committee also made some observations about the appeals and review rights of community housing tenants. The Housing Act 2003 has been recently amended by the Housing and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2013 to enable Queensland to adopt the national regulatory system for community housing providers. Once fully enacted, which is expected on 1 January 2014, this will provide nationally consistent safeguards for community housing tenants. Community housing providers will be required to demonstrate they are fair, transparent and responsive in the delivery of services to tenants and specifically in relation to complaints and appeals that these matters are managed and addressed promptly and fairly.

A provider who fails to do this will be subject to compliance action under the Housing Act 2003. In the event that these breaches are not rectified, are repeated or serious in nature, the provider risks being deregistered, losing their funding and having the service transferred to another provider that provides high-quality and responsive services to tenants.

I take very seriously the need to ensure tenants are treated fairly and have access to complaint and appeals mechanisms regardless of whether they are living in government managed or community managed housing. This is why housing ministers around the country are appointing community housing registrars to monitor the sector's performance, to take direct action where needed to protect tenants and funded assets, and to advise ministers on issues that need national resolution. Put together, these changes will be a significant boost to the protections afforded for tenants in community housing.

I now move on to the second part of the bill. On 29 August 2013, the Governor's assent was given to the Queensland Building Services Authority Amendment Act 2013 which implements the first stage of the government's response to the report by the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee on its inquiry into the operation and performance of the Queensland Building Services Authority. While the majority of issues identified in the government response to the committee report are being considered by the building regulator or an implementation committee, some issues need to be progressed as soon as possible. Accordingly, the bill includes amendments to facilitate commercial development, public private partnerships and similar government projects such as the Commonwealth Games Village.

By amending section 42 of the Queensland Building Services Authority Act, the QBSA Act, we will allow a business or individual who is not a licensed building contractor to engage a licensed contractor who will then undertake the commercial building work. The amendments will also remove restrictions regarding retention moneys and security applying to special purpose vehicles involved in PPPs. The bill also amends section 83 of the QBSA Act to enable the building regulator to apply to QCAT for an order so it can continue to act in a building dispute while QCAT proceedings are underway. This is expected to facilitate earlier resolution of building disputes referred to QCAT.

The bill also includes amendments to the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009 to promote the rights of people with a disability who rely on these dogs for support. The act currently allows people with a disability to be accompanied by their guide, hearing or assistance dog in public places and in public passenger vehicles. These proposed amendments will address barriers that people with a disability face when relying on a guide, hearing or assistance dog and the frustration of being refused accommodation or having to pay additional charges for having their dog with them. The changes proposed will remedy this situation and make it a specific offence to refuse private, rental or holiday accommodation or impose terms such as additional payments.

While the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 makes it unlawful to discriminate by refusing to rent accommodation to a person because the person has an impairment and relies on a guide, hearing or assistance dog, the proposed amendments also create an express right for people who rely on their dogs to access places of accommodation. Alongside this express right is a new offence which provides an additional remedy to those available under the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991. The implication is that the onus for seeking a remedy is no longer the sole responsibility of the person with a disability. Instead the burden of prosecuting the offence now lies with the government.

While these amendments have been considered as urgent in order to address this legislative loophole, a broader review of the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009 is currently underway. This is being informed by a review panel of relevant stakeholders from training organisations, advocacy organisations, tourism and accommodation sectors, and relevant government agencies.

Once again, I would like to thank the committee and all the stakeholders for their contribution to this important bill. I commend the bill to the House.



Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (4.38 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013, introduced into the Legislative Assembly by the second Newman government Minister for Housing and Public Works, Hon. Tim Mander, on 10 September 2013 and which was referred to the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee for scrutiny and public consultation. This bill, as indicated by the minister, proposes amendments to three separate pieces of legislation; namely, the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008, the Queensland Building and Construction Commission Act 1991, and the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009. I propose to talk to each piece of legislation proposed to be amended by this bill before turning to the more holistic issues which stem from the introduction of this bill.

This bill amends the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 in what could only be described as a substantial way. The explanatory notes of the bill indicate that the provisions of the bill in its current form will allow for a smooth transition of tenancies from direct government management to management by a community housing provider; achieve greater consistency between public housing and community housing; and support the implementation of the government's new antisocial behaviour policy. Now this may all sound well and good in theory but, when you actually look at the legislation and the form to date of the Newman LNP government, there are many worrying and concerning factors about this legislation.

So let us look first at the two streams of the amendments as outlined in the explanatory notes, that being the transfer of tenancies from direct government management to management by a community housing provider and the notion of greater consistency of operation between public housing and the community housing sector. Specifically, let us focus on clause 20 of the bill which amends multiple sections of the existing act. But let us focus on new section 527C, 'Replacement of standard and special terms for certain tenancies', and new section 527F, 'State may charge bonds and service charges under existing state tenancy agreements'.

Section 527C deals with public housing tenants who are currently managed by the state government but will be transitioned to a community housing provider. This section will allow the standards and special terms of the tenancy agreement to be replaced and even modified from the existing agreement when the transfer occurs from the Department of Housing and Public Works to the community housing sector. This amendment will also allow the lessor, through regulation, the power to levy a bond on the tenancy and state how that bond should be paid and allow the service charges of individually metered properties to be passed on to the tenant. However, the crux of this amendment is to allow the state to transfer in bulk the management rights of currently owned and managed Department of Housing and Public Works properties to the non-government sector through a community housing provider.

Members, let's just pause for a moment and talk about the minister's shiny, slick new policy which was rolled out during his estimates hearing this year with the grand title of *Housing 2020* because, as members would know, this document, *Housing 2020*, is the catalyst for the changes that we are debating in this House today and has been referenced by the minister during this debate. It was interesting, if not surprising, to learn that during the estimates hearing this year, when I asked the minister to table the implementation plan for this bold, new strategy entitled *Housing 2020*, the minister failed to do so. In fact, when I asked him for it he indicated that it was the document that he had tabled during his introductory speech; namely, the 16-page *Housing 2020* document. The minister was unable to provide, and still has not provided, a listing of the costing, modelling and exactly how he will achieve his bold objectives of, and I quote from his message—

Our aim is to establish a flexible, regionally based, integrated system that, by 2020, will deliver an additional 12,000 homes and see up to 90% of social housing dwellings managed by community housing providers.

So what we have here is a minister with an idea of transitioning the management rights of our public housing to the non-government sector but with no strategic plan that this parliament knows of. What I fear and what tenants fear is that this is only the start, that the transferring of the management rights is only the beginning. And they fear that we will soon see this Newman LNP government flogging off public housing assets en masse to the non-government sector and most likely to the private sector as well—perhaps even to the top end of town.

Section 527C of this bill is concerning on multiple levels as the implications that it creates are wide-ranging to say the least. One of those implications is for the current hardworking and dedicated staff in the Public Service—those officers who work within the Department of Housing and Public Works service centres right across the state. I ask the minister and members of the LNP in this chamber: what will happen to them as a result of this transfer? Will these officers be transitioned? Will they be retained in the Public Service? If they are transitioned, will they receive their current entitlements? Will they be at their current Public Service levels or will this change? These are all questions that the minister could not answer at estimates and has failed to furnish those details subsequently.

I believe that during the public hearings of the committee the department referred on numerous occasions to the fact that people would be able to gain access to various pieces of information and support services via the housing service centres, with Mr Eades, the Deputy Director-General, Housing Services, Department of Housing and Public Works, stating—

We engage with people at the coalface—at the service delivery end at the counters—of our housing service centres ...

I would like to table the document entitled *Transfer of the management of social housing to the non-government sector*, dated July 2013, which outlines the proposed time frame for the transition of public housing currently managed by the government to be transferred to the community housing sector over the coming years.

Table paper: Document by the Department of Housing and Public Works titled 'Transfer on the management of social housing to the non-government sector, an overview' [3950].

As members will be able to see, the program is proposed to commence in urban areas and then work its way out to the regions and indeed has, if this document is correct, already begun. That begs the question: what will happen to the highly trained, hardworking and dedicated housing department officers currently in the housing service centres across this state when the transition occurs? This question was put to the minister during the estimates hearing, with him stating—

An essential part of the contracting out to community housing organisations is asking them how they intend to use the staff in the current housing service centres—people who are very skilled, people who have quite a bit of intellectual property, people who I have got a great deal of respect for.

The minister went on to say in relation to staff at the Caboolture Housing Service Centre and their future—

They know that they are an asset to any future organisation to be working in this field and that is the approach that they have been taking. I think they have, again, no reason to fear. If they are passionate and are doing as good a job as I think they are doing, they will be snapped up by these community housing organisations.

Let us look closely at the minister's words. He used the term 'snapped up'. This means that none of them have a guarantee that their jobs will be safe, that in terms of their future employment these officers are on their own. None of the hundreds of hardworking and dedicated public servants working in the housing sector know if they will have a job in the community housing sector. That is right—none of them know.

The legislation before the House today enabling the government's policy to transition 90 per cent of public housing to the non-government sector will likely engender a severe side effect, with many hardworking and loyal Public Service officers losing their jobs because of it and becoming additional victims on top of the 14,000-plus public servants that this heartless Newman LNP government has sacked already. I call on the Minister for Housing and Public Works—as compassionate as he may like to portray himself—to guarantee that no public servant, no officer in the Department of Housing and Public Works, will lose their job due to this transition process. These hardworking public servants, as the minister has previously publicly indicated, have a wealth of intellectual property assisting Queensland public housing tenants on the front line day in, day out. It will be a loss not only to the government but also to the Queensland community if these officers are left without a job and without an avenue to use their skills by operating the public housing system in this state.

It is known that the former housing minister in the former Labor government stated in 2011 that the government was considering transferring the whole of Queensland public housing stock to community providers. However, this did not happen under Labor. An article on 28 April 2011 in the *Courier-Mail* about this topic stated—

Critics believe that private investment could open the door to unscrupulous providers who would be in a position to rip off the state's most needy.

What we could have from the very minute this legislation in its current form is passed in the House is incorporated associations and private businesses popping up all over the state claiming to be community housing providers but which will really be purely in it for the money. That is why the former Labor government did not take this path. The management of the public housing system is not just about the management of bricks and mortar. The public housing system is different from the private rental market. The public housing sector is a different beast from the private rental market. It requires the people managing it to be more than just administrators. In fact, they are multiskilled. They are counsellors, investigators and staff who provide support when required to some of the most vulnerable people in our community.

These officers are highly respected in the communities in which they work. That is why it is crucial that we retain the current officers who are in our public housing centres across Queensland, as they have years of experience in this sector. That is why we will not be supporting this part of the legislation to allow for the replacement of standard and special terms for certain tenancies, because we do not agree with the bulk transfer of management rights from the government to the community sector in this matter. We do not believe that those opposite including the minister have done enough homework to ensure that this model will work.

Do not get me wrong: we do support the community housing sector. We believe that over time the community housing sector can have more of a role just like it did under the previous Labor government, with the government building new units or houses and then gifting them to the community housing sector to run and to manage. But a bulk transfer, if it should be done at all, should not be done lightly. It needs planning to ensure that not only public housing tenants are looked after but also the hardworking officers in the Department of Housing and Public Works are looked after and do not end up as mere statistics on this government's long list of axings and sackings. These officers deserve more than being chucked on the scrap heap, Minister.

Let me now turn to section 527F of the bill which, if successful, will allow the government to levy a bond and pass on service charges like water usage to existing public housing tenants. The notion of levying a bond on public housing tenants and passing on charges for utilities such as water is a concept that we do not completely oppose. Public housing tenants, just like private rental market tenants or owner occupiers, should be able to pay for what they use to ensure that fairness is maintained. However, adequate safeguards and provisions need to be put in place to ensure that the most vulnerable members of society are looked after, and this is something that I will cover later.

I would like to touch on the bill as it currently stands in terms of the retrospective nature of the provisions before us today. Proposed new section 527F, as it is before us, allows for the state to add provisions to tenancy agreements which are currently on foot in terms of the requirement to levy a bond and pass on service charges. I ask members of the House: do you really think this is fair? Most people would not think it is fair. I do not think it is fair. Is it fair to have an agreement that you have entered into retrospectively changed during the course of the agreement with the ability of the lessor to insert whatever requirements they like on the tenant? Is this fair? No, it is not. While in general we are not opposed to the insertion of new provisions in the tenancy agreement, we agree wholeheartedly with the Tenants Union of Queensland, which stated during the Queensland parliament's consultation process—

The application of this provision would essentially mean that a tenant may enter into an agreement at a particular date, and the State could in the future retrospectively alter the conditions of that agreement. This provision offends the basic principles of natural justice and equips the State with considerable power to effectively 'move the goal posts' on social housing tenants, who have no choice but to abide by the new terms or face homelessness.

These provisions essentially empower the state to change the terms of the agreement at its own discretion. What we have here are provisions that will retrospectively change the agreement to potentially dramatically change a tenant's tenancy agreement. Tricky, isn't it? It is real tricky of the minister. I am surprised that the Minister for Housing and Public Works has come into this chamber and introduced laws that allow retrospective powers. Why am I surprised? Because the articled clerk, P-plate, bumbling Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Mr Jarrod Bleijie, in early June this year slammed retrospective legislation as 'repugnant and does not work'. But let us move on. We on this side of the chamber believe that tenants should be afforded every possible opportunity to understand any new regulations and provisions which will be placed on them and not have them forced upon them in some arbitrary, retrospective fashion by this Newman LNP government.

That is why we wholeheartedly support the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee's recommendations which propose to redraft these sections to ensure that our public housing tenants in this state receive a fair go. The committee stated—

The Committee is concerned that proposed section 527C would enable a regulation to retrospectively change the standard and special terms of existing State tenancy agreements. The regulation would not be subject to the scrutiny of this Committee until after it is introduced, nor Parliament, nor the parties to the agreements changed by the regulation. The Committee also understands that, under this Bill, the regulation would be able to change any part of the existing agreement including the levying of bonds and service charges, the duration of the agreement, the rent payable etc.

The committee goes on to state—

Section 527F would enable the CEO of the Department of Housing and Public Works—

that is the director-general—

to retrospectively change existing State tenancy agreements so that the State may levy bonds and service charges.

I could not agree more with the committee's concerns and I believe that redrafting is necessary. Do not get me wrong; I believe that it is appropriate that over time public housing tenants are required to contribute to the utilities that they have used and to pay a bond based on their current subsidised rent. However, these provisions should not be thrust upon public housing tenants retrospectively without proper agreement and their knowledge. This is why—and I believe this is the best course of action—the public housing tenancy agreements do not change and should not change until either the

tenancy agreement is terminated through natural means, such as the expiration, transfer or renewal of an agreement, or if the agreement is breached and terminated in a manner already prescribed under the act. In addition, the committee has recommended that the clauses be redrafted to change the proposed method of the tenancy agreement to be amended from the use of regulation, which can be drafted and enacted by the executive arm of the government without prior scrutiny, to be required to be enshrined in the legislation through an amendment to the act. This will ensure that any change to a tenancy agreement, either a future tenancy agreement or, more importantly, an agreement which is currently on foot, will be safeguarded against any potential negative change as it will have been subjected to the rigorous parliamentary committee process. However, with that said, we do not believe that these provisions provide the adequate safeguards to current and future public housing tenants when it comes to the specific issue of levying a bond and passing on service charges. As I stated previously, we do not have an issue with public housing tenants being required to pay a bond or a service charge. However, this should be undertaken in the appropriate manner.

Queenslanders are doing it tough with the soaring price of electricity under LNP rule and with the soaring price of utilities under LNP rule. Many are finding it tough to make ends meet. With the Newman LNP government elected on a mantra of lowering the cost of living, it begs the question: why are they imposing further provisions to provide for people to pay more, blowing household budgets for the poorest people in our community? One has only to look at the *Hansard* from when those opposite were in opposition to see how they would bleat on and on, day in, day out about the cost of living and, in particular, the cost of living of those in public housing. A brief search of the *Hansard* shows that a motion was moved by the then Leader of the Opposition, now Minister for Education, Training and Employment, Mr Langbroek, on 7 October 2009 opposing any increase to public housing rent for pensioners. Mr Langbroek stated—

Queensland pensioners are doing it tough. Even with the increase, a single pensioner receives just \$330 and typically spends about \$75 on food for the week. This state government literally wants to take away 10 per cent of these pensioners' hard-won food allowance. The increase in rent of \$7.50 a week, or \$400 each year, will be a burden for every single pensioner in Queensland.

Most members were not in this chamber at the time, but it was absolutely appalling that, when in opposition, those opposite were concerned about the cost of living pressures on our Queensland pensioners but then, when they came to government, they completely forgot their statements. They allow legislation to be drafted to force public housing tenants, in particular those on fixed social benefit income, to pay more through a bond and service charges. During that same debate the member for Burdekin and then shadow minister for community services and housing and shadow minister for women stated, 'Pensioners are amongst the state's most vulnerable people.' I must admit I do not often agree with her, but she was right on this one. It is no wonder that she was dumped from the frontbench and relegated to the backbench as she made a lot of sense on this issue.

The pensioners of Queensland demand respect, and that is why we believe that the requirement to pay a bond or a service charge should not be placed on all public housing tenants. Safeguards should be put in place to ensure that public housing tenants who are on a fixed income such as a Centrelink pension are not subjected to these new provisions. We are not talking about people who only receive a small portion of a pension or payment and have other substantial sources of income, but those like our senior citizens whose major source of income is a pension from Centrelink. It is these people, the pensioners, who need to be protected. A bond should only be levied on those who are in a position to afford it, not people who rely solely on a pension who would, if a bond is levied on them, face increased pressure on their cost of living. I call on the minister to have a heart, to show some compassion from his days at the Scripture Union and give the pensioners of Queensland a break and exempt them from a rise in their cost of living. I ask the minister most sincerely: what would Jesus have done? I also quote from Matthew, chapter 25—

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order, members!

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I was speaking. The member for Bundamba has the call.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you for your protection, Madam Deputy Speaker. I quote from Matthew chapter 25—

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in ...

I would like to now turn to the proposed notice to leave because of a serious breach provisions concurrently with the amendments of the handover requirements. I know that many members who are in this House today are relatively new to this House and probably will not be around for long. However, I am sure that they have already experienced the stories about what *Today Tonight* or *A Current Affair* would describe as 'the public housing tenants from hell'. I have been a member of this place for a very long time and I can tell honourable members that my hardworking electorate staff, who have been with me from the beginning, and I have dealt with our fair share of public housing tenants who treat the system with contempt and without respect. Public housing has always been, and should always be, a privilege and not a right. It is there to help Queenslanders in need whether that is for a short period of time or a longer, protracted period.

It should always be respected and taken care of whilst a tenant is occupying it because at the end of the day the dwellings are the property of the state and, indeed, all Queensland taxpayers. That said, the new provisions outlined in clause 9 of this bill which creates a new provision, section 290A, 'Notice to leave because of serious breach', go too far. Currently there are a whole suite of provisions in legislation and regulations that are available to authorities in managing difficult and unruly tenants. As outlined by the committee report—

Currently, a notice to leave the premises can be given to a tenant on the following grounds:

- unremedied breach of the agreement (including but not limited to failure to pay rent)
- noncompliance with a tribunal order
- agreement frustrated (Non-liveability)
- compulsory acquisition
- sale contract/intention to sell
- ending of entitlement under employment
- ending of accommodation assistance
- ending of housing assistance
- without ground (for periodic and fixed terms agreement).

Each of these grounds currently attracts different notice periods ranging from seven days to two months service; however, the bill before the House today adds to these provisions by allowing the lessor to serve a tenant with a notice to leave for 'serious breach' if the lessor—now get this—

reasonably believes the tenant has:

- used the premises for an illegal activity
- destroyed or seriously damaged part of the premises
- endangered other persons or
- interfered with the reasonable peace, comfort or privacy of another tenant.

This means that a tenant may be served with a notice to leave for a serious breach based on a reasonable belief—something that does not have to be proved. They will then have seven days under the new proposed section 329(2) to vacate the premises based on a mere belief or suspicion of something taking place. As was stated at the public hearing of the committee, there are already current provisions enshrined in legislation such as section 297 under the 'objectionable behaviour' provision to terminate someone's lease; however, the minister is taking the view that he wishes to have the power to terminate someone's lease on the basis of suspected illegal activity. This, as the Tenants Union of Queensland has stated—

... should not proceed into legislation as it would fundamentally undermine the rules of natural justice by reversing the burden of proof and allow lessors to judge tenants guilty until proven innocent.

This proposed provision to allow the lessor—either the state or a community housing provider—to form a reasonable belief of someone's guilt without them even being convicted or even charged with a crime is akin to the Attorney-General and the Minister for Justice ramming legislation through this House, subverting the doctrine of the separation of powers and trying to be judge, jury and jailer. But we fear that those opposite, including the Minister for Housing and Public Works, do not really respect the work nor the words of public housing advocates such as the hardworking individuals from the Tenants Union of Queensland, so let me quote from the submission made by the Anti-Discrimination Commission, which said—

A fundamental human right ... everyone charged with a criminal offence shall have the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law.

...

This basic human right ought not be overridden by this legislation, and a conviction for serious illegal behaviour being carried on within the premises ought be the requirement before a notice to leave is issued.

Let me repeat the key point in their submission: innocent until proven guilty. Therefore, these proposed laws to allow tenants to be evicted merely based on a suspicion or a belief is completely and utterly unacceptable.

I wish to refer back to 'Bazza' and 'Dogger', who were frequent visitors to the Royal Mail Hotel in Goodna in my electorate, who I mentioned during my speech in the pointless and waste-of-time debate on the Succession to the Crown Bill—another Bleijie bill—a few months back. I would like to inform members today that they are now both safely back in Australia, after having travelled to England to be in the crowds of well-wishers during the christening of His Royal Highness Prince George of Cambridge. I have heard that Bazza and Dogger—like me, the Tenants Union of Queensland and the respected Anti-Discrimination Commissioner of Queensland—have major reservations about this provision. Bazza has been heard saying: 'What happens if my neighbour does not like me? What happens if my neighbour decides to make up false claims that I am growing dope in the back yard or that I am harvesting dope crops, when I am really just tending to my prized petunias, all in a bid to get rid of me as they do not like me because I am unique as an individual? What happens if my neighbours take offence to my wider family coming around on the weekend to catch up and socialise, particularly if they are having a bet on the horses, and make claims that they are too noisy or disturb the peace?' Dogger has asked me: 'Even though we are just playing the *Classic Hits of the 60s and 70s*—and not loudly at all—what's wrong with Elvis? What's wrong with the Beatles?' He said to me that this legislation is open to abuse. It is open to the community to invent claims of falsehoods and mistruths just to get the neighbours evicted and moved because they do not like them.

This legislation will create housing bullies in our streets and our suburbs; people who will make up anything just to get rid of an unwanted neighbour or two. It will allow people to be more easily evicted, thus potentially increasing the homeless rate and creating a culture of couch and house surfers—people and whole families going from couch to couch and house to house each night to find shelter, and while the committee supports these provisions—

Government members interjected.

Mrs MILLER: Squawk on! Squawk on! You're a oncer!

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order! Member for Bundamba, I would ask that you direct your comments through the chair and not at individual members, please.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you very much for your guidance, Madam Deputy Chair. While the committee supports these provisions, with the recommendation of amending the reasonable peace, comfort and privacy of another tenant clause to make it only relevant if the actions occurred over a protracted period of time, we will not be supporting this section, as it fundamentally goes against the cornerstone of justice in our society that you are presumed innocent until proved guilty.

As I said earlier, these new provisions should be read in conjunction with the proposed amendment to section 329 of the act, which will change the notice period times to seven days if someone is evicted through the serious breach process—that I just spoke about—and the second, amending the time that a tenant has to move out when their lease has been terminated or other than through a serious breach from two months down to only one month.

I understand that there is a waiting list for public housing and that if someone is no longer eligible for public housing, then they should be required to move out at the earliest possible opportunity. However, as the Tenants Union of Queensland has stated—

Mr Kempton: 'Dear Comrade!'

Mrs MILLER: I take that interjection. You are complaining about the Tenants Union of Queensland, are you? We will make sure they all know—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order! Member for Bundamba, I have asked you to direct your comments through the chair before—

Mrs MILLER: Yes, I—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order! I am still speaking. I would hope that I do not need to continue to guide you. I have already asked you twice.

Mrs MILLER: I take your guidance on board, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I thank you. As the Tenants Union of Queensland has stated—

Two months is already an extremely short time period for a tenant to find an alternative property appropriate to their needs.

Many households will have children at school or other reasons for needing to remain in the local area, and will also be on a limited income.

...

vulnerabilities, require time to relocate. They need time to find a suitable property as well as time to physically move their household. Many of these households will not have their own transport.

Restricting the notice period from two months to one month would be detrimental and potentially cause greater harm and potentially increase the homelessness rate in our state as more people are forced to leave with nowhere to go. We will not be supporting this move to guillotine the notice period requirements. However, we do encourage the minister to review and potentially implement the Residential Tenants Representation Agency's submission to allow for public housing tenants to terminate their lease prior to the end of the notice period if they find another location and not be penalised or required to continue to pay rent on the property. This will allow the tenant to be served with a two-month notice period but have the ability to leave sooner than the two months without penalty if they are successful in finding other accommodation prior.

Let me turn to clauses 11 and 13 of the bill which create two new provisions in the act: section 296A, 'Application for termination for damage or injury in public or community housing'; and section 297A, 'Application for termination for objectionable behaviour in public or community housing'. These sections create two new provisions which apply to only one specific class of people—those in public and community housing in Queensland—and not to those in the private rental market.

In particular, members would know that these provisions widen the liability of the tenant to be responsible for the actions of not only the tenant and occupant but also their guests or a person the tenant allows on the premises. The provisions capture harassment and abuse by the tenant or individuals on the property; and intentionally or recklessly endangering another person on the premises or interfering with the reasonable peace, comfort or privacy of a person occupying premises nearby.

While we have some concerns with creating a new and separate provision to solely deal with one class of people and not all tenants of Queensland, we do believe that public housing tenants should take responsibility for their actions and the actions of their guests, just like other residents across Queensland. However, with that said, we do have concerns about how the minister and his department will establish adequate safeguards and support services to ensure public housing tenants in Queensland are protected and not being taken advantage of. As the Anti-Discrimination Commission stated in its submission—

Some tenants with certain mental health or intellectual disabilities are at higher risk of and more vulnerable to being manipulated or used by unscrupulous individuals who may be involved in illegal activity or engage in other objectionable behaviour.

These concerns were similarly echoed by the Queensland Mental Health Commission and the Tenants Union of Queensland. Therefore, while we do not have an in-principle objection to these clauses we have concerns, like many others do, including the committee, which states—

The Committee is concerned to ensure that households with more vulnerable occupants are provided with appropriate support so they can maintain their tenancy.

I call on the minister to outline in detail what support services will be provided to public housing tenants to ensure that, if these laws pass, they are provided with the support they need to navigate themselves through the new legislation. I will talk more shortly about the issue of tenant support services.

I move on to other parts of this 46-page bill, to amendments to what the tribunal—namely, the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal—may, must and must not consider when determining a termination order. Proposed new section 345A adds in various items that the tribunal may, must and must not take into consideration, which in essence compels the tribunal—namely, QCAT—to consider broader concerns when making a decision to terminate a tenancy agreement. This clause, as members would be aware, adds new provisions in section 345A(3)(c)(ii) stating that the tribunal must, if the tenant is a tenant under a state tenancy agreement, take into consideration the needs of

persons awaiting housing assistance from the state in its deliberations. This is absurd as it has no relevance to the individual tenant's situation. Why should the tribunal take into account the state of the public housing waiting list when deliberating on an individual's case? It is absurd. Does that mean that if the public housing waiting list is high the person can be thrown out onto the street and if it is low they might be able to stay? This provision, as recommended by the committee, should be omitted from the legislation to ensure public housing tenants in Queensland receive a fair go.

It is important that we as legislators create legislation that will assist the most vulnerable members of our community, and that is why we support the committee's recommendation No. 5 to redraft section 345A to ensure the tribunal must take into account all relevant circumstances of the tenant and any vulnerable members of the tenant's household in its deliberations. As the Anti-Discrimination Commission has stated—

The Commission considers the circumstances of the tenant and any vulnerable members of the household are relevant matters for the tribunal to take into account when considering the termination of public or community housing tenancies. The Commission is concerned those relevant circumstances may not be taken into consideration by the tribunal unless explicitly required.

The Commission suggests the Act should explicitly state that the tribunal ought to be able to look at **all relevant circumstances** to determine whether it is reasonable to make a termination order, including the circumstances of the tenant and any vulnerable members of the tenant's household ...

It is extremely unfair and unacceptable that some public housing tenants in our state do not follow the rules and are not good citizens. As previously mentioned, we have heard the horror stories of public housing tenants who have gone too far and whose behaviour has deteriorated to an unacceptable level. New sections 527D and 527E will allow the lessor to require a public housing tenant to enter into a behaviour agreement prior to signing the tenancy agreement, which will include the tenant's responsibilities and rights in one document. If the tenant then breaks this agreement a process may be initiated to seek remedy. Whilst we do not oppose these agreements occurring, I ask the minister to please explain in his reply what safeguards will be put in place to ensure this process is not abused, what checks and balances will be initiated and what support services will be provided to public housing tenants in this state to ensure they are fully aware of their rights, obligations and responsibilities before they enter into any agreement.

I would like to turn now to the support services for public housing tenants in Queensland. As the committee outlined throughout its report but in particular on page 12—

The Committee is concerned to ensure that households with more vulnerable occupants are provided with appropriate support so they can maintain their tenancy.

The committee goes further on to state on page 37, which forms part of its deliberations for recommendation 12—

The Committee considers that it is extremely important that social housing tenants fully understand their rights and responsibilities under the Act and under their tenancy agreement, whether that be with the State or a CHP. This understanding is made even more important by the new and potentially serious consequences enabled by this legislation and by the fact that a significant number of public housing tenants are likely to require considerable support to fully understand the terms of their agreements.

In an answer to a question on notice by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the department stated that there is currently a 12-page state tenancy agreement—12 pages—provided to each tenant in addition to a 19-page document titled *Renting a house or unit in Queensland* and the entry condition report. In addition, there is a further 123 pages of information consisting of booklets in relation to other aspects of renting a property. This already seems like an overwhelming amount of information, but this does not include new information that will be provided regarding the changes proposed in this bill and the acceptable behaviour agreements. The department has stated that—

A housing service centre staff member takes new tenants through each part of the document in a formal interview.

Well, if the management of public housing is going to be migrated over to the communities sector and housing service centres shut up—they close right across this state—then who exactly is going to be left to provide this one-on-one support? Through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask the minister today to ensure that there are adequate support services available to public housing tenants to ensure that they understand completely their rights and responsibilities under the law. As the Tenants Union of Queensland stated at the public hearing—

These changes are coming at a time when tenants are relatively unsupported in terms of access to independent advice. The state government has chosen not to support our services and we are still going because of some emergency money that runs out in December.

Members might recall where this emergency money came from. Yes, it came from a former Labor government, because only Labor believes in a strong tenant and advocacy advice service because we believe in the values and the benefits of helping and supporting thousands of people each year to remain in the homes that they are renting. But let me move on.

As we move forward in the public housing space, we need to think outside the box and be able to use every possible resource to ensure that our tenants are supported in a holistic and strategic way. For example, we need to be partnering with other agencies and providing cross-agency responses, as was suggested by the Queensland Mental Health Commissioner during the public hearing. She mentioned an MOU that was signed between the West Australian Department of Housing and the West Australian Mental Health Commission. She stated—

It does not solve everything, but it has quite clear guidelines about contact within 48 hours after the first strike, essentially. So the mental health services go in if it has been identified by Housing that this person may have a mental illness or they suspect that they do. Then you have someone to come in, work with that person—maybe their family, maybe their neighbours—so it is not just a housing problem ...

I table a copy of the MOU for the benefit of all members of the House and in particular the Minister for Housing and Public Works.

Tabled paper: Government of Western Australia—Department of Housing and Mental Health Commission: Memorandum of Understanding—Combined Capital Bid—Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol, and Disability, Mental Health Commission 2011-2012, dated 13 June 2011 [3926].

It is absolutely imperative that we get the basics right. If we have a strong foundation of support services available to all public and even private tenants, all of our communities across Queensland will be better for it.

Before I move on to the amendments associated with the Queensland Building and Construction Commission Act 1991, I want to address some concerns that were raised by the committee in terms of fundamental legislative principles and consultation. In fact, it is the first time that I have seen a committee of the Queensland parliament—it is the first for a committee—specifically state these concerns in its recommendations. In particular, I draw members' attention to recommendations 14 and 15. Recommendation 14 recommends that in any future bills the minister properly identify and address all fundamental legislative principles and provide a more comprehensive discussion of proposed policy changes. This is extraordinary and the minister should hang his head in shame, because he should have taken more time in addressing the fundamental legislative principles and various policy concerns before introducing the legislation into this parliament.

When the minister introduced the legislation and sent it off to a committee for its deliberations without introducing an urgency motion, I thought, being the generous person that I am, that the minister may actually be trying to undertake proper consultation. However, the minister has been comprehensively slammed by the committee for his lack of consultation prior to the introduction of the bill which may have assisted the development of the bill to ensure that it was introduced into this parliament with as few errors as possible. The committee has recommended in recommendation 15—

... that the Department of Housing and Public Works consult extensively on all future Bills to ensure the views of stakeholders and representative bodies are taken into consideration.

I guess only time will tell if this minister will heed and accept these recommendations. The bill also amends the Queensland Building and Construction Commission Act 1991 and, in the interests of time, I will leave the opposition's comments on these amendments to the shadow minister for public works and member for Rockhampton, Bill Byrne.

Before I conclude I want to speak on the amendments to the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009. The committee in its report stated that the policy objective of the amendments—

... is to ensure that people who rely on guide, hearing and assistance dogs have the same rights as others to access places of accommodation.

This set of amendments will make it an offence for a person who runs or is associated with an accommodation service to refuse accommodation to a person with a disability who relies on a certified guide, hearing or assistance dog. It is no secret that the shadow minister for disability services and my good friend and colleague the member for Woodridge, Mrs Desley Scott, introduced a private member's bill into this House on 22 August—my birthday in fact—titled—now, wait for it—the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs (Places of Accommodation) Amendment Bill 2013. And do you know what the bill did? The explanatory notes explain it. They state—

The object of this Bill is to amend the *Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009* to make it an offence for a person in control of accommodation offered to the public to deny accommodation to a person with a disability who relies on a certified guide, hearing or assistance dog.

Call me cynical, but doesn't the bill introduced by the opposition seem to be similar—if not identical—to the amendments introduced by the minister? An important question to ask is: when were the government's amendments drafted? We would like to know when, because during the public hearing a Ms O'Connor, Executive Director in the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, said that the Premier wrote to the minister on 12 July asking her to look into the situation and introduce urgent amendments to address the accommodation issue. We asked her further questions about the drafting of these amendments and she spoke in relation to that and said—

... but drafting did not start until around August.

However, she did not provide a specified date. So I ask in my concluding comments: if the Minister for Housing and the Minister for Communities merely ripped the opposition bill and dumped it in their bill, what are you earning your money for? I ask—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order! Member for Bundamba, I have asked you before to refrain from using the term 'you'.

A government member: Kick her out! Kick her out!

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: This is the third time I have had to pull you up.

A government member: Kick her out!

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I now warn you under 253A for ignoring my directions.

Mr Bleijie: Has she already been warned today?

Government members interjected.

Mrs MILLER: Madam Deputy Speaker—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Bundamba, if you would like to make a point of order, could you at least turn your microphone on please?

Mrs MILLER: I did have it on.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Well, it is not.

Mr Bleijie: Spare us!

Government members interjected.

Mrs MILLER: Madam Deputy Speaker, I heard the comments made by the Attorney-General across the chamber and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mrs MILLER: No. I find—


Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Bundamba, can you please allow me to make an adjudication?

Mrs MILLER: Yes.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I did not hear the comments from the Attorney-General, perhaps because there was a lot of interjecting across the chamber. You have 11 seconds left and I would ask that you conclude your contribution, please.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you very much for your wise guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker. I ask what the ministers are earning their money for.

(Time expired)

 **Mr HOBBS** (Warrego—LNP) (5.39 pm): I am pleased to speak to the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. I will not go into the objectives of the bill, because the minister and other members have covered them very well. After listening to the ALP members today, you would think that they were the champions of social and public housing. The ALP is the reason we are here today to change the act. The ALP is the cause of the problem: 20 years of incompetent management, 20 years of protecting criminals, 20 years of supporting tenants from hell. Good tenants have a right to be able to live in peace and harmony instead of having people screaming next to their bedroom and annoying them. The ALP has supported illegal activities in social housing. The ALP has supported drug offences occurring in public housing. The ALP has supported the cost of up to \$75,000 to rectify damage and to bring a dwelling back to a habitable condition. There are 20 known cases of rectification. Under the ALP's watch, these activities have been allowed to flourish.

I do not think it is right that the ALP criticises us for trying to fix these problems. Good tenants should not live in fear. If you are a good tenant and you are doing the right thing—you are looking after your home—you will be protected and looked after. That is what any reasonable person would expect. These drug laboratories that the ALP has been supporting over the past 20 years produce hazardous chemicals that are a risk to the health and safety of people who enter or use the property, including children. The ALP is supporting children having access to these drugs and chemicals. That is not what I think most people would want to happen. The member who spoke before me made it quite clear that the ALP was a so-called champion. The ALP is not a champion; the ALP is the cause of the problem. Today, we are here trying to fix this mess that has been left to us by the ALP over the past 20 years.

It takes a long time for these criminal charges to be resolved. In the meantime, under the ALP's act, those people who have been charged with those offences can stay in their houses and contaminate them. They can stay there and influence the kids. We do not believe that that is what should be done.

Mr Malone: They sold houses off.


Mr HOBBS: They sold off houses as well. They got rid of quite a few houses that were quite good. We were told that the ALP is a strong advocate for tenants. The reality is that the ALP was a poor manager of a wonderful structure that we had to help many people who need social housing. We need to be able to offer a wonderful service for those people.

I thank the minister for his comments in relation to the committee's recommendations to the bill. The committee examined the bill in detail. I am pleased that the minister has picked up on some of the recommendations that we made and that other recommendations will be picked up as legislation is developed in the future. It is certainly the government's absolute right to keep to the principles and objectives of a bill before the House. The committee certainly accepts that. The work that has been done by committees across this whole parliament is invaluable and can be used in future legislation.

I refer to the proposed new provisions that will enable the department to evict tenants for a serious breach without having to apply to QCAT for a termination order. Those provisions also apply to any property adjoining or adjacent to the premises, including any property that is available for use by the tenant in common with others for an illegal activity and an occupant, a guest of the tenant, or a person allowed on the premises by the tenant. New section 290A allows action to be taken to end tenancies quickly. That has to be done quickly when public housing or community housing properties are being used for illegal activity or where there are serious breaches, as we know have occurred. The section is not limited to drug related activity. It has been drafted widely to apply to illegal activity generally. This provision intentionally lowers the standard of proof and will allow a lessor to take prompt action to issue a notice to leave for a serious breach rather than having to await the outcome of criminal proceedings.

The department advised the committee that, although the ASB policy was implemented in July 2013, it continues to have difficulty in obtaining termination orders from QCAT and subsequently retaining the possession of public housing dwellings in a timely manner. We have to be able to get hold of these buildings where serious, antisocial behaviour has occurred. The bill also allows the department and CHPs to act more swiftly and directly when seriously and/or persistent antisocial behaviour is occurring in public and community housing. This bill makes significant changes to a lot of our housing rules. That is important, because we have to run the system properly. We have to ensure that we have a good system.

The bill also makes amendments to the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act. We had a situation where the Anti-Discrimination Act was being invoked and our act had to be consistent with that act. This bill also makes amendments to the Queensland Building and Construction Commission Act to give it greater clarity, which will be of benefit to many people. On behalf of the committee, I thank the people who made submissions to our committee on the bill. It was certainly very helpful. I support this bill.

 **Hon. TE DAVIS** (Aspley—LNP) (Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services) (5.47 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. This bill embodies what the Queensland government is about: doing things better so taxpayers' money is not wasted while ensuring that quality services are delivered to Queenslanders. We see this in the transfer of tenancy management for social housing

from government to a more efficient community housing sector. This bill is also about recognising that everyone has responsibilities to each other regardless of where they live and illegal and antisocial behaviour in taxpayer funded housing is not acceptable. I support the amendments in the bill that make it easier to respond to social housing tenants who engage in antisocial or illegal activities.

This bill is also about supporting the Queensland government's commitment to growing Queensland through investment. This is seen in the amendments to the Queensland Building Services Authority Act 1991 to remove restrictions in the act that can be an obstacle to commercial development and government projects. I support these amendments as they will provide more opportunities for growth and investment in Queensland.

The bill is also about equity of access. I refer specifically to the amendments in the bill relating to the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009, which falls under my portfolio. I would like to thank Minister Mander for including amendments to the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act in this bill that firmly support the right of people with a disability who rely on guide, hearing or assistance dogs to access residential and holiday accommodation. The ability to book a holiday or enter into a lease for rental is something that most of us take for granted. But for some, this seemingly simple task has not been so straightforward as a result of the introduction of the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009 by the former Labor government.

We know that on some occasions accommodation has been refused because of the presence of one of these assistance dogs, so to rectify this the amendments that are set out in this bill make it an offence for a provider of accommodation to refuse to let accommodation because a person is accompanied by their guide, hearing or assistance dog. I support these amendments so that people who rely on guide, hearing and assistance dogs have the explicit freedom, as is their right, to holiday and live where they choose.


We know that the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 currently makes this type of conduct unlawful. However, seeking a remedy through the Anti-Discrimination Act requires a person to pursue a complaint themselves through the Anti-Discrimination Commission. This can be a very time-consuming and stressful process. By making such conduct an offence through the bill a person can make a complaint directly to my Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and the department will investigate the complaint and prosecute the offender. This relieves the burden for individuals. Much bigger than that, the amendments to the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act which are laid out under the bill make a clear statement that this type of discrimination is simply not acceptable. The government has worked hard to ensure that these amendments will work in practice and we will continue to work with the accommodation and tourism sectors to ensure that they understand their obligations under these amendments.

I am also very pleased to say that the government is currently undertaking a broader review of the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009. We have gathered representatives from organisations across the disability, tourism and accommodation sectors to form a review panel. These representatives are providing advice on what changes could or should be made to the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act to ensure it meets its objectives to support people who rely on guide, hearing or assistance dogs. I met with members of the review panel at a recent meeting. I was very impressed by their enthusiasm, energy and the expertise that they brought to the table. I know that there will be some well informed, sensible and practical recommendations made as a result of this review.

I note that working with the tourism and accommodation sectors was something that was quite lacking in the private member's bill introduced previously and referred to by the member for Bundamba in her very interesting contribution this afternoon.

Mr Bleijie: It was insane. Take my interjection.

Ms DAVIS: No, I will not take your interjection, Attorney. Had the member for Woodridge engaged with me prior to introducing a private member's bill I would have happily updated her on the work we were already undertaking to address these important issues. Indeed, the member for Mulgrave was acutely aware that we were undertaking a review by the end of the year. I wrote a letter to him confirming the government's commitment to that. I appreciate the commitment of the member for Woodridge to the rights of people who rely on guide, hearing and assistance dogs, but remind her that these amendments are only required today because of the deficient legislative approach taken by the former government. In closing, I support all aspects of this bill and I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (5.52 pm): I rise to speak to the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. At the outset can I say that I know from experience the compassion of the current housing minister, his care for the community and his heart for people who are doing it tough. I do not think there is any need for us to question his motivation. I would also like to place on the record my appreciation for housing providers and organisations that do this community work in my electorate. These include Roseberry Community Services, Anglicare, the Community Advisory Service, the Aboriginal housing co-op and, more recently, although it is not managing housing yet, Gladstone Affordable Housing, which is a subset of the Brisbane affordable housing group. Each of these organisations, and I exclude Gladstone Affordable Housing because it is constructing at the moment, have a track record of caring for people in the community, some with quite difficult disabilities or behaviours because of mental health issues. Not all tenants are in that category and that is for sure. Each of those organisations have shown over time that they are cognisant of people with additional support needs and have provided additional support where it is needed.

The transfer of tenancies from the government to management by community housing providers does not remove the obligation or the need for government to provide affordable housing. I feel like a real nag on that, but I have seen firsthand the impact of rent increases in a community that saw the heart of our community just torn apart. That was in part because there was not enough government-built affordable housing. Rentals do not cover that gap. Rentals never cover that gap because the commercial rent goes up to the maximum amount that can be sucked out of the market.

Mr Bennett interjected.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: That is right. The member for Burnett knows, too. It was higher than \$800 a week, it was over \$1,000 in some instances. It has gone down a little bit in my electorate. I noticed in the paper only last week that there was one very old home for rent for \$395. The rest were newer homes with rent upwards of \$450, but certainly down from the \$1,500-\$2,000 that were in existence at the beginning of this year. Every time we have a development boom, and it happens regularly, families that are on modest and fixed incomes are hurt the most. They are the ones that the government needs to step into the breach and provide affordable housing for. Without those people in our communities the community itself fails. It implodes. They are usually the salt of the earth. They are the volunteers. They are the ones who help with the footy and soccer games. They are the ones who do so much in our community. It has been tragic to see the impact. I reiterate that community housing providers who may be going to manage government housing stocks in an increasing quantity will not remove or reduce the need for government to provide affordable housing.

I also place on the record my concern about jobs in the housing sector. In my electorate there is a little band of people who work for Queensland housing. They are amazing folk. They deal with some wonderful tenants, but every now and again there is the difficult tenant and they act with compassion, are as fair as they can be, being human beings, and as objective as they can be. I am in awe of the Housing Commission people who have worked for a long time in my electorate and I would hate to see them at risk in terms of their job security. When WorkCover closed its office several years ago, three staff—they were amazing women; there were no fellas—were lost to WorkCover. What a tragic loss in expertise, ability and understanding. I would hate to see that. I am looking forward to the minister's comments in relation to job security for those people.


I listened to the substance of the comments of the member for Bundamba. I share a number of her concerns. I am looking forward to the summing-up of the minister in response to the substantive issues that she raised. I note in the committee's report that they have recommended that section 527C be redrafted to provide that changes to existing state tenancy agreements which transition to a community housing provider may only be made under the act and not by regulation and that the only changes that may be made to the existing state tenancy agreement are where they are administratively necessary to effect the transition—for example, the name of the lessor and the requirement for the provision of household information—and, secondly, upon the natural end of the tenancy agreement whether through expiration, transfer, renewal or the agreement is breached, whichever occurs first. I share the concern about the potential retrospectivity. In my time in parliament Henry VIII provisions have been something that have been seen to be abhorrent. That is where an act is amended by regulation as opposed to going through the legislative process. I share the concern of other members in relation to retrospectivity.

I commend the committee for its report. It shows that the committees can act in a very objective and bipartisan manner. I have not seen the government's response, which the minister tabled in his speech to parliament earlier today. I will look at that before we consider the clauses. I share some of

the concerns about substantive matters that the member for Bundamba raised. I will certainly be listening to the minister's response in relation to those matters, in order to determine how I will vote. Again I say that the social housing sector is a different community and it is a different area to the rental market in total.

However, in transferring to community housing providers, I hope they are the ones that have been established and have a track record of working with people who have a variety of needs and a variety of socioeconomic challenges and other linguistic and cultural challenges. I know that those groups that work in my electorate are wonderful. If there is going to be a proliferation of new providers, the risk and my fear would be that we will see a situation like when Centrelink responsibilities federally were handed over to the private sector. In the long term, the private sector found it very difficult—I will not say 'did not want to', although that is what I want to say—to handle complex job seekers. It ended up that Centrelink had to find a little niche in its office to help the long-term unemployed who had difficult circumstances or difficult behaviours. There is a risk that, if no Queensland housing service providers at all are retained, a section of the community will fall through the gap and will not receive the services and the support that they require.

Again I thank the minister for his compassion and care. I look forward to his reply in the summing-up stages of the bill, to determine my response to some of these matters. Again, I place on the record my appreciation to so many in our community who work for people who have needs and they work wonderfully.

 **Hon. JA STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games) (6.02 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Amendment Bill 2013, which was introduced to the House by the Minister for Housing and Public Works, the honourable member for Everton, on 10 September 2013. Covering the areas of housing, building and disabilities, the objectives of this bill are threefold and it amends the following: the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008; the Queensland Building and Construction Commission Act 1991; and the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009, which specifically will provide rights of access to accommodation for those who rely on guide, hearing and assistance dogs.

In July this year, the Minister for Housing announced the Newman government's plan for social housing, the Housing 2020 Strategy. I congratulate the minister for developing a flexible and sustainable approach to the housing system through this significant reform—reform that Labor governments refused to undertake. One of the key strategy objectives of this bill is to transfer 90 per cent of tenancies from direct government management to management by a community housing provider. Unlike those opposite, this government has always understood that our job is to be the enabler, not the doer. This applies across an array of sectors, including that of public housing.

This bill is a significant step in the right direction and, importantly, will not create any discrepancies between the levels of service tenants receive. Proposed amendments will enable a community housing provider to capture Commonwealth rent assistance, levy a bond or service charges and will require tenants who are transferred to provide relevant information. Importantly, those whose tenancies are transferred under these changes will notice no difference. There will be no paperwork and for all intents and purposes it will be an outwardly seamless transition. Community housing organisations are already permitted to levy bonds and, under this bill, the government will also have the ability to apply a bond. There are, of course, safeguards in place through a measured roll-out period and assistance through bond loans and the like for tenants.

These changes address the core of the Housing 2020 Strategy through a focus on preparing public tenants for the private market, in a concerted and measured effort to encourage an independent future. As the Minister for Housing noted in his introductory speech, there are some who will always require the government's support and this is not disputed. However, it is also important to address and assist those who are confronted with a barrier to the private market that can be overcome with our help. I am pleased to say this bill is one of the many steps in working towards that outcome.

Over the past year, this government has made significant inroads in curbing antisocial behaviour in public housing and elsewhere. I want to place on record my acknowledgement that the majority of social housing tenants do the right thing and respect their properties. However, it is the minority who abuse their rights and, in doing so, treat all Queensland taxpayers with absolute contempt. Unlike Labor, this government refuses to turn a blind eye and we make no apologies for implementing tough penalties for those who act with such disregard for the roof over their heads. This

bill strengthens the ability to act on unsociable behaviour. Where the lessor reasonably believes the premises are being used for illegal activity, the tenancies may be eroded. Further changes will grant the department and community housing providers the ability to act swiftly and decisively where persistent belligerent behaviour is occurring.


Recent statistics indicate that there have been three first strikes in the Currumbin electorate from 1 July through to the end of September 2013. Whilst it is very pleasing to see a low number of seriously bad tenants, there is still strong demand for housing assistance in my electorate. As at 31 August of this year, there were a total of 437 applications for long-term housing in the Currumbin electorate. Notably, 80 of those fell in the very high needs segment, with 181 in the high-needs segment. It is figures such as those that reiterate the significance of the Housing 2020 Strategy, with an aim to deliver an additional 12,000 homes by 2020. I welcome this objective and the changes encompassed under this strategy.

The second aspect of this bill is focused on facilitating commercial development and major government projects, and promoting quicker resolutions of building disputes. Specifically, amendments will enable a business or individual who is not a licensed building contractor to engage a licensed contractor to undertake commercial building work. Further, changes will see the Queensland Building Services Authority have the ability to apply to QCAT for an order to allow it to continue to act in a building dispute while proceedings are afoot. This will have a direct result in faster resolutions of building disputes, which is a win for all involved.

Finally, the bill makes amendments to support the rights of people with a disability to access accommodation without discrimination. The Queensland government has prioritised the tourism industry as one of the four pillars of the Queensland economy, setting the ambitious goal to double overnight visitor expenditure from \$15 billion to \$30 billion by 2020. The government recognises that Queensland boasts diverse tourism destinations that offer unique and engaging experiences. This bill makes it easier for all visitors to experience our great tourism offerings, without fear of discrimination. Industry sources inform me that there is an adequate supply of accessible accommodation on offer. Accessible accommodation rooms tend to be placed in locations near lift wells and are fitted out differently from standard hotel rooms. Admittedly, not everyone with a disability requires an accessible room. Whilst demand is expected to increase over time, it is very interesting to note that those rooms are currently occupied by people with a disability only about 30 per cent of the time.

The bill introduces a new offence where a person in control of a place of accommodation refuses to rent accommodation to an accompanied handler. Amendments also make it an offence for accommodation providers to impose additional charges, to separate a visitor from their guide, hearing or assistance dog or to refuse entry to part of the accommodation due to their guide, hearing or assistance dog. Importantly, this bill removes the current unfair process requiring a complainant to pursue a complaint through the Anti-Discrimination Commission. This often imposes significant time and financial costs on the complainant. The bill provides an additional avenue for pursuing complaints that is likely to be less time consuming and costly, given the government and not the complainant will investigate and potentially prosecute the events.

In conclusion, the amendments to the public housing, building and disability sectors are progressive and welcome changes. I congratulate the minister for this timely piece of legislation.

 **Mr GRANT** (Springwood—LNP) (6.09 pm): As an elected member for 15 years I have represented folk who live in social housing. I can certainly see this from their perspective. I wish to begin speaking by looking at this bill through the eyes of the many different people in the community. I will not lump all public housing tenants into one group, but, rather, for the purposes of this debate, divide them into three groups. The vast majority are wonderful, law-abiding citizens. There are a very small percentage of people who terrorise their neighbours. Then there are the most vulnerable—that is, those who have mental illness. This bill is aimed not at the most vulnerable; it is aimed at those who terrorise their communities. Over the years I have faced these people. I have seen people whom I worked closely with bashed by folk who live like this. This is what the government is dealing with.

The social reality is this. In 14 years I think I saw one public housing tenant evicted. That was because the statistics from the police went from one or two break and enters per week to 37 when the family moved into the area. If the opposition tried to tell me that this legislation is misguided or goes too far, bunkum would be my response. We have to give these good officers the power to move people on. It is only appropriate that those who live in that way are not given, as QCAT gives them, the opportunity to time and time and time again terrorise their suburbs.

Let us talk about the provision relating to the reduction in the time to leave from two months to one month. We are talking about a tiny percentage of people who are wilfully nasty to everyone around them. If they have lived like this for months and years and neighbours have put up with them for months and years then I say, 'Yes, let them have only one month to find somewhere else to live.' It is time that they learnt their lesson. It is time that we helped them get on their feet instead of continuing to live like that. Those individuals are not reaching their potential while they go on living and treating people like that. That is not the best way to live their lives. We want to give them a hand and give them a wake-up call and say, 'Come on, wake-up to yourself and stop treating people like that.'

I want to shift now to the financial reality that we as the incoming can-do Newman government inherited from 20 years of Labor. Tell this to private enterprise, 'I will give you 60,000 homes. You do not have to pay for them.' The Labor government let the system that owned 60,000 homes bleed millions of dollars. What an absurd reality. This government is not going to stand for it. These 60,000 homes do not have to bleed money. This is part of the bigger agenda within this bill.

The background to the provision is this. Some 90 per cent of homes are to be transferred to community housing providers. In my part of the world just under 5,000 homes are to be transferred. I do not think we will see a proliferation of community housing providers because I can say from firsthand experience that the department has been working for five years on getting the Logan renewal project up and running. In one form or another, the department has been planning and working. To listen to a member of the opposition say that not enough planning has been done is, once again, a nonsense. The time has come to move on.

I wish to now speak to some specific parts of the bill and once again give heart to the broader community who have suffered long enough at the hands of a small number of people. Those who wish to live that way should realise that they are facing pretty much what the illegal bkie gangs are currently facing. We will give the power to the community housing providers and the wonderful staff who have worked in government for decades, many of them, the power to move these people on. In this regard, the committee report states—

The Bill proposes a new section 290A (*Notice to leave because of serious breach*) which provides that a lessor—
or in this case a community housing provider—

can give a tenant a notice to leave for 'serious breach' if the lessor reasonably believes the tenant has:

- used the premises for an illegal activity
- destroyed or seriously damaged part of the premises
- endangered other persons or
- interfered with the reasonable peace, comfort or privacy of another tenant—

or another resident nearby. In the bill the length of notice to leave is reduced from two months to one month. I have already referred to that.

I turn now to the work of QCAT. So many people are frustrated with QCAT and the, like other courts, old rap over the knuckles and give you another chance practice. This sees QCAT jammed with cases being heard again and again. I believe this legislation should give QCAT the chance to be finished with issues instead of hearing them time and time again. There are issues in the bill that QCAT may consider and there are others that QCAT must consider. QCAT may have regard to the seriousness of the two additional objectionable behaviours introduced in this bill which are—

- intentional or reckless endangerment of another person at the premises and
- interference with the reasonable peace, comfort or privacy of a person occupying premises nearby.

It is only reasonable that we as a government provide that for the residents of our state. The committee report states—

... QCAT must have regard to in deciding if the behaviour justifies terminating the agreement:

... the tribunal must have regard to—

- (a) any serious or adverse effects on neighbouring residents or other persons, including whether neighbouring residents or other persons are likely to be subjected to objectionable behaviour if the agreement is not terminated; and
- (b) any evidence regarding the tenancy history of the tenant ...


If a person has behaved in that way in every previous tenancy then we have to take into account that it is extremely likely that, if behaviour agreements have not progressed, they will behave in the same way in another home. The report continues—

- (c) if the tenant is a tenant under a State tenancy agreement—
 - (i) the department's responsibility to other tenants; and
 - (ii) the needs of persons awaiting housing assistance from the State.

There are people who do not put their best foot forward. If amongst the 20,000 families waiting for accommodation there are more vulnerable people, this bill is telling QCAT that they should take that into consideration.

I also want to comment on what councillors across the state will consider of this legislation. I suggest that there will be councillors in most councils throughout this state who will be clapping their hands with joy to realise that no longer will they have to continue to suffer the complaints, the reasonable complaints, from neighbours about so few people who just continue their terrorising ways.

I wish to support this bill wholeheartedly. I thank the committee members for the work that they have done. It was good work, listening to people and taking on board the considerations. In closing, I would just like to put a question to the minister—and I thank him for doing this work: if you have a figure available, could you let the House know in your summing-up what sort of money has been lost in recent times because of the manner in which not the staff in the housing offices but the former government managed these assets? I support the bill.

 **Mr GRIMWADE** (Morayfield—LNP) (6.20 pm): I rise tonight to support the bill and, in doing so, I give my full support to the minister for what he is doing. I also thank the secretariat and our committee for their hard work, and I thank the submitters and all of the people who took part in the briefings and hearings throughout the period of the review. I want to start by acknowledging today the Housing 2020 Strategy that the minister spoke about a number of times. Of course it is my personal opinion that the Newman government has done a lot already in the area of housing. It has done a lot for people who are on the waiting list and a lot for communities around my electorate to ensure that families, including kids, have a roof over their head.

The 2020 strategy looks at transferring 90 per cent of community housing providers to NGOs, non-government organisations. I think this is a really good move. In fact, the minister joined me recently in Morayfield, where we officially opened a unit complex on Caboolture River Road. The community housing provider Coast2Bay were there on the day explaining the services that they can provide as a non-government organisation. They explained about wraparound services such as health services and other services that they can provide locally. It is not that the current housing department cannot do that but, because these people are local—they know the area well and they know what services and other non-government organisations are around with regard to health facilities and those sorts of things—they are able to offer a wide variety of wraparound services. It was a breath of fresh air to hear about these sorts of things and to hear from some of the residents on the day who are using these wraparound services about the positive experiences they are having.

I will not touch too much on areas that members have spoken about tonight with regard to some of the technical sections of the bill. But I want to talk about the actual 2020 strategy overall and also the legislation that we have before the House. I think it builds on what we have already done as a government, going right back to March 2012 when we were elected to this place when the then minister, Bruce Flegg, started the ball rolling and then Tim Mander has picked up the ball and developed this 2020 strategy. I have a keen interest in it myself. I have read the strategy extensively, being a member of the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee. When I talk about some of our achievements, I think it is worth noting that this strategy builds on what we have already done.

Honourable members will remember that we have introduced a number of strategies already when it comes to lowering the public housing waiting list from what was about 32,000 to about 21,000 these days. We have made significant inroads into lowering the number of people on the waiting list. We have done that through strategies such as using underoccupied rooms and things like that. We put out a survey when we were first elected with regard to looking at who were occupying public housing. Some people might not have declared that they were living in public housing, while other homes might have had underoccupied rooms and all of those sorts of things.

We have already benefited extensively in the electorate of Morayfield from those strategies. People who live in my electorate will know that I have delivered about three or four speeches in this place already, including last sitting week, when I highlighted some of our achievements across a number of areas. One of those is in the area of housing. When I became a member in this place in March 2012, in my electorate there were around 831 families, including children, without a roof over their head who were on the waiting list. These days there are 307 people on the waiting list. So that is fantastic news. We have made serious inroads into giving more people a roof over their head. The reason I mention that today is that this 2020 strategy is part of this ongoing process and that is what

this legislation is about. It will ensure that more people who are vulnerable and who are on the waiting list will have the opportunity to have a roof over their head, and of course 12,000 more dwellings are being built as part of that strategy.

I will touch a little bit on the transition of tenants when it comes to what it is like currently in public housing as opposed to what it would be like in the private sector, and the minister talked about this in his second reading speech today. Of course it is important that we protect people, and that is why we have a safety net for people in this state to have access to public housing. That is what public housing is about: giving people a safety net so that when things go bad or times get tough the department does have a mechanism to put a roof over their head. Throughout the process of reviewing this legislation, it was interesting to hear about some of the areas of differentiation between the public sector and the private sector. They included things like bonds and excess water charges.

Although we have a safety net, I do not think people should assume that public housing is a lifelong necessity for them to be able to access. Public housing in my view should be a safety net that is a protection base for them and gives them an option when things go bad to have a roof over their head, but it should not have the stigma attached to it that once you get into public housing at an early age you are there for life. We should be encouraging people to get out of public housing. We should be offering them a hand up, rather than a handout, which is something I spoke about during my maiden speech. For that reason I think the minister has it right here when he talks about encouraging people to have bonds and that when they use excess water they should be responsible for paying for it. It is no good having people in public housing where they occupy a house or occupy a room but have no responsibility. Tenants who are doing the wrong thing do not care about the house. They have no bond. They have nothing to lose. If they use too much water by leaving the tap on out the back when the kids are on a slippery slide, they have nothing to lose. I think that is sending the wrong message with regard to how they should be treated.

I think this legislation has a fair balance with regard to bonds. As the minister said in his second reading speech, the legislation gives them up to a two or three-year period to save up for their bond. The bond will naturally be a lot less than what it would be if they were in the private market because of the lower rent. I think it is a fair and equitable way for people to transition, by having a bond where they will actually have something to lose or by getting an excess water bill when they use too much water. So when they eventually get themselves back on their feet, where their circumstances might change in life, they will then be able to transition to the private sector and know what it is like to be in the private sector, having responsibility for paying for excess water and having a bond. I think this legislation strikes a good balance between what we are trying to do and looking after the tenants.

The other point I will touch on tonight is the antisocial agenda. I support the minister with regard to the antisocial agenda that some of these people who occupy public housing have. There are a number of people now, a minority, who are doing the wrong thing in public housing. We are not targeting those who are doing the right thing. We are not targeting those who need a safety net and who are getting back on their feet, doing the right thing and paying their rent. So, when we talk about the antisocial agenda, we are talking about the few people out there who are doing the wrong thing.

It was a big shock before to hear the member for Bundamba talk about protecting these people and giving them everything, giving them multiple chances and opportunities. We have some tough legislation coming through. We have the three-strikes policy. This legislation is about ensuring that the people who are doing the wrong thing are the ones we will target, because those who are doing the wrong thing should not have the public housing safety net that puts a roof over their head while people who are ready to do the right thing are on the waiting list, living out of their cars, and their children do not have a roof over their head. If people in public housing are not going to do the right thing, it is my personal opinion that they should be moved out of that public housing to allow for somebody who is on the waiting list and who is ready to do the right thing to move in.

We are talking about breaches and illegal activities. Last year the Department of Housing and Public Works received over 24,000 complaints about antisocial behaviour. Between 2008 and 2011 there were 103,000 breach notices issued and 320 households were evicted over the same period. People who occupy public housing who are doing the wrong thing are causing millions of dollars of damage that ultimately taxpayers have to pay for. There was over \$5 million in damages last year. As the minister said in his second reading speech, it takes over \$75,000—


Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order! Member for Morayfield, would you please move that the debate be now adjourned?

Debate, on motion of Mr Grimwade, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm.

COMMUNITY SAFETY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT REGULATION (NO. 1)

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (7.30 pm): It is only natural for me as a rural member to move this motion in the House. I move—

That the Community Safety Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2013, Subordinate Legislation No. 110 of 2013, tabled in the House on 6 August 2013, be disallowed.

This imputes an emergency fire levy on all rural residents right across Queensland. In last year's budget the government announced that it would almost halve funding for rural services right across Queensland. At that time I believed that was one of the greatest attacks on rural Queensland that we have ever seen in Queensland's history bar the forced council amalgamations. As we were heading into probably one of the worst fire seasons in Queensland's history, it was very imprudent of the government to make the decision to cut the fire service almost in half.

Mr DEMPSEY: Mr Speaker, the member is being misleading and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! That is not a point of order.

Mr DEMPSEY: I find it offensive and I ask him to withdraw. The budget was not almost cut in half.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, I did not hear any inference or personal insinuation to you. That is not a point of order. I call the member for Dalrymple.

Mr KNUTH: Then we had the Malone review, which was going to soften and sweeten all rural residents and the rural fire brigade. The member for Mirani travelled over all of Queensland, and I will refer to that later.

We have once again been duded because we have been hit with a rural fire levy. The sad thing about this is that rural residents are already out there fighting fires. They are already out there raising funds. They are always out there putting their time, energy and effort into fighting fires. There are 35,000 volunteers. This is going to kick those 35,000 volunteers in the guts by forcing them to pay a rural fire levy. Those 35,000 volunteers are telling me right now that, if they are not valued, if the government does not need them, they will walk out and let the government put out the fires.

I believe this is a most serious issue. I will read to the House a document about the concerns that exist regarding this Rural Fire Service levy. This is a great impost. As I said, we already have volunteers who in their own time and at their own expense are out there raising funds. They know the area, they have the experience, they know where all the tracks are, they know where the watering points are and they know how to communicate. They are already there. This is why we have moved this motion in the House, because we want to ensure that we have a sustainable rural fire brigade available and on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. An article in the *Tablelands Advertiser* of 18 October titled 'Levy fires up closure fears' states—

THE owner of one of Tableland's premier attractions says a new government levy could force him to close the doors.

Mt Uncle Distillery owner Bruce Watkins said he could be forced to close as a result of the State Government's Emergency Management Fire and Rescue levy, which is due to be implemented on January 1, next year.

Mr Watkins, who has spent 12 years setting up his business, said he was disgusted with the introduction of the new tax and his business simply could not sustain the cost of \$37,536 a year.

'I will not be paying the rural fire levy tax; the only options will be closure or prison,' Mr Watkins told *The Advertiser*.

In terms of distilleries and all workplace health and safety water relief, we have everything in place and it's not a problem; there is a better chance of a car blowing up than our distillery.

...

Mr Watkins said the 'double tax is a money grab for the Government' and will not guarantee a faster response time to his property in the case of a fire.

Here is a person who has provided 12 jobs to a rural community and he is hit with a \$37,000 levy. I know that this person has always been a great supporter of the LNP. I hope that the minister will succumb and implement the recommendations of the Malone review and provide greater support to the rural fire brigade. I hope that he announces it tonight. He has come out with a few sweeteners.

I will read what the rural fire brigade in Charters Towers has said in response to the minister talking about providing protective clothing and a few other nice goodies. It states—

CHARTERS Towers Rural Fire Brigade Association representative Nell Baron has called on the State Government to give local volunteers some respect.

This is not the member for Dalrymple saying this. It will not be the member for Mount Isa who will be saying this. It is the Charters Towers Rural Fire Service that has called on the government to give the volunteers some respect. It states—

The government has reaffirmed its support for Queensland's Rural Fire Service after committing to fully fund the equipment and training needs for the service.

But Mrs Barron said the government is giving the RFBA nothing they don't already get.

Minister for Police and Community Safety Jack Dempsey said the increased funding would include protective clothing, communication equipment and training.

'They've always given us protective clothing,' Mrs Barron said.

'The communications system is supplied but they could supply better.'

'They already offer training.'

Mrs Barron said people don't realise the volunteers have to fundraise to put fuel into their RFBA vehicles because the state government doesn't pay for that.

'They don't supply anything,' she said.

'I haven't seen any area where they're going to increase (funding). They're giving us what they've already been giving us.'

'They're not doing anything different that would make you jump up and down.'

...

Mrs Barron said the fact that the government had taken so long to implement the actions of the review had caused big eruptions throughout Queensland.

I think it has caused big eruptions around Queensland, but the only people who do not know about it is the LNP government. The article continues—

'They (volunteers) need to be treated with respect and I don't believe that's what they're getting,' she said.

'All we want from the government is a fair share and a fair go. We don't want the government to be making it any worse.'

I table these two documents that I have read out.

Tabled paper: News article from the *Tablelands Advertiser*, dated Friday, 18 October 2013, titled 'Levy fires up closure fears' [\[3927\]](#).

Tabled paper: News article titled 'No fire in extra funding' [\[3928\]](#).

I hope that the minister reads them, and I hope that he implements the recommendations of the Malone review. There have been seven reviews of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service since the integration of urban and rural firefighting operations over 20 years ago. Every review, including the latest review conducted by the member for Mirani, has made the same key recommendations that the management of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service should have greater operational and funding control and a greater role in the command hierarchy of Queensland's emergency services. Unfortunately, every government, including the current government, has rejected these recommendations because the central decision makers in every government over the past 20 years have been urban based, with the majority of influence in cabinet in South-East Queensland.

The latest review is the Malone review, headed up by the member for Mirani. I commend the member for the way in which the review was conducted throughout rural Queensland. The review was comprehensive and extensive. Rural fireies felt they had been heard and that the member for Mirani had been given the authority to ensure the findings of the review would be implemented by the government.


The issues raised by the rural fireies during the review were support for local district staff and a strong call for increased district staff levels to provide support to the network of brigades and fire wardens; supply of adequate and appropriate fire equipment and assets; provision of training that is relevant to the tasks and operations of rural fire management with a focus on practical application; minimise procedural administration encumbrances for volunteers; provide adequate and appropriate insurance, WorkCover and indemnities; remove the philosophical impediments of a state command structure and place decision making at the local rural area level where the risk and responsibility lies; enhance the cost-effectiveness and efficiencies of operational and administrative services, minimising the present waste and delays.

The Malone review made 91 recommendations to improve the position of volunteers and rural fire brigades. The government is more in favour—as perceived by the Rural Fire Service—of the Keelty review than the Malone review, but hopefully the minister will surprise us. Hopefully, he will say

tonight that he is more in favour of the Malone review than the Keelty review. The Keelty review contained zero contributions from rural firefighting volunteers, demonstrating the lack of representation that rural residents have on key decisions affecting their communities. The imposition of the emergency management fire and rescue levy is nothing more than another tax to increase consolidated revenue, which is where the money will be going. This is what has rural residents and the rural fire brigade up in arms, because they want the funding and the autonomy to go back to the Rural Fire Service, not hit residents with a \$37,000 bill or a \$2,000 bill when they already put out their own fires, when they already put out their own systems, when the rural fire brigade and other volunteers are already out there fighting those fires in their own time and at their own expense; they are already raising funds. This is something that needs to be addressed tonight.

The 34,000 rural fire volunteers in Queensland were rejoicing when the government announced this review. They did their best to ensure that not only did their contributions point out the problem but they also brought solutions to the table. In my electorate Rural Fire Service volunteers gave up their time and often travelled great distances to attend meetings held by the member for Mirani. This disallowance motion is to reverse the impost on rural Queensland and to acknowledge also the suffering of rural and regional Queensland at present and their concerns about being hit with this impost while they still go out and raise the funds for their service. If the government wants to get rid of the 35,000 volunteers, why does the minister not do this tonight? By not adopting this review and introducing this levy that is what he is telling us. He is kicking those great Rural Fire Service men and women in the guts.

The Malone review recommended a funding model in which any levy collected by local government on behalf of the Rural Fire Service was directly related to the needs of the local rural firefighting units. I will repeat that. The Malone review recommended a funding model in which any levy collected by local governments on behalf of the Rural Fire Service was directly related to the needs of not consolidated revenue—it is not money that is going to pay off the budget—but the local rural firefighting units. The levy that has been put in place by this Community Safety Legislation Amendment Regulation is unsustainable. It is an impost that will cause severe damage to struggling communities with no guaranteed benefits to the rural fire brigades that volunteer to risk their lives protecting their communities from the ravage of the bushfire. We will see another bushfire season, but this is the foundation for years to come. We do not want to kick them in the guts because there are people who are ready to leave now and there are good people who have already left. We might say to you that you are mad, but I have just read out to you the concerns of not Shane Knuth or other members of parliament, but concerns of rural residents. I hope that members can support this disallowance motion.

 **Mr MALONE** (Mirani—LNP) (7.44 pm): Before I speak to the disallowance motion, I would like to reflect on recent events in the Blue Mountains that highlight the critical but often heartbreaking role that both the paid and the volunteer firefighters and the emergency services personnel play in protecting their communities from the devastating effects of bushfires. Accordingly, I would like to take the opportunity to thank those officers who have travelled interstate to assist with the firefighting efforts in New South Wales. Of course, when we are in strife, they also reciprocate by coming back into Queensland.

As head of the Malone review, I travelled around Queensland with a group of experts on rural fires. I met with close to 2,000 volunteers. I met with all the staff throughout Queensland, all of those whom Mr Knuth said we were going to sack, which we did not do of course. More importantly, almost 250 submissions were fed into that report. I have to tell honourable members that some of those submissions were 100 pages long; it was quite extensive. The comprehensive report that was put together is a reflection of the grassroots feeling in the bush and also on the fringes of the urban areas here in Queensland.

I have to say that after 20 years of Labor there is a lot of discontent felt by volunteers throughout Queensland. It is fine to move a disallowance motion in respect of certain aspects of the emergency management fire levy, but the reality is that we need to build up our support for volunteers. We cannot put it on the credit card from the Chinese government; we actually have to fund that in some way. The reality is that right across Queensland there are events that affect all of us whether it is fires, floods or even emergencies in the bush such as a snake bite or a car crash where a helicopter flies in or even a flood where we rely on the SES or the paid staff to come and rescue us. As I said, there is a need to fund those operations.

We know that Queensland is not immune to disaster events. We have close to 41,000 volunteers right throughout Queensland and many more who jump in when things get tough. In a lot of cases many of the farmers and graziers do not actually belong to fire and rescue brigades or volunteer firefighters; they do their own thing, they use their own equipment et cetera. Obviously they are protecting not only their neighbours but also their own pasture. The big issues are lightning strikes and inadvertent and sometimes deliberate fires that start on the sides of roads. The view of the Malone report is more about mitigation, about protecting our landscape from wildfires. We talk about the wildfires we have seen in New South Wales where the countryside is totally devastated. There is not an ant, not a bird, not a wallaby, not a koala bear or anything else that survives those wildfires. The intent of the Malone review is to ensure that we put in place the cool burns so that those animals can escape and, more importantly, the biodiversity of the country is maintained. We are working through those issues now.

To give some background, in April 2013 I handed down the findings of the review of the Rural Fire Service in Queensland. That included 91 recommendations regarding the functions, structure, leadership and funding for the Rural Fire Service. The review recommendations were referred to the Police and Community Safety Review headed by Mr Keelty in terms of a broader consideration.

We all know that the Keelty review has now been completed, and I am pleased to advise that the Minister for Police and Community Safety has asked me to start prioritising the recommendations from the review into the Rural Fire Service for implementation, and I am currently doing that. We are moving quickly on that; we have had two meetings already over the last week.

Central to progressing the recommendations will be the appointment of a Deputy Commissioner for Rural Fires and State Emergency Services. That person will be in both leadership and managerial roles so that there is a line of command from the person on the fire line right through to the deputy commissioner for volunteers. While the Police and Community Safety Review have picked up on the structural and functional recommendations, funding of the Emergency Management Service, including the Rural Fire Service, remains an ongoing challenge. The introduction of the expanded levy will ensure that Queensland is able to maintain and continue to grow a strong and effective fire and emergency service.

I understand that this will be a significant change for a number of councils that have not collected an urban levy, but I have been assured that appropriate assistance has been provided to ensure that councils will be able to implement the new arrangements, which come into effect on 1 January 2014. Also, if owners do not agree with the levy that is applied to their property, in certain circumstances they will be able to appeal that decision.


Mr Knuth, the member for Dalrymple, has raised the issue of one particular business. I know the regulations talk about a distillery, but the reality is that there are only two major distilleries in Queensland. I am sure the one that he talks about is certainly not a commercial distillery like the CSR distillery in Sarina or the one in Beenleigh, so I think there is ample opportunity for that to be sorted out.

Finally and significantly, the new arrangements do not prevent councils from raising a rural fire levy to support their local brigades or do what they currently do now. In a lot of cases councils actually support their brigades out of the general fund. Importantly, I would like to point out that the levy is only one of the ways that the government is supporting the building of a capable and strong Rural Fire Service. Recently the government committed to fully funding the equipment and training needs of the Queensland Fire Service, and certainly in line with that there were a lot of other issues that we are in the throes of implementing along with my report.

In relation to the Rural Fire Service, the red and blue flashing lights have been a longstanding and difficult situation for rural firefighters when they are burning along the sides of roads. Many trucks and vehicles do not respect the flashing orange lights, and we have had a number of volunteers that have almost been killed and some have been severely injured because of the fact that nobody will pull up to recognise what they are doing on the side of the road.

As part of my role as the Assistant Minister for Emergency Volunteers I look forward to building on these changes and working with the Rural Fire Service to implement the recommendations from the review into Rural Fire Services in Queensland. As part of this, I will continue to work closely with the brigades to address any issues concerning the introduction of the new levy, and I make the commitment that I certainly will be out there front and centre to do that.

Finally, I would like again to commend the ongoing efforts of Queensland rural firefighters, and I urge all Queenslanders to continue to support the Rural Fire Service and their fundraising efforts.

 **Mr HOPPER** (Condamine—KAP) (7.53 pm): I am rising to congratulate the member for Dalrymple for having the intestinal fortitude to bring this disallowance motion before this House. And rightly so! I saw the police minister smirking while he spoke and grinning from ear to ear—

Mr DEMPSEY: I rise to a point of order. He is being misleading. I take offence at what he said as well.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Condamine, the minister has taken offence. I ask that you withdraw.

Mr HOPPER: I withdraw but—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: It needs to be without condition.

Mr HOPPER: All right, I withdraw. Let me just say this is a serious matter before the House tonight. Whether we have people in this chamber laughing at the member for Dalrymple or not, the member for Dalrymple has thousands of rural fires watching this debate tonight and the member for Dalrymple has brought this disallowance motion to this chamber on their behalf. We are faced by people who may laugh at the speech that the member for Dalrymple has made—and I am not naming any names—but all of those fires saw who it was, and it was a disgusting contribution to this institution.

Let me just say that our rural fires for probably the last 15 years have been the backbone right across Australia. We saw Ash Wednesday in Victoria and we recently saw the other big fires in Victoria which were the most horrific in the history of this nation; we have recently seen the fires in New South Wales; and now with the drought that is going on in Queensland, heaven help us with what we may have to face.

What we have seen here is an absolutely massive attack from this government on rural fires. We have seen money that is supposed to go back into rural fire brigades go into consolidated revenue. That is why this disallowance motion has been put forward. This government has got their greasy fingers on money that should be providing services for rural fire brigades, and that is exactly why the member for Dalrymple has moved this motion tonight.

We have seen the member for Mirani, who is a good man and a very good politician—and a senior member of what used to be the once great National Party—stripped of his cabinet position because he is not a liberal, so he is not in cabinet. If he had been in cabinet, maybe we would have had a minister who would have looked after rural fire brigades. What I am saying is the member for Mirani toured the whole of Queensland and met with thousands of people to find out exactly what we needed to fix rural fire brigades in Queensland. What does the Premier of Queensland, Campbell Newman, do? He hires Mr Keelty, who brings in a review that will overrule the member for Mirani so that the Premier can get his fingers on the fees that are charged under the fire levy and put them into consolidated revenue because the member for Mirani knew that that money needed to go to rural fire brigades. This government should hang their head in shame, swallow their pride and vote with the member for Dalrymple tonight, because what the member for Dalrymple is proposing is good for rural Queensland. It is a protection mechanism which will strengthen rural fire brigades to protect mums and dads, little girls and boys and grandfathers and grandmothers who live in rural Queensland.

Mr Stevens interjected.

Mr HOPPER: All of you rural fire brigades out there listen to the Leader of the House now! He is commenting against you. Let me just say that tonight we are seeing a good disallowance motion. I have seen a lot of disallowance motions come before the House, but this is a disallowance motion that is very, very good.

The Keelty review actually sends rural fires out the door. That is exactly what that does. There are 35,000 volunteers—see the smiles over here? Those opposite are once again laughing at the rural fires. There are 35,000 of you people out there, and some of you are watching tonight. You are watching yourselves being laughed at by the people who have brought this legislation in to destroy the very thing you stand for.

All of those fees to rural fires are going to go into consolidated revenue. There are a few issues here that really need to be addressed. Brigades have been deceived because they have been advised by senior officers of the QFRS—minister, you know this—that they could not charge for their services. This appears to have been done to protect the commercial activities of TEM—Training and Emergency Management—which is the commercial arm of QFRS. There is documentary evidence to prove that TEM has charged vastly inflated costs for fuel reduction operations compared to brigade pricing.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr HOPPER: If the member wants to interject, I will come back hard on him too, I tell you what! There is one documented instance that TEM attempted to charge another state government department \$13,000 more per land parcel than the local rural fire brigades. This involved numerous blocks of land. Let me say a few more things.

It is suspected that TEM has been utilising the Department of Community Safety public liability policy to cover its commercial fuel reduction operations to lower its own costs. It appears that this is in direct breach of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission business rules. We are uncovering a few things here. I wonder why this has all come about. Unless QFRS can produce a current commercial public liability policy for the operations of TEM from a recognised insurance company or broker—this should also show coverage for prior years—the commissioner of QFRS has permitted TEM to operate unlawfully and, as part of a government agency, placed the elected government in legal jeopardy. That is on the record so let us see what happens in the future.

Brigades are not part of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. The QFRS comprises the commissioner and fire service officers. Members of brigades are not fire service officers under sections 8A and 25 of the Fire and Rescue Service Act. Your staff have a bit to do now, Minister. I see you smiling once again.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Condamine will speak through the chair.

Mr HOPPER: After my speech tonight there will be a fair bit of work for the minister's department to do.

A brigade may charge a fee for carrying out hazard reduction burns at the request of a landowner. What have we seen the QFRS do? Paragraph 75 of the Public Accounts and Public Works Committee report No. 11 of June 2011—I was part of that committee—titled *Management of rural fire services in Queensland*, states that the Attorney-General advised the committee that at the time the 2008 report was written the Queensland Audit Office was of the opinion that the brigades were part of the department but the Auditor-General now considers that the brigades are not controlled by the department and they appear to be unincorporated bodies. Recommendation 1 on page 16 of that report is 'that the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services undertake a comprehensive legal review in order to clarify the legal position of brigades and their members'.


Under section 25, the director-general may employ the persons the director-general considers necessary to perform QFRS functions. The groups of persons comprising brigades are not employed by the director-general. The brigades are not part of QFRS.

Under section 83(3) of the Fire and Rescue Service Act, members of the brigade must comply with the commissioner's directions when the brigade is in charge of operations for controlling and extinguishing a fire. This gives the commissioner some power to govern some operations of the brigade, but it does not give the commissioner the power to govern all operating policies of the brigade or the power to govern financial policies of the brigade.

A member of parliament has seen that legislation is wrong. He has had a good look and seen that the regulations are wrong. He has found the exact regulation that is wrong. He has moved that that regulation be disallowed. We sit in this chamber and watch the Leader of the House and the police minister laugh at the motion before the House. I say to all rural fires out there tonight: this is what you are going to cop—absolutely nothing from this government.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! Before I call the next speaker, I ask the House to welcome to the gallery a good friend of mine, Reverend Neil Scott from the Australian Christian Churches.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (8.03 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate of the disallowance motion with respect to the proposed changes to the Fire and Rescue Service Regulation 2011 and the Community Safety Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2013. These are reflective of a fundamental flaw in government policy, which fails to acknowledge or address the differences between urban and rural communities.

This issue had its genesis some months ago. We were sitting in parliament and were told of some proposed cutbacks to the Rural Fire Service. I listened to the Deputy Premier tell us how this was a good thing and say that he was preparing the ground for these changes to be made. There was

a blow-up in the media and, to give credit where credit is due, the government stopped, had a think and sent the member for Mirani out to see what was going on and look at how to fix the situation. From all accounts he did a sterling job and has provided recommendations. The critical thing now is for those recommendations to be taken up. The feedback to me shows that there is a lot of anxiety on the part of a lot of the rural fires that this will not be rolled out in the way they want.


This is part of such a strong trend that we see all the time. When words such as 'consolidated revenue', 'centralisation' and 'competition' are used, it always ends badly for the bush. I put it in the context of schools in my area being closed. We were not supposed to have any schools closed. The Gregory school has been closed and the building taken away. Year 7 is being removed from primary schools in my area. The government talks about making things better for rural fires. They are told, 'Just give us the money and we will take care of it.' I am sorry if there is a bit of distrust there. Local authorities and local fire brigades should remain autonomous. That is what they want and that is what should be delivered to them—to run effectively and to know that every bit of energy that goes in and every bit of money that they raise, whether it be from the council or through volunteers, goes back into their service.

There seems to be a leaning towards these Keelty review recommendations, which will not be favourable and will not be taken up by members of these communities, by the 35,000 volunteers out there. I do not need to go over the importance of the services provided to these areas. I saw firsthand the damage that was done by the Bowthorn fires last season and by the gulf fires. The critical requirement for these services was painfully obvious. Those fires caused a hell of a lot of damage. Not only is any threat to that service a threat to lives and safety; fires burn valuable pasture in our area. We need that service operating as best they can. Any disincentive is certainly a step backwards.

The main issue from my perspective is the attitude of the government in terms of consolidated revenue. They say, 'Just trust us. We will take the money in and we will divvy it up evenly and you will get a better result.' That does not wash with me. They also say that there is no money and we have to find a better way to do things. As long as I see a big hole in the ground in William Street—with a \$675 million commitment to a new office building that we do not need—I will not accept that.

Mr Powell interjected.

Mr KATTER: I take that interjection about the private sector. You can pay interest on a mortgage or you can pay rent. Do you need the building or not? Do you need the upgrade? Over 100,000 square metres of office space is coming online in Brisbane city offices, so do not tell me about the debt. If it is a question of expenses, I do not accept it; nor should anyone else. In light of that, this disallowance motion should be supported by any rural member of this House and anyone who sticks by rural fires.

 **Mr BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (8.08 pm): I rise to speak in support of the disallowance motion. Tonight we are debating one of the very reasons Rural Fire Service volunteers are so upset with this LNP government. I want to get straight to the point of this debate. Rural Fire Service volunteers know that the money raised through the new emergency services levy is just a cash grab by the Treasurer. All Queenslanders know it.

The budget papers showed that more than \$24 million was removed from the Emergency Services budget and returned to consolidated funds. Next minute there was an announcement of the new emergency management fire and rescue levy to raise \$24 million. The opposition could support measures that raised funds to provide services for the community, but Rural Fire Service volunteers know that the money raised is not flowing back to them at a level commensurate with the increased tax burden placed on all Queenslanders.

I made this statement of reservations on 2 August 2013 in the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee estimates report, and it speaks volumes about how badly this government has managed this issue. I said at the time in that report—


The Rural Fire Service remains in a holding pattern awaiting the findings of the Keelty Review. Questions remain over the implementation of the Emergency Services Levy, particularly with respect to council collection of the levy and the flow of funding back to the Rural Fire Service. It appears warnings had been given by the Department that Councils might refuse to collect the levy. The Minister has a responsibility to communicate to the hardworking volunteers what the true financial position is of each Brigade as they plan for the future.

The Opposition is concerned that while there is an increase in the funds being collected through the increased tax, this comes at a time families are struggling with the cost of living, only to see the tax revenue be handed back to the Government and not used for the intended purpose of supporting emergency services volunteers. The Minister has clearly failed to guarantee funding to the Rural Fire Service; these concerns are being felt in Brigades across the State.

Fast-forward to October 2013 and what has changed? The \$700,000 Keelty report has been handed down which rips up many of the recommendations contained within the Malone review. That is \$700,000 that could have been spent assisting brigades. There is still no formal government response to the Keelty review, so brigades remain in a holding pattern. Maybe we will never get a full and frank response from the government to Keelty. Tonight I noted the comments from the member for Mirani regarding his responsibilities with the Rural Fire Service, so I assume the plan is to drip-feed these pieces of information out about Keelty in bits and bobs from the government because it simply cannot aggregate a response to the entire report. This is why volunteers are protesting outside LNP government members' offices. Urgent meetings have been held and now the Premier is required to step in once again and put out the fire which is engulfing his regional backbench, many of whom are rightly dismayed privately by the lack of respect given to regional Queenslanders by the LNP leadership. Malone review supporters are slowly winning concessions from the Treasurer and the police minister for things like flashing blue and red lights, training and equipment, but it has been a long time coming. Volunteers know that they are still dealing with a police minister who has mismanaged the Rural Fire Service ever since he announced in the parliament over a year ago that they were talking about sacking 56 Rural Fire Service staff, only to pretend later that he never actually made the speech in the parliament, while at the same time hanging out the fire service leadership to dry.

Finally, I table page 14 of the Department of Community Safety annual report which reveals the massive cuts in funding last year made by the LNP for our emergency services, with all of the money being transferred to fund our exploding prison population. It shows cuts to Fire and Rescue of \$39 million, Emergency Management of \$14 million and the Queensland Ambulance Service of \$3 million. In the end, this whole exercise is just a grubby tax grab and everybody knows it, especially members of the Rural Fire Service. The opposition will be supporting this disallowance motion.

Tabled paper: Page 14 of the Department of Community Safety Annual Report for 2012-13 [\[3929\]](#).

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (8.13 pm): In rising to speak to this disallowance motion, I want to acknowledge the assistant minister, Mr Malone, and the minister, because I know that they have been working tirelessly with regard to the Malone review and the 91 recommendations that have been agreed to in principle and have had many mature debates with the Rural Fire Brigades Association to ensure that the outcome for rural firefighters will be a good result.

Mr Knuth interjected.

Mr BENNETT: No, but we still have a way to go, member for Dalrymple. It is great that we have been able to introduce training, equipment and representation with a deputy commissioner. These things are slow in coming but they are being implemented in such a great organisation, the Rural Fire Brigades Association of Queensland. I have done some research and around my electorate there are nearly 80 brigades and nearly 2,000 volunteers. I have taken great joy in visiting at least half a dozen of them in the last couple of months and 10 previous to that, because it is always interesting to hear from the grassroots volunteers about their needs and aspirations.

A wide range of emergency services are delivered across Queensland—from firefighting to rescues, evacuations and resupplies. The equipment and expertise needed for specialist emergency management has grown significantly over time. At the same time, there has been an increasing number of disasters that have significantly impacted on our state. This government recognised the critical need for a sustainable funding base to be established to ensure vital emergency services could continue to be delivered into the future. For this reason, on 1 July 2013 the urban levy was renamed and its purpose broadened to the emergency management fire and rescue levy. The new coverage of the levy comes into effect from 1 January 2014. This means that the levy will apply to all prescribed properties that are outside current fire districts unless an exemption applies.

The levy is assessed and applied by each local council based on the area of the property, or part of the property, and the use of the property. An appeals process is available for property owners who consider that their property has been wrongly assessed, and of course that leads into the valuation issue. Importantly, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service has been working with local councils to assist them in implementing the new component of the levy and classifying properties correctly—which is always a nice place to start—and I encourage my local council to continue to work with the government in a mature way to implement the requirements of the new levy. Queensland fire and rescue staff are travelling around the state with the Local Government Association of Queensland to assist in the implementation of the levy. The capacity for local councils to apply a rural fire levy for additional direct support to their local brigades has not been changed. This government has

reaffirmed its support for the Queensland Rural Fire Service by committing to fully fund the equipment and training needs of the service. As I mentioned earlier, some of the other recommendations from the Malone review have started to be implemented. This funding will ensure that rural firefighters are equipped to do the best job for Queenslanders, and that is something that we all expect. All Queenslanders benefit from having well-equipped, well-trained, capable and responsive emergency services.

Over the past decade Queenslanders have suffered a significant number of natural major disasters, and if anyone wants to come to Bundaberg sometime I can certainly show them that. Apart from that, many towns have also suffered throughout the state. Throughout each of these disasters, Queensland's emergency services personnel have provided a first-class response to their respective communities. Expanding the existing urban fire levy to include emergency management is one of the most equitable means of providing the best emergency response possible for Queensland. This levy will ensure that emergency management is placed on a sustainable footing so that the government can continue to deliver as and when it is required.

I take this opportunity to speak on an important issue to not only my electorate of Burnett but also the whole of Queensland, and that is volunteering within the Queensland Rural Fire Service. As I mentioned before, I am extremely proud of the 80 rural fire brigades around my area and the 2,355 volunteers who service the Burnett, Bundaberg and of course the Callide areas. It is a fantastic community focused organisation and this debate should not underestimate our thanks for our hardworking and dedicated volunteers. Rural fire brigades across Queensland service 93 per cent of the state and provide services such as fire mitigation, volunteer training and community education to rural and semirural areas of Queensland. Even outside of rural communities, the Rural Fire Service made a significant contribution to the floods in 2011-12 and 2013 and many fire events such as, as the member for Mirani alluded to earlier, the recent tragic events in New South Wales. This effort is worth mentioning and noting in the House.


It is an organisation that we are all proud of in terms of the positive contributions that it makes to our rural communities. However, the future of the organisation as we know will be based on the strength and the growth of its volunteers. That is why I want to use the time remaining tonight to urge members of my community to consider a rewarding volunteering opportunity with their local rural fire brigade. Being a volunteer in the rural fire brigade is rewarding, not only to the volunteers but also to the communities. Communities across Queensland have come to respect the yellow trucks and I hope that this debate tonight continues to show that we are moving forward. As a volunteer you will learn new and important skills and develop friendships and connections with your brigade that will last a lifetime. It is the spirit of service that bonds volunteer fires, and it should be that spirit of service that attracts new volunteers to the service.

The rural fire brigade in my electorate has many volunteers, but it needs to have more to ensure its growth into the future. Continued growth is important not only to the brigade but also to the wider community. That is why I fully support the recent initiatives taken up by the Malone review. I would like to think that the local brigades and the Rural Fire Brigades Association can continue a mature debate and recruit volunteers and educate the local community about what is important in local fire management. I urge all the residents of the Burnett electorate to consider volunteering for their local fire brigade. Volunteering is a noble cause. Some of the members of this parliament have noble bones in their bodies. Let us continue to have a mature debate about rural fire brigades.

With the fire season soon approaching, we need volunteers. We all know that that is critical. The long-term security of the service hinges on younger residents putting up their hands to be a volunteer. Up at Rosedale last Sunday at the local emergency management meeting it was overwhelming to see that the SES and the rural fire brigade were willing to continue the debates and the conversations with me as their local member on behalf of a wide-ranging, active, volunteer rural fire brigade. I was happy to talk about the Malone review. I was happy to talk about my commitment to their cause.

The Minister for Police is continuing his open-door policy with the Rural Fire Brigades Association. I must say that around home that is much appreciated. Again, I take this opportunity to encourage the younger residents in my region to volunteer. They are best placed to develop the service well in the future. They have the ability to use social media to attract volunteers, to utilise these new avenues of recruitment, to continue to innovate and to make sure that the service is maintained in the long term. In return, the service can provide them with access to much needed skills and services. The opportunities that are available to younger people through the service will assist them for life and will help them develop the region for years to come.

I will finish by saying to the young people in my region and in Bundaberg to log on, call up, do whatever they can to find out about becoming a volunteer in the rural fire brigade. I ask them to take some time to learn what is going to happen in the future to their rural fire brigade and the services that the LNP government will help them provide. The rewards for the volunteers in our community will certainly outweigh any effort in signing up and joining the proud tradition of being a member of a rural fire brigade.

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (8.21 pm): I rise to speak in support of the disallowance of the Community Safety Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2013, subordinate legislation No. 110 of 2013. From 1 January next year the average household in regional Queensland will be hit with a new \$90 tax with the introduction of an emergency management, fire and rescue levy. The average urban household will also be hit with an increase of \$10.80 to the urban fire levy. This is just one of the tax hikes and revenue grabs introduced by the Newman government.

So far under the Newman government taxes have gone up by more than \$1,000 per year for the average family of four. This was after the LNP promised at the election to lower the cost of living by \$250 to \$330 per year. As I said the other day, when it comes to the Premier's election pledge in his contract with Queenslanders to lower the cost of living, the result has been an 'F' for fail. The Newman government's emergency management, fire and rescue levy will raise \$187.6 million over four years. It is part of a set of \$1.2 billion in tax grabs by the Newman government in this year's budget—tax grabs that were not flagged before the last election.

It states in the budget papers that the levy has been introduced to provide funding for emergency management, fire and rescue services. However, on a closer examination of this year's budget papers it is clear that, for this financial year at least, this is not the case. Although the Newman government's new revenue grab will raise an additional \$24 million this financial year, the funding from the Consolidated Fund to emergency management, fire and rescue has been reduced by the same amount compared with the funding for the previous financial year. That means that, although the levy proceeds are going to emergency management, fire and rescue, the funding contribution from the Consolidated Fund for these services is being reduced by the same amount. So let there be no mistake about it: this levy increase is a revenue grab, pure and simple.

The Newman government has left it to local governments to implement this revenue grab. Instructions have been issued to local governments to go out and categorise the prescribed properties that will be charged the levy. Considering that none of this funding is going to additional services and that the Newman government has taken the politically convenient option of leaving the collection to local governments, this can only be seen for what it is: a politically motivated, cynical grab for cash.

This is a tax grab that is not delivering any additional resources for rural fire brigades, which have been asking for more support. It was only when serious fires started up in New South Wales recently and the government saw protests from rural fire brigades right across our state that it started to listen to our rural fire brigades. That was long overdue. To impose a new tax on people living in regional Queensland and to not divert that revenue to fire services in those areas is a cop-out.

It does make me wonder what happened to the 'N' in the LNP. Where are the old National Party members on this issue? I know some of them figured out that they were on a sinking ship and left to join the crossbenches. So we have the 'N', which is fast disappearing. We have the 'L' in which all that is left is the big 'L' Liberal; there is no longer any small 'l' liberal. That just leaves the 'P', which stands for 'Party'. We all know that, after the last sitting of parliament the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the member for Cairns and others loved to party out on the veranda. But why are those old Nationals not speaking up for their local communities on this issue? Perhaps many of them do not know about this increase, which might be understandable considering that it is yet to come into effect.

I know that many rural fire brigades rely on generous donations from local communities and businesses. This government is imposing a levy that is said to fund rural fire services; however, that is not where the funding is ultimately going. By imposing a levy that claims to fund rural fire services, but does not, this government risks discouraging donations as it makes people think that they are already paying for the service anyway. But they are not.

I urge those members who have large parts of their electorate located outside urban areas to look at this issue closely. In doing so, I am not seeking to score any political points but to point out that it is an upcoming issue of significant community concern for them. Let us not forget that last year this government announced that it would sack 56 Rural Fire Service staff, only to then later pretend that it had never made that announcement. The increase in this tax is even worse for businesses

across Queensland. For a small shopping centre, the increase is up to \$445 per year. For a medium-sized guesthouse or hotel, the increase is up to \$1,316 per year. For a tavern or a theatre complex, the increase is up to \$2,150 per year. For a hotel or motel that is four levels, the increase is up to \$3,290 per year. For a brewery, sugar terminal or distillery, the increase is up to \$37,534 per year. For a power station, the increase is up to \$43,026 per year. For a large tourism resort, the increase is up to \$64,542 per year. For a large tertiary education institution, the increase is up to \$107,573 per year. Lastly, for a large casino, which includes accommodation or restaurant facilities, the increase is up to \$179,294 per year.

This Newman government talks a lot about how it serves businesses, but it does not mind slugging them with a tax grab when it suits them. Just as no analysis was done by Treasury on the impact of this government's insurance tax grab on disaster affected families, I am yet to see evidence that any assessment of affordability for businesses and regional Queenslanders was undertaken for this tax hike. Recently, the member for Cairns flagged his support for increasing building heights in North Queensland. That may well be for very good reasons. As set out in the regulation, hotels will be charged the fire levy based on their building height. For a hotel or motel of not more than two levels, the increase is up to \$445 per year. For three levels, the increase is up to \$1,316 per year. For four levels, the increase is up to \$3,290 per year. For five to six levels, the increase is up to \$5,838 per year. For seven to 10 levels, the increase is up to \$20,301 per year. For 11 to 16 levels, the increase is up to \$37,534 per year. For 17 to 25 levels, the increase is up to \$43,026 per year. For more than 25 levels, the increase is up to \$64,542 per year.

These higher buildings in North Queensland would also attract higher levies under the Newman government's new emergency management, fire and rescue levy. Previously, I referred to local governments having to collect this levy on behalf of the state government. I note that today councils across Queensland have said that they do not want to be the tax collectors for the state government. They do not want to have anything to do with this tax collection either. Greg Hallam, the CEO of the LGAQ has said—


Clearly councils would rather not collect money on behalf of the State Government.

I think he was being reserved. Regardless of the collection method, the introduction of this levy by the Newman government would be less objectionable if the money was being directed to rural fire services. But it is not. The budget papers set out that the introduction of the emergency management, fire and rescue levy is nothing more than a revenue grab—a tax grab from a Newman government that from opposition claimed that taxes and charges were out of control, a Newman government that has now increased taxes for the average family of four by more than \$1,000 per year since it was elected and a Newman government that made an election pledge to every Queensland family that it would lower the cost of living by \$250 to \$330 per year. This Newman government has broken its promises on the cost of living and it has broken its promises to business. It is another 'F' for fail. The introduction of the emergency management, fire and rescue levy is just one more example of a broken LNP promise.

I urge this government to not forget about the importance of our rural fire brigades. I am a former auxiliary firefighter. We worked very closely with rural fire brigades in my home town of Gordonvale. I certainly know that they perform an absolutely amazing task and often will not be able to get the support from the urban fire services when they need it.

I have recently met with a range of different people from rural fire services in Far North Queensland. They have been very clear about their absolute disgust at this approach, what the fire levy is going to do for business and certainly the fact that this Newman government has hung the member for Mirani out to dry. They let him loose on what I thought was quite a reasonable document at the end of the day, agreed to by most of the people in the Rural Fire Service, and guess what? The Keelty review came in right over the top of it and pretended he did not exist.

To introduce a tax like this in regional Queensland and to hoard the money to allocate elsewhere is simply unfair. The people in regional areas deserve better than this from the LNP government. They deserve better from the Newman government that is supposed to, in theory, also represent the 'L', the 'N' and the 'P', not just the 'L' in LNP.


 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (8.30 pm): I rise to support the disallowance motion. I have listened to previous speakers. Can I put on the record that my problem is not with a casino levy group 14 rising from \$60,731.40 to \$64,545.40. My problem is not with a drive-in shopping centre, more than one shopping level area devoted to buildings, roadways, parking and landscaping, moving from \$30,364.10 to \$32,271. My support for this disallowance motion is because of the concern that

has been expressed to me by our rural fire services, our volunteers who work tirelessly in our electorates with very little recompense in endeavouring to keep our rural areas safe. Over the years they have been provided with clothing. The current government has confirmed that that will continue. In terms of provision of vehicles, in the past only part of the cost of a vehicle, irrespective of what sort it was, was covered by government. The Rural Fire Service still had to fundraise for the remainder of the vehicle. I am unclear whether that has changed. Fuel has never been funded. We have these volunteers who turn out day and night to fight rural fires and they have to fundraise to pay for petrol. I think that is unacceptable. I am sure that the minister does not believe it is acceptable either.

I would like to pay tribute to the rural fire brigades in my electorate. They cover Tannum and Boyne, Benaraby, Mount Maurice, Mount Larcom, the Yarwun area, the Calliope area and the Boyne Valley in its entirety. We have a number of brigades in those areas. They are all volunteers. Many of them, particularly in the far rural areas, do not have fire fighting equipment that is provided by the Queensland Rural Fire Service. They actually use their own trucks and dozers. They give so much to the community.

The greatest outrage that I heard in my community was in relation to the extension of the levy to apply to all properties so that rural properties will now pay approximately \$90 a year. Most rural property owners do not mind paying that providing at least some, if not all, of that \$90 was going to go to assist the rural fire service. In this place I have asked several questions of the minister and asked him to review the circumstance where some of this levy would be able to go to the Rural Fire Service. That was the approach that I had from my constituents and from my rural firefighters. They did not necessarily want all of that levy; they wanted some of that levy to be allocated to the rural firefighting volunteers so that they got some benefit. They just wanted some recognition of the service that they give, the volunteerism that they provide. I raised in this place last sitting that we had an experience only in the last month where our nextdoor neighbour was slashing, probably imprudently in the weather that we have, and started a fire. It burnt through their place and onto ours. We were very fortunate in that both the rural fire service and the urban service turned out on the first day and they stopped the fire from progressing. On the second day it reignited and again both the red and yellow pumpers turned out and were able to more effectively extinguish the fire. The urban firefighters provide an amazing service, particularly in the area of structural fires. They are full-time. They are trained properly in structural firefighting. The rural firefighters turn out to every other type of fire. I acknowledge that in that instance we had the urbans turn out, and I know that they do in rural areas on a regular basis where it is practical. The rural firefighters in my electorate, and I know across the state, are very much aggrieved that they will not receive any benefit from the new levy on all properties across the state, which means that rural properties will be paying that mandatory \$90 levy. In the past local governments made the decision whether to make a rural fire levy. This one is going to be mandatory.

Had the minister been able to give some assurance that a proportion at least of the \$90 was going to go to rural fire services I probably would not have supported the disallowance motion. Indeed, the reality is that maybe the disallowance motion would not have been moved. The reality is that on several occasions when I have asked whether a portion of that levy could be applied to the Queensland Rural Fire Service, the volunteers who turn out in all sorts of climates to fight fires in the rural sector, I have been told that they would be getting none of that levy. On that basis I will be supporting the disallowance motion.

 **Dr DOUGLAS** (Gaven—UAP) (8.36 pm): I wish to support the disallowance motion being moved tonight. This motion is a very important motion for all of us here tonight; not only for those members who have rural fire brigade units in their electorates, but also for many of those here tonight who do not. I have a number of rural fire brigade units within my electorate and three on my immediate borders. I am very fortunate to have a relatively new urban fire station in the middle of my electorate of Gaven. That was built several years ago. I really appreciated the government of the day building it. It took many years for it happen and there were many petitions. I was ably assisted by the member for Mudgeeraba in that process. That unit will not function without the rural brigades in the hinterland. I repeat that: that will not work without the rural fire brigades because they cannot get into the areas with the sorts of vehicles they have and their gear is not set up for it. They will acknowledge that. The rural brigades gave up a large amount of their levy when the urban full-time fire brigades got going. But what is worse is the current threat of the removal of the rural fire levy, which is what this legislation that we are trying tonight to disallow will do.

Much seems to have been made by government speakers that no-one has anything to fear from the fire services levy, but these reassurances seem very hollow when clearly the new levy is being directed into consolidated revenue. In fact, there does not seem to be any disguise about that.

Mr Rickuss: What is a levy for?

Dr DOUGLAS: You might listen to this.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! The member will speak through the chair and other members will cease interjecting.

Dr DOUGLAS: I have hundreds of letters from a variety of rural firefighter volunteers and many from brigade captains.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Dr DOUGLAS: As you probably have, member for Lockyer. You should be supporting them. I want to detail some of their concerns immediately following the release of the Keelty review coming after the more reassuring Malone report.

On the Gold Coast there is great concern because, four months ago, Mayor Tom Tate declared that the GCC would no longer collect a rural fire service levy. In fact, after January it will be the only council to leave those brigades completely bereft of an income. Their futures are not guaranteed, nor are our own. The Guanaba Rural Fire Brigade captain, Mr Eldon Bottcher, says his brigade needs \$50,000 per year in funding and this cannot be generated by brigade member funding. Chook raffles and door knocks will not generate enough funds. Eldon worries about the knock-on effects of inadequate funding. The loss of volunteers is one effect, but certainly it is the big one. He says the available volunteer pool will definitely fall. That is only one small brigade; there are 1,400 of them. He has asked the minister to confirm in writing—and he has sent a variety of letters and emails, as I am sure the minister knows—to confirm whether any component of the levy will be redirected and returned to the brigades to replace the current council collected levy. The minister has not confirmed that.


The members for Currumbin and Burleigh advised the Tallebudgera Rural Fire Brigade that the state will ensure that they will get sufficient funding, but that is it. Others have stated in writing that no brigade will be worse off funding wise, but no-one will confirm whether that money is coming towards them. Captain Bottcher is concerned that we will have a bad fire season. He seems to be right, as the drought is continuing. Already Clagiraba, in the Gold Coast hinterland, has been fire affected. The Gold Coast hinterland attracts 30 to 35 per cent of the 11 million tourists who come annually to this state. That is 11 million tourists each year, and the figure is growing, although slowly. I thought tourism was part of the LNP's four-pillar strategy, but like everything else the devil is in the detail. In fact, they ignore these things. They do not realise that fire will damage the biodiversity of our bush and detract from the environments that tourists want to visit. As the minister would well know, Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie have visited the glow worm caves. Does he think they would come if the land was burnt out? They would not! If the government wants such people to come to the state and if it wants movies to be made here, it has to protect the environment. It has to give enough money, but it is not doing that.

Heaven help us if the brigades are left on their own. The local council has declared, in writing, that it will not assist them. Tonight I feel sorry for the member for Mirani and I am sure many amongst us feel the same. I know the rural fire volunteers trust him, because they say so. Those volunteers had earned the Malone review rollout, but they did not get it. The Keelty review short-changed them. They have a very good argument here. Is anyone aware that not one volunteer was interviewed for the Keelty review, and neither was the RFBAQ? The Keelty review denied the brigades the ability to control their own futures. The voluntary contributions by council have raised only \$5.6 million. That is not much. The rural brigades save over 93 per cent. The state, that is the Crown, is the largest landholder and, of course, it is the biggest acquirer of their services, yet it does not contribute anything. It contributes nothing!

Our rural brigades have struggled over the years. For many years, most of the businesses in Nerang—and mine is one of them; I have had a business in Nerang for many years and currently it is on the northern side—contribute everything from air conditioners and engines to pumps. We raise money and give up our time. We need the brigades; everybody knows that. The Keelty review was flawed. As I said, he did not connect with volunteers, he did not consult with them, he did not ask volunteers for submissions and he did not have a volunteer member on the review panel. In fact, the only fire related person on that panel was the urban deputy fire commissioner. Yet it is the review

upon which the minister, on behalf of the Campbell Newman government, is basing his whole decision. The government says that it will not give anything to the fire brigades. There are 1,400 of them and there are 34,000 volunteers. For those who do not understand, I ask this: have you ever heard that coalitions of support win elections? Do you know that coalitions of support also lose elections for governments? That is a big coalition of support. The current minister is a member of a regional area and he must realise how important this is. They are opposing a new state tax, which is what this is. It is a state tax, designed, designated and disguised as a rural fire service levy. It is nothing like that. It is a load of bunkum.

I say to the government, come clean. The government should scrub this revenue grab and give the critically needed rural fire volunteers what they want, which is the right to raise a levy. That levy was actually installed by a Labor person. Tom Burns brought it in. He did that because it secured their future and enabled them not to have to go cap in hand. That is the history of it. It was fair at the time and it is fair now. We need the fire volunteers and they need to know that we respect them and we are going to repay them for what they are doing, not just now but into the future.

 **Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—Ind) (8.45 pm): I rise to speak to the disallowance motion. One thing that is consistent in my mind is that we all believe our rural fire services need to be sustainable. Tonight many comments have been made about the importance of our rural fire brigade. Whether a member of the government, the opposition or the crossbenches, we all know of the great work they do. To look at it from a local's perspective, only this afternoon I received a call from my wife who said that one of our Belli Park Rural Fire Brigade members said, 'We need to have a fundraiser. We need to have something, because we need some more members'.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr WELLINGTON: Quite frankly, I am not taking interjections from the government members. If the government members want to interject, they will have a chance to speak.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! Members will cease interjecting if the member is not taking interjections.

Mr WELLINGTON: We have heard a lot about the Malone report and we have heard a lot about the Keelty report. What amazes me is that we have heard nothing from government members about the PricewaterhouseCoopers report. I know some government members are very familiar with that report. I take some of the newer members back to 1999. Guess what? A similar disallowance motion was moved in this very chamber. Unfortunately, it was before the days of our current minister, but can members guess who moved it? Mr Malone, the member for Mirani.

As I listened to the member for Mirani, other members of the government, and members of the crossbenches and the opposition, I compared the contributions with those made back in 1999. At that time, the then Labor government was proposing to increase, and did increase, a fire levy. Can members guess why? To make our fire services more sustainable. The minister of the day spoke about how the PricewaterhouseCoopers report indicated that the fire services were on the verge of insolvency, or words to that effect, and if critical decisions were not made there would have to be sackings, because there were simply not enough funds to go around. What did the member for Mirani have to say tonight? He said nothing about this matter. He spoke about how we needed to have this report. He ridiculed the members of the crossbenches for daring to say that the disallowance motion was fair and reasonable. It is amazing how, over a period, positions can so easily change.

My position is very simple: our rural fire services need money to operate. In 1999 I supported the 14 per cent increase because the position was put to me very clearly that it was almost in a state of insolvency and it was critical. From then to now the Belli Park Rural Brigade has been reduced to an almost skeleton crew. We have to try to find some way to get volunteers to support the brigade, even as this government is saying, 'We are going to tax you to do the volunteer work'. They talk about a levy, but quite frankly to the layperson this is simply another big, new tax. Our former federal opposition leader now Prime Minister used to talk about a 'big new tax'.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! There is too much noise in the chamber. The member for Nicklin has the call.

Mr WELLINGTON: My local Belli Park Rural Fire Brigade is finding it so hard to get volunteers to fight fires. I am not going to put my hand up and support another big new tax. Do members know why? As the member for Gladstone said, there is no commitment that a percentage of this will go directly to the services that need the support of volunteers. There is money to help with the purchase of a truck, uniforms and a few other things, but guess where this levy money is going? It is going straight to consolidated revenue.

As the member for Gladstone so articulately said, if we had a commitment from the government that a percentage of these funds would go to our rural fire brigades, it may have been the case that the member for Dalrymple would not have chosen to move this disallowance motion. There has been nothing. There has been deathly silence. If members of the government really want to look into this matter then I invite them to go back and read the 1999 PricewaterhouseCoopers report.

I will be supporting the member for Dalrymple's disallowance motion. I think it is fair and reasonable. The government talks a lot about consultation and wanting to consult. Guess what the explanatory notes say? The government is so proud of this. Printed in big bold letters under the heading 'Consultation' we have 'Consultation regarding the amendments has been undertaken with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and Queensland Treasury and Trade.' By crickey; what about consultation with mums and dads in the community?

We have heard all about the great Ted Malone review that was undertaken. He travelled the state and there was great support and enthusiasm for the review from my brigade members and members right across the state. But guess what? The government did not want it know about it. My view is that the government gave Ted an assistant minister's job to keep him quiet and get him in the tent because he might have rocked the boat too much. I think it was the member for Condamine who articulated that the member for Mirani is his own man. In my view, the government had to bring the member for Mirani into the tent so he was part of the team and did not speak out and rattle the cage. The member for Mirani certainly can rattle the cage when he wants to.


Mr Hopper: What tent do you sleep in?

Ms Bates: You know what they say about being outside the tent, don't you, Ray.

Mr WELLINGTON: I take that interjection. In relation to people outside the tent, I say that at least people outside the tent are free to speak as their constituents want them to and they are not muzzled.

An honourable member: They want to muzzle the judiciary now.

Mr WELLINGTON: That is right. They want to muzzle the judiciary. I know that it is getting late, but I am looking forward to my contribution in the adjournment debate tonight. I will resume my seat so we can proceed with the debate and hopefully move to the next exciting stage in this parliamentary sitting.

 **Hon. JM DEMPSEY** (Bundaberg—LNP) (Minister for Police and Community Safety) (8.53 pm): I rise to oppose the disallowance motion. I note the allegations made by the member for Condamine. If he has any evidence at all he should bring it forward and I assure him it will be investigated.

Queensland's diverse geography makes it susceptible to the full force of Mother Nature. The truth of this statement has been particularly evident over the last decade, with the state experiencing significant bushfires, cyclones, torrential rain and devastating flooding. But through tenacity and resilience Queenslanders continue to overcome the incredible challenges that these disaster events bring. On every occasion, Queensland's emergency services personnel and volunteers have worked tirelessly to respond to and support the recovery of their respective communities.

I do not need to look further than in my own electorate of Bundaberg earlier this year to find examples of where the support and services of our emergency services and volunteers has helped Queensland communities significantly. The support and camaraderie of our emergency services, helicopter rescue services and volunteers in Bundaberg and the North Burnett will forever be remembered. I have previously stated how proud I was of the response to this disaster—from the dedicated efforts of volunteers providing shelter to those who lost their homes to the people who brought in supplies despite damaged roads and bridges. It is our emergency services staff and volunteers who are the backbone of the response when people and property are in crisis.

The range of emergency services provided across the state are extensive and include: urban and rural fire services; rescue services including road accident, swift water and other forms of technical rescue; helicopter rescue services; the State Emergency Service; disaster management services, including planning and preparation; the monitoring of risk and warnings; coordination of disaster response arrangements, such as evacuations, damage assessment and resupplies; and support for volunteer marine rescue organisations.

The increasing number of disasters has also meant that the need for specialist equipment and expertise in these fields has grown. In 2013-14, the estimated cost of providing emergency management, fire and rescue services delivered by the Department of Community Safety is \$643.2 million. Accordingly, the government recognised that for these vital emergency services to

continue to be delivered to such a high level into the future, a sustainable funding base that supported wider emergency management services, not just the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, was required.

For this reason, the urban fire levy was renamed the emergency management, fire and rescue levy in June of this year. From 1 January 2014, levies will apply to the majority of property owners across Queensland. This will ensure that all Queenslanders are contributing to effective and responsive emergency services. This is a more equitable system of sharing the costs of these services. Exemptions from the levy apply to crown land, property vested in the Aboriginal and Islander Affairs Corporation and certain categories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land. The current 20 per cent discount for eligible pensioners will also continue to apply.

The levy amount is determined in accordance with the Fire and Rescue Service Regulation 2011, which establishes a schedule of property types and classes of levy district on which the levy amount is based. New arrangements have been put in place whereby farming properties with one owner that are comprised of more than one lot and where those lots share a common boundary—*are contiguous*—will have only one levy apply to the whole property.

Local councils administer levies on behalf of the government and it is up to local councils to identify property types in accordance with the schedule in the regulation. In some circumstances, the introduction of the new levy arrangements may result in a significant increase in the levy contribution. This will only be in cases where the property is in a higher levy category due to the size of the property, how the property is used and the risk the property presents.

If owners disagree with the levy applied to their property, they are able to appeal the decision in certain circumstances. For example, if a property owner believes the property is not a prescribed property or the local government has made an error or wrongly categorised the person's property, they are able to appeal to the chief executive of the Department of Community Safety. From tomorrow this will be the chief executive officer of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service.

In the same way as it is currently done, the levy will be collected by local governments on behalf of the state government. As the coverage of the levy will be broadened, there will be some local governments that have not previously collected the levy. They will be assisted with the transition. From 1 January 2014, there will be an additional 11 local governments collecting the levy. These include: the four deamalgamated councils of Noosa, Livingstone, Douglas and Mareeba; and the seven existing local governments that have not previously collected the levy—Diamantina, Etheridge, Bulloo, Burke, Carpentaria, Croydon and Barcoo.

Local governments will continue to receive an administration fee to collect the levy, which is calculated in accordance with the Fire and Rescue Service Regulation 2011, which is \$3.35 per property up to 40,000 properties and \$2.80 per property thereafter. Where there is an increase in the number of properties levied, there will also be an increase in the administration fee. Government is also providing costs related to support for local councils to assist councils to implement the new arrangements in the first year. Queensland Fire and Rescue Service staff are also travelling with staff from the Local Government Association of Queensland to assist councils with the implementation of the levy. Usually at least one levy notice must be issued prior to 1 January for the financial year. To assist with implementation of the new levy arrangements, for the 2013-14 year this requirement will be waived and councils will be able to issue notices later in the financial year.

This government remains committed to strengthening the Rural Fire Service Queensland, its volunteers and brigades across Queensland, by providing free of cost personal protective clothing, uniforms, communications equipment and training. On 18 October I announced the support of fully funded equipment and training needs for the Rural Fire Service. I also announced that the Assistant Minister for Emergency Volunteers, the member for Mirani, Mr Ted Malone, will be responsible for overseeing the actions arising from recommendations formed from his review of the Rural Fire Service. This followed a meeting with senior representatives of the Rural Fire Brigades Association Queensland on 27 September to discuss a number of their concerns. These discussions were positive and productive.

Only this week Assistant Minister Malone held a meeting with Director-General Kelvin Anderson, Commissioner Johnson, Assistant Commissioner Neil Gallant and members of the Malone review committee. From this positive meeting, the Malone review working group has been established and is being led by Mr Malone. It includes the Cairns Peninsula Area Director, Rural Fire Service Queensland, Inspector Bryan Cifuentes, and other members of the Malone review committee. In addition, Mr Peter Jeffrey, Director, State Emergency Service, will support the working group, ensuring clear lines of communication relating to implementing the Malone recommendations.

I would like to stress this point: there is still the opportunity that the operational costs for brigades in local areas may continue to be funded by the local community through its rural fire levy. At this time, only about one-third of local governments raise a rural fire levy, with rates ranging from \$5 to \$100 per property—the average being \$25. The most recent survey of local governments indicated that approximately \$4.1 million is collected and distributed to rural fire brigades annually. The government is therefore actively working with local councils to encourage them to continue collecting the local rural fire levy and providing advice and support to councils to assist with levy collection.

I want to make it clear that the new levy will not be a windfall of additional funds. It is expected to raise in the order of \$24 million per annum in 2013-14 and \$51 million in 2014-15 gross. It will be used to deliver a broad range of emergency services, including urban and rural fire services, the State Emergency Service, disaster management services and other emergency and disaster services across this great state. The levy will only, however, cover around 60 per cent of the full cost of delivering emergency and disaster management services. The Queensland government will continue to contribute significantly to service delivery costs.

Delivering a first-class emergency management service requires commitment and funding from both government and the community. The levy helps us to create a safer community, which is one of this government's cornerstone promises. I oppose this disallowance motion.

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

AYES, 15—Byrne, Cunningham, Douglas, Driscoll, Judge, Katter, Miller, Mulherin, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Scott, Trad, Wellington.
Tellers: Hopper, Knuth

NOES, 56—Barton, Bates, Bennett, Berry, Bleijie, Cavallucci, Cox, Crandon, Cripps, Crisafulli, T Davis, Dempsey, Dillaway, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, France, Frecklington, Gibson, Grant, Grimwade, Hobbs, Holswich, Johnson, Kempton, King, Langbroek, Latter, Maddern, Malone, Mander, McVeigh, Millard, Minnikin, Newman, Nicholls, Ostapovitch, Powell, Pucci, Rice, Rickuss, Ruthenberg, Seeney, Shorten, Shuttleworth, Smith, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Trout, Walker, Woodforth, Young.
Tellers: Menkens, Sorensen

Resolved in the negative.


Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I acknowledge and welcome to the gallery a former member for Redcliffe, Terry Rogers.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AND ROOMING ACCOMMODATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 3740, on motion of Mr Mander—


That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr GRIMWADE** (Morayfield—LNP) (9.16 pm), continuing: Before the dinner break tonight, I was talking about people who have antisocial attitudes towards public housing. I was touching on some of the illegal drug labs and activities that some people conduct within public housing which the member for Bundamba was defending. She was saying that we should be looking after these people. I do not think it is fair to the people who are waiting on the public housing list, because they should be able to access public housing when others are doing the wrong thing. Where people have drug labs in public housing, it is ultimately the taxpayer who is spending around \$75,000 to bring these houses back up to a standard where they can bring in a new tenant and move the former tenants on. It is not only \$5 million in damages each year; \$75,000 to repair each home that has drug labs in it is a big impost on the taxpayer. In that regard I support the minister and the intent of the bill.

Before I finish up, I want to touch on the QBSA section of the bill. I applaud the minister for this section, as it is a part I am really keen on. When we did the QBSA review there was a lot of talk about early intervention with QCAT and not being able to continue mediation and negotiations throughout the process while issues were referred to QCAT. It is good to see that this bill will allow mediation and negotiations to continue while QCAT is proceeding.

To recap, I will be supporting the bill. I thank the minister. I think this government has come a long way when it comes to public housing and the reforms that we have already implemented in terms of public housing. The Newman government is a can-do government in terms of putting a roof over people's heads. We have seen a massive reduction in the number of people on the waiting list, particularly in the electorate of Morayfield which I represent. As we move towards an agenda of

putting more roofs over people's heads, we are allowing people to access public housing, we are giving people a hand up, not a handout, and we are cracking down on people who are committing crimes and doing the wrong things in our public housing sector. I fully support where the government is going, and I support the minister and this bill.


 **Mr BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (9.18 pm): I rise to make a relatively brief contribution in the debate on the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. I will be confining my remarks to the amendments the bill makes to the Queensland Building and Construction Commission Act 1991, the QBCC Act. The bill proposes to amend sections 42 and 83 of the QBCC Act 1991. Section 42 of the act provides that a person must not carry out or undertake to carry out building work unless that person holds a contractor's licence for an appropriate class under the act. These changes are being made because the government has received advice that section 42 of the act, as it is currently worded, has the potential to adversely impact on the delivery of a Commonwealth Games Village. Economic Development Queensland has advised the government that most prospective development partner entities for the Commonwealth Games Village will not hold a builders licence. This is because they are development entities, not contractors and/or special purpose vehicles set up for this construction of the games village.

It is, therefore, proposed that section 42 be amended to provide that a contractor's licence is not required for a person who agrees with a principal under a building contract to cause commercial building work to be carried out by an appropriately licensed building contractor and a licensed building contractor carries out the commercial building work. At first glance the removal of the requirement to hold a building licence sounds like a bad idea. What does the amendment mean in practice? Through the committee process the department has clarified the operation of the clause in light of the concerns raised by stakeholders and advised that the amendment—

... does not allow an unlicensed person to direct or manage a licensed builder in carrying out building work. The amendment allows an unlicensed person to enter a contract to carry out building work, provided the building work (including the direction or management of building work) is carried out by a licensed builder. Accordingly the amendments do not authorise an unlicensed person to provide management, supervisory or advisory services in regard to building work.

I am grateful for the clarification from the department regarding the operation of the new clause. The opposition will, therefore, be supporting this amendment.

I turn now to the proposed amendments to section 83 of the QBCC. Section 83 of the act has the effect that the QBSA, or the QBCC when the QBSA Amendment Bill commences, is unable to act in relation to a complaint about defective building work if one of the parties prior to or after receipt of a complaint commences a proceeding in QCAT. Once a proceeding for a dispute has been lodged with QCAT, the QBSA or QBCC cannot, for example, issue a direction for work to be rectified or pay an insurance claim under the Queensland Home Warranty Scheme. To address these concerns it is proposed to amend section 83 of the act to allow the QBSA/QBCC to make application to QCAT to seek leave to act in relation to the building dispute where QCAT has management of the building dispute. During the inquiry into the operation of the BSA we heard from many people who were unable to have the BSA intervene on their behalf because either the contract was still on foot or the matter was subject to proceedings at QCAT. Allowing the BSA to seek leave of QCAT to act in a dispute appears to be a common-sense move. I note that QCAT will be able to decide whether or not leave is granted and I trust that they will make the right decision on a case-by-case basis as to whether it is appropriate for the BSA to become involved in the matter. The opposition also supports this amendment.

 **Mr SHORTEN** (Algeria—LNP) (9.23 pm): I rise to speak to the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 and the report. The objectives of the bill are to allow for a smooth transition of tenancies from direct government management to management by a community housing provider; to achieve greater consistency between public housing and community housing; and, thirdly, to support the implementation of the government's new antisocial behaviour policy. It also changes the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009 to provide rights to access places of accommodation for people with a disability who rely on guide, hearing or assistance dogs and make it an offence for a person to refuse accommodation to a person with a disability who relies on a certified guide, hearing or assistance dog.

The bill also effects changes to the Queensland Building and Construction Commission Act 1991. The change facilitates commercial development by amending the licensing requirements and removing restrictions regarding retention money for public-private partnership and an amendment to facilitate earlier resolution of building disputes. I will move on now to discuss in detail some of the points that I have mentioned.

The Department of Housing and Public Works is strengthening the role of the not-for-profit sector by progressively transferring the management of department owned and managed properties to the non-government sector. Community housing providers will become the property and tenancy managers of former department owned properties which have state tenancy agreements in place. State tenancy agreements differ from general tenancy agreements, which are used in the private rental market, in that they allow the department to increase rents without needing to give two months notice of a rent review for those on periodic leases, review and increase rents during the term of a fixed-term tenancy and require the household information to be provided.

The bill amends the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act to allow the standard and special terms of existing state tenancy agreements to be replaced by regulation with a new set of standard and special terms when a community housing provider becomes the lessor under the tenancy agreement. These legislative amendments have been drafted to enable a community housing provider to access Commonwealth rental assistance in the rent charged to a tenant, levy a bond or other service charges and require household information to be provided by a tenant.

On 1 July this year the new antisocial behaviour policy and strikes based process was introduced. Unfortunately, the department continues to have difficulty in obtaining termination orders through QCAT and subsequently regaining in a timely manner possession of public housing dwellings in cases where serious antisocial behaviour has occurred. It is proposed that a notice to leave for ending of housing assistance may be used in public and community housing where a tenant has engaged in antisocial behaviour and exceeded the permitted number of strikes, that being three, under the antisocial behaviour policy.

I would just like to take a minute to talk about the new antisocial behaviour policy or, as it is commonly called, the three strikes policy. During a public briefing I asked departmental officers about this policy and how it resembles or is from the same mould as the current workplace dismissal laws where the employee has three opportunities to improve the performance or behaviours. So residents have opportunities to modify their behaviours before, ultimately, their tenancy is terminated. How much fairer can you be? They have three opportunities. They are counselled, they are engaged and they are supported to change those behaviours that would be considered antisocial. If they do not do it, then the department can issue a termination order.

We need to remember how we arrived at this position. We need to remember that the department manages—and I stand to be corrected—well over 60,000 homes in Queensland and there are well over 20,000 families on the waiting list. I do not have the exact numbers with regard to those who are considered for urgent emergency housing or those at the lower end of the scale. Having grown up in public housing, having family who still live in public housing and family who are on the waiting list to enter public housing, I know and understand the process better than most. I can assure every member in this House that the departmental officials—and I heard the member for Bundamba rambling on tonight. I did not take much notice, as is normal with regard to the member. I did pick up that on a number of occasions she was talking about the hardworking staff of the housing centres, and I concur. They are very hardworking staff. They do a good job. They are good public servants. They care for the tenants whom they are tasked to care for. I know that everyone who walks into their office is given the courtesy and the objectivity that they deserve to have their case heard and they will take every opportunity to work through to find a home.

The sheer fact is that we just do not have enough homes. The whole idea of this bill is to open up the market so that nongovernment organisations can come in and manage the housing stock that we already have. In the process they can also build more homes to house those disadvantaged Queenslanders that we know are out there: over 20,000. I have no idea how many of those are children.

Mr Rickuss: It used to be 32,000!


Mr SHORTEN: I will take the interjection from the member for Lockyer. It was over 32,000 when we came into government, and we are down to just over 20,000-odd. That is an awfully good record for 18 months.

I will turn to the subject of removing tenants from housing due to antisocial behaviour and the speed with which the department sometimes has to move. I heard the member for Warrego who I think quoted a figure of \$75,000 worth of damage that tenants had done to a home. Having grown up in public housing in Coopers Plains, I know that we are talking about less than one per cent of public housing tenants. It disappoints me greatly that we have to legislate for the minority, but that is what we have to do. It is the old adage about there always being a few bad apples in the barrel. We have

to make sure that the one per cent do not cost the government—ultimately the Queensland taxpayer—money for the upkeep of public homes. If you are a resident of public housing you have a responsibility to your community to look after that home, and 99.9 per cent of residents do. I remember very well growing up in the old Dutch homes in the community of Coopers Plains—and it was a community. They were not the greatest homes in the world, but for a family of eight kids living in a three-bedroom dwelling, that was home. In fact, I still call it home.

I will just turn to the part of the legislation that we are looking at tonight concerning guide dogs. There is a huge investment in training these animals. In fact, in the end the dog becomes the best friend of their owner. I think that it is the lowest act in the world for an accommodation renter or provider to turn someone away that has an assistance, guide or hearing dog. I applaud the change in the legislation tonight to make sure that those members of our community who have or need the assistance of these guide, hearing and assistance dogs have every single right to enjoy the level of service and accommodation that every one of us takes for granted.

I just want to close with a little speech. It frustrates me greatly that the Labor Party seems to think that they have a monopoly on caring for public housing tenants or socially disadvantaged people. The Labor Party never did anything for me, and I grew up there in public housing. I have seven siblings and one of them is a teachers' delegate, so she probably would say Labor had something to do with it. But I would suggest the majority would agree that they have everything in life because they worked for it. One of the philosophies of the Liberal National Party is that you get out of life what you put into it; in other words, if you take on responsibilities you will achieve in life. It aggrieves me greatly when I hear the seven members in the corner whinge and wine about how bad we are with all the policy changes that we are making. They have left the mess; we have got to clean it up—I just wish they would get out of the way and let us do that!

 **Mr WOODFORTH** (Nudgee—LNP) (9.34 pm): I rise to speak briefly in support of the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. Most social housing tenants in the Nudgee electorate do the right thing: they pay their rent, look after their homes and are good neighbours. Unfortunately, a small minority do not; some engage in persistent antisocial behaviour and illegal activities such as operating drug labs. Last year the Department of Housing and Public Works received over 24,000 complaints about the antisocial behaviour of public housing tenants. Between 2008 and 2011—on Labor's watch—public housing tenants were issued with a combined total of 103,126 breach notices for a range of reasons including rent arrears, poor behaviour and failure to meet other tenancy obligations. 320 households were evicted over the same period. There was also over \$5 million in damage to social housing properties last year alone.

The government has responded to this by announcing a new antisocial behaviour policy and strikes based process, which was implemented on 1 July 2013. Even so, the Department of Housing and Public Works continues to have difficulty in obtaining termination orders from the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal and subsequently regaining quick possession of public housing dwellings in cases where serious antisocial behaviour or suspected illegal activity has occurred.


There have been numerous cases throughout Queensland where the department has received complaints of frequent antisocial and illegal behaviour occurring in public housing properties. One example was when the department had for many months been unable to remove a public housing tenant despite receiving advice from the Queensland Police on two separate occasions about the alleged existence of dangerous chemicals used in the manufacture of drugs at the property. Drug laboratories produce hazardous chemicals which are a risk to the health and safety of those entering or using the property, including children. They also pose a risk to neighbouring properties and people if they explode or catch fire. The cost to the state of drug laboratories being operated is significant. Typically, \$75,000 is required to rectify damage done to a dwelling to bring it back to a habitable condition. There are currently 20 known examples of rectifications which are underway in public housing as a result of drug laboratories.

The provisions of this bill will strengthen the antisocial behaviour policy and strikes based approach, allowing for quick intervention on the basis of antisocial behaviour. It is the government's intention to build a social housing system with consistent policies for the whole sector, ranging from the Department of Housing and Public Works through to the smallest community housing provider. The provisions of the bill will protect tenants' rights to natural justice. When a strike is issued, a notice

to remedy a breach or a notice to leave is issued to the tenant, or an urgent application is filed in QCAT to terminate the tenancy. A tenant can already challenge such notices or contest the application in QCAT, and so in effect challenge the strike that was issued. These rights will continue. The tenant would also have the right to be heard on any application to terminate the tenancy.

Before getting to QCAT, tenants' complaints are thoroughly investigated to remove the risk of vexatious or malicious complaints resulting in strikes being issued or a household evicted. In addition, the department has well-established processes and practices to ensure that a tenant is afforded natural justice and has a right of reply before a notice to remedy or notice to leave, and strike, are issued. The ASB policy and strikes process allows for warnings to be issued instead of strikes for some low-level, minor antisocial behaviours, although two warnings for the same behaviour will result in a strike. There is also the capacity for departmental staff to use their discretion when issuing strikes in cases where the behaviour can be attributed to a person's mental health, illness or disability.

I congratulate the minister and his department for this bill. The bill makes it clear that tenants are responsible for their own actions and what the consequences for persistent poor or illegal activity will be. From the calls and emails we have received in my Nudgee electorate office, this bill is going to be well received in my electorate. I support the minister for putting this bill to the House.

 **Mrs SCOTT** (Woodridge—ALP) (9.38 pm): I rise this evening to make a contribution to the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. For a number of years Logan City worked towards forming a Logan Housing Co. Possibly five or six years ago I took a delegation of councillors to tour a number of facilities built by the Brisbane Housing Co. and to view a presentation by David Cant, CEO of the Brisbane Housing Co. In time meetings were held with a representative of the department of housing, and then councillor John Grant was tasked with taking this forward. The now member for Springwood, John Grant, is the government member tasked with taking forward the Logan Housing Renewal Project, which I understand will be a pilot where older housing is demolished and a new, more appropriate mix of housing built.

Back in the 1950s and 1960s, three-bedroom homes were what was required. We now have a high need for one- and two-bedroom units and also, in an area like Woodridge, a number of four- and five-bedroom homes. But it is now long overdue for the minister to announce the chosen consortium to start this process. Logan City is awaiting the next chapter in our city renewal.

I thought I might just mention why we do not have many more units of public housing. I recall back in the days when we had a federal-state housing agreement the federal government allocated to Queensland in excess of \$300 million to build homes. I am not sure over what period. I think it was during John Howard's reign as Prime Minister that the federal-state housing agreement was changed to a rental subsidy scheme. Guess what? The landlords put up their rents, so a lot of that subsidy went into the pockets of landlords. So rather than continue building public housing we actually subsidised and filled the landlords' pockets.

There is a great deal of fear within the public housing sector at the moment—right from the time the infamous letter from the Hon. Bruce Flegg was delivered to residents seeking their decision to move out, open their home to a lodger or pay higher rental. There are now fears that residents who have lived for 30 years in their home—raised their family, nurtured their garden and often put personal funds into upgrades of their homes—may now be forced to leave. These residents within my area often have a family member—sometimes grandchildren—needing to return to reside with them for various reasons, and living in a one-bedroom unit will make that family support, which is so vital, impossible.

While my office has dealt with many neighbourhood issues over the years, some of them serious—and I believe that some residents do not deserve to be in public housing if they abuse the system—I do have some issues with the 'three strikes and you're out' policy. There are times when issues are complex, and I do acknowledge that there has been an undertaking to give support where that may be necessary, such as in the case of a person with mental health issues.

I fear that there will be families with young children who may be evicted, such as an Aboriginal family whose extended family members may lob in to stay with them and cause disruption in the neighbourhood. They may face eviction, and where will they find a real estate agent to give them accommodation? Similarly, a single mum may have a boyfriend who brings friends around on a regular basis, they have some drinks and cause complaints from neighbours. My fear is that we are facing an explosion in homelessness. I have worked in the area now for 28 years, and I know the issues many of our residents face. It is not always within the ability of the tenant to control those who may be regular visitors to their home.

Now, without the Tenancy Advocacy and Advice Service, my office is constantly called on to support and assist with tenancy issues. The minister would have received correspondence from me outlining the inability to have maintenance of private rental properties attended to—after dealing with, first of all, the real estate office and then the RTA with no action and finally going to QCAT, which found in favour of the tenant. All of that because our TAAS is no longer available to sort out housing problems. My office is fearful of what will happen in the future.

I want to commend the exceptional service that our department of housing has given to our tenants. We have had managers with a high degree of understanding of the wide range of tenants we deal with, and many times our departmental officers have gone way beyond what is asked of them. We have had a close relationship with our department and have found them responsive on a wide range of issues. It is vital that their expertise not be lost. With our public housing now being handed to the private sector and being rebadged as 'transition housing', I fear that many families will face a harsh and bleak future.

I now wish to turn to the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009. The committee in its report stated that the policy objective of the amendments—

... is to ensure that people who rely on guide hearing and assistance dogs have the same rights as others to access places of accommodation.

This set of amendments will make it an offence for a person who runs or is associated with an accommodation service to refuse accommodation to a person with a disability who relies on a certified guide, hearing or assistance dog.

On 22 August 2013 I introduced into this House a private member's bill titled the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs (Places of Accommodation) Amendment Bill 2013. I acted to close a loophole which was an unintended consequence of the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009, which inadvertently omitted provisions to include rental accommodation, permanent, temporary or holiday premises in the act.

Mr Crandon: So it was Labor that made that mistake?

Mrs SCOTT: I will admit that. I think we have seen this week that your side also makes mistakes, especially when things are done in haste.

Mr Crandon: You wouldn't believe it from the feedback we have been getting from your mob.

Mrs SCOTT: We are not perfect and we are happy to say that this was an omission. The previous Labor government had recognised this and prepared the amendments to close the loophole, but the necessary changes lapsed when the Newman government was formed.

Mr Crandon: So it took them three years?

Mrs SCOTT: This omission resulted in discrimination, as it was possible for landlords to refuse entry to those aided by dogs. In fact, one individual who was refused accommodation wrote to the minister responsible pleading his predicament and asking the government to fix it. Still there was no action by this LNP government.

Now, more than 18 months later and despite lobbying to the LNP government by Vision Australia and individual stakeholders, the LNP government finally responds—not because of the need or the lobbying but because the minister was embarrassed by my private member's bill into acting to protect some of the most vulnerable in our community.

Mr Crandon: Why didn't you embarrass your mob in three years?

Mrs SCOTT: Well, it is better late than never, and I am delighted the government has acted as a result of my private member's bill.


Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Berry): Order! Member for Woodridge, just hold on a second. Thank you for your contribution, member for Coomera. I think you have made that point several times. 'Three years': we understand that now.

Mr CRANDON: I am sorry, but I did not make a comment in that last interaction.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I know, it was the one before that. I haven't got to the other ones yet. I call the member for Woodridge.

Mr Bleijie: I think it was me, Mr Deputy Speaker,

Mrs SCOTT: 'Mea culpa'. Well, it is better late than never, and I am delighted the government has acted as a result of my private member's bill. Therefore, I support the amendments to this act.

 **Miss BARTON** (Broadwater—LNP) (9.48 pm): I rise this evening to make a brief contribution to the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. At the outset, I congratulate the minister for the great work he has done in this space. The Newman government, when it came into office, faced incredibly long waiting lists in terms of public housing, and the work that has been done by this administration has seen those waiting lists cut and has seen us make sure that we are able to provide accommodation for those who desperately need it.

I want to touch on a couple of issues contained in the amendment bill, and the main issue is the fact that we are clamping down on antisocial behaviour. The reason I rise to contribute to this debate tonight is that this has been a big issue for me in terms of one particular constituent—a man named Bob, and I will not give his full name because the matter is still being fully dealt with. He has faced some particularly terrible circumstances. His upstairs neighbour throws eggs at his car. She puts rubber masks on and threatens him with scissors. She plays music at all hours of the night. She brings, as he would describe it, many guests home at all hours of the day and all hours of the night. For years he has been complaining about this upstairs neighbour and two people before him had complained for years. It got so bad that, after the inaction of the previous government and the previous member, the easiest thing for them to do was move. It is a really great tragedy that someone is forced to move out of their home because of the antisocial behaviours of someone else because the previous government was not able to respond to that antisocial behaviour and was not able to help Bob.

I had a meeting with Bob a couple of weeks ago and we talked about what it was that I could do to help him. We have seen really positive outcomes to the point where the department of housing is talking about going to QCAT. We have seen a really positive outcome for Bob because this government is committed to ensuring that antisocial behaviour in public housing is stopped. It is absolutely disgraceful that someone can treat their neighbours with such absolute contempt. It is absolutely disgraceful that someone can treat public housing properties that are provided to them by the state of Queensland and funded by hardworking Queensland taxpayers' dollars with utter contempt.

I am particularly pleased to see the great lengths that this minister has gone to in order to ensure that we have a three-strikes policy. The only criticism that I have received of the three-strikes policy is that one person said that three strikes was two too many. That is an overwhelming endorsement of the work that we are doing in this state. People in my community have reacted very positively to the moves that we have taken to ensure that we are protecting the innocent and the vulnerable in public housing so that they are not driven out of their homes.


It was a great pleasure for me to be able to help Bob and I look forward to being able to see his smiling face when he is able to get more than one hour's sleep a night, when he does not need to ring the local police station because his upstairs neighbour is threatening to kill him or because his upstairs neighbour has decided to throw eggs on his car. It will be an absolute pleasure for me to be able to look him in the eye and say, 'I'm glad that we've been able to help you,' because that is what this government is about. It is about helping people who need help, and this legislation and the work that we are doing in terms of stamping out antisocial behaviour are key elements of that. When we consider the fact that when we came into office there was a waiting list of about 30,000 or 32,000 people I find it unbelievable that we would allow someone who kicks holes in the walls and plays really loud music to the point where they disturb their neighbours so extremely that they cannot sleep to stay in their home, get their public housing fixed and stay there. It is high time that something is done about this, and I congratulate the minister for it.

The member for Bundamba made some very interesting comments in her contribution to the debate, and I am not sure that if I were to respond I would be able to do so using parliamentary language. The only thing that I would say is that the comments that the member for Bundamba made make me really question the words of Voltaire, because at the end of the day I seriously wonder how someone can stand up here after having been part of a government that failed to protect hardworking Queenslanders who are simply looking for affordable accommodation. As I say, her comments in this House tonight and many other times have really made me question the words of Voltaire.

The only other issue that I wanted to quickly mention is that it is great to see that we have now made it an offence for those providing accommodation to discriminate against those who have a guide-dog, a hearing dog or an assistance dog, and I congratulate the Minister for Communities for the great work that she has done in this space. She has long been passionate in this area. In fact, a couple of weeks ago I went to see the guide-dogs in Southport and was talking to someone about the work that she has been doing for many years in this space, particularly in her local electorate

supporting the guide-dogs in Aspley. So I know that the minister has long been passionate about this issue and I applaud her very much for bringing this to the fore in this bill and I thank the minister for ensuring that it goes through with this suite of reforms.

As I said, this legislation is great for our communities because it means that we are looking after those in public housing who really need support and those who are being victimised by the antisocial behaviour of others. I look forward to being able to call Bob and saying, 'We've fixed this for you, mate. Have a good night. Enjoy it!'

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (9.55 pm): It is a pleasure to rise to support the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill—legislation that supports my community's expectations. There are many exciting elements of this legislation, but there are two in particular that I want to expand on in the limited time available. Most tenants in social housing, as we know, do the right thing. They pay their rent, look after their homes and are good neighbours. A small minority, though, do not and an even smaller minority engage in persistent antisocial behaviours or even illegal activities. Last year the Department of Housing and Public Works received 24,529 complaints about antisocial behaviour from public tenants. Between 2008 and 2011, public housing tenants were issued with a combined 103,000 breach notices for a range of reasons, including rent arrears, poor behaviour and failure to meet other tenancy obligations, and 320 households were evicted over the same period. There was also \$5 million in damage to social housing properties last year.

This government has responded to this by announcing on 4 April the new antisocial behaviour policy and the three-strikes process which was implemented on 1 July 2013. I can tell the House of the overwhelming support in my electorate for this proposed legislation and the number of people who are absolutely devastated by the actions of a few. Even so, the Department of Housing and Public Works continues to have difficulty in obtaining termination orders from the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal, QCAT, and subsequently regaining quick possession of public housing dwellings in cases where serious antisocial behaviour or suspected illegal activity has occurred. There have been numerous cases where the department has received complaints of frequent serious antisocial behaviour or illegal behaviour occurring in public housing properties, and in one case police were called over 90 times in relation to behaviour at a housing complex which mostly involved one public housing tenant. Also, the cost to government of rectifying damage is significant. Typically, many thousands of dollars are required to rectify damage to bring the dwellings back to a habitable condition and there are currently 20 known examples of rectification underway as a result of drug labs.

Community housing policies will be amended to ensure that consistency is achieved. This bill includes some significant changes, including ending tenancies where the lessor reasonably believes the premises are being used for illegal activity; broadening the scope of objectionable behaviour to cover wider circumstances; requiring tenants to sign acceptable behaviour agreements; and specifying that QCAT considers the effect of the antisocial behaviour on neighbours and other tenants when deliberating about termination orders. As I alluded to before, that is the most exciting part of the legislation and I wanted to convey to the House that the people in my electorate are overwhelmingly supportive of the minister's implementation.

There is also an amendment which requires that QCAT must not refuse to terminate a tenancy merely because the tenant is living in social housing. The provisions of the bill protect tenants' rights to natural justice and when a strike is issued a notice to remedy a breach or a notice to leave is issued to the tenant or an urgent application is filed with QCAT to terminate the tenancy. A tenant can already challenge such notices or contest the application in QCAT and so in effect challenge the strike that was issued. These rights will continue. The tenant would also have a right to be heard on any application to terminate a tenancy.

Before getting to QCAT, tenant complaints are investigated thoroughly to remove the risk of malicious complaints resulting in strikes being issued or a household eviction. In addition, the department has well-established processes and practices to ensure that a tenant is afforded natural justice and has a right of reply before a notice of remedy or notice to leave or a strike are issued. The department recognises that there may be some individuals who may have difficulty understanding the new policy or may engage in poor behaviour as a result of illness or disability. The policy and strikes process allows for warnings to be issued instead of strikes for low-level, minor antisocial behaviour, although two warnings for the same behaviour will result in a strike.

There is also capacity for departmental staff to use their discretion when issuing strikes in cases where the behaviour can be attributed to a person's mental health, illness or disability. In such circumstance, the policy provides for an alternative response, including referrals for support, consideration of a transfer to another public housing dwelling and/or more closely monitoring the tenancy. The provisions of the bill are a well-balanced set of changes that allow social housing providers, including the state, to respond to antisocial behaviour and to make it clear to tenants when they have crossed the line. There are similar requirements in other states.

The bill makes it clear that tenants are responsible for their actions and the consequences for persistent poor or illegal activity. As a result of clearly sending this message to social housing tenants, the government expects complaints and subsequent evictions will decrease.

Section 42 of the Queensland Building Services Authority Act Queensland states—

A person must not carry out, or undertake to carry out, building work unless that person holds a contractor's licence of the appropriate class under this Act.


The wording of this section has caused some issues in the industry, where private sector parties leading major infrastructure projects may be required to hold a contractor's licence even where the lead party will be entering into a separate contract with the licensed building contractor to perform the work and will therefore not be carrying out any building work itself. As a consequence, the lead party not only has to take in the administrative and cost burden of maintaining a licence but also must comply with the prescriptive financial requirements of licensees under the QBSA Act's financial requirements of the policy. In some cases, this requires costly measures to be taken by the licensee to ensure that it does not breach any financial requirements as the consequences of such a breach are severe. This situation clearly imposes an unnecessary regulatory burden on commercial developers, particularly in circumstances where the developer is entering into a contract with the principal who is not a domestic consumer.

This issue was raised a number of times in submissions to the committee's inquiry into the operation and performance of the Queensland Building Services Authority, raising concerns about what was perceived as the unintended consequence of section 42 of the QBSA Act. The parliamentary committee subsequently recommended that section 42 be revised to make it clear that there is no breach of the QBSA Act if an appropriately licensed builder carries out the building work. The bill amends the licensing requirements of section 42 of the QBSA Act to facilitate commercial development, public-private partnerships and prescribed government projects, of which an example may be construction of the Commonwealth Games Village.

Under the bill a contractor's licence will not be required for a person who agrees with a principal under the building contract to cause commercial building work to be carried out by an appropriately licensed building contractor and a licensed contractor carries out commercial building work. Domestic consumers are not affected by this amendment and all building work under domestic building contracts with consumers will continue to be carried out and supervised by an appropriately licensed building contractor.


As a currently licensed building contractor who maintains their qualifications, I can tell the minister that this amendment was welcomed by contractors in my local area. By introducing this amendment, this government is overcoming the unintended consequences of section 42. I thank the minister for that. The building industry in my electorate is also thankful.

Most importantly, the amendment removes the regulatory impediment for commercial development in Queensland. We all know that Queensland is open for business. I know that, particularly in my electorate, there is a lot of activity with a progressive local government approving unprecedented building developments. We need these sorts of impediments to be removed from the act. I support the proposed legislation. I congratulate the minister and the committee. I will be supporting the bill.

 **Mr LATTER** (Waterford—LNP) (10.04 pm): I am going to speak very briefly in support of the bill this evening. I am not going to go through the technical details of the bill. I think it has been discussed enough. But tonight I want to say why I am supporting this bill and why it is important to my electorate. Earlier it was mentioned the tens of thousands of people who are on the housing waiting list. I understand that at present approximately 1,400 people are on the waiting list to get into a house at Logan City. Of those 1,400 people, just over half—750 or thereabouts—are in the Waterford electorate. So this is a serious issue for me and it is a serious issue for the people of my electorate. May I say without hesitation that housing and the issues around housing are the most consistent issue that walks in my door, comes in on my phone, or passes over my desk and it is so for various reasons.

May I say that it is getting beyond a joke to hear continually issues of antisocial behaviour by people living in these properties and the impact that that behaviour is having on their neighbours and the impact that that behaviour is having on people who need assistance, who need housing but who cannot get it. The 'three strikes and you're out policy' is a tough position, it is a strong position, but may I say that it is welcome in my area. For those people who take advantage of a government that is trying to support them through a difficult time in their life, who throw it back in the face of the community, who throw it back in the face of those people who are paying their taxes, working, contributing to providing this housing, their time is up.

There are some great amendments in this bill. The provisions relating to access to housing for people who need assistance dogs are very welcome. I support the minister strongly for what he is doing. I support him with regard to the provision of extra housing. I support the minister's very tough stance in relation to abuse and to the availability of housing. On that basis, I support the bill.

 **Hon. TL MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works) (10.07 pm), in reply: I thank honourable members for their interest and their contributions to the debate this afternoon and tonight. In particular, I thank the members of the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee for their diligence and the hard work they put into examining the legislation. I would also like to thank those who made submissions to this bill and those who took their time to present their arguments before the committee at the hearing held on 1 October 2013.

I will now address some of the issues that were raised during the debate. I suppose it is only appropriate to begin with the contribution of the member for Bundamba, but I honestly do not know where to begin. I know I have been an MP for only a relatively short period, but I am struggling to remember hearing a more inconsistent, contradictory and, frankly, ill-informed set of so-called arguments. True to form, the member for Bundamba used the full quota of time allowed to her to engage in groundless scaremongering. This is a persistent practice of the member for Bundamba, who, over the past 18 months, has begun a scaremongering campaign among residents of government owned caravan parks, nursing home residents, people living in private rental and, now, social housing tenants.

One thing that has become obvious from listening to the member for Bundamba is the extent to which the Labor Party is really stuck in the past when it comes to this issue. It really shows a massive philosophical difference. The Newman government believes that social housing should, wherever possible, be transitional. We are about empowering people, about normalising the process of renting from the government and about helping people build resilience rather than reliance. In contrast, if the member for Bundamba is any indication, the Labor Party believes that the best thing that could ever happen to people is for them to remain dependent on the state for the rest of their lives. That is the Labor way. The member is perfectly entitled to hold that antiquated view, just as she is entitled to amuse herself with conspiracy theories about wholesale public housing sell-offs. Unfortunately, I fear that in doing so she simply reveals the extent to which she is out of touch with the people of Queensland.

Let me touch on some of the issues that she raised. I am proud to say that I have visited housing service centres all over this state. I have been to Bundaberg, Emerald, Buranda, Caboolture, Gladstone, Cairns, Capalaba, Inala, Ipswich, Maroochydore, Robina, Maryborough, Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Mount Isa, Thursday Island, Townsville and Woodridge. Next week I will be at Chermside and Fortitude Valley. I will be able to say that in my first year as a minister I have visited every housing service centre in the state.

Mrs Miller interjected.

Mr MANDER: The incredible thing about meeting these front-line staff in the housing service centres, and the one thing that I do agree with the member for Bundamba about, is that these staff are hardworking, compassionate and passionate people who do a brilliant job. One of the reasons that I have been visiting them is to tell them about our housing 2020 vision, about our Homelessness-to-Housing strategy, about our three-strike policy and talking about the future. These people are enthusiastically behind what we are trying to do. In fact, they are shocked that they have actually seen a minister. They have never seen a minister in the time that they have been in these housing service centres. I am committed to engaging with them and speaking to them about their future. I have had frank discussions with them about their future and about where they stand. We are still working those issues out at the moment as we talk about this.

Mrs Miller interjected.

Government members interjected.

Mr MANDER: But they are backing their own ability. They understand that they are an asset for the future. The member for Bundamba should be ashamed of herself for the way that she is trading in baseless speculation and again in fearmongering.

Mrs Miller interjected.

Government members interjected.

Mr MANDER: The member's speculation about property sharks masquerading as community housing providers just shows how ignorant she is of the community housing sector and the national regulatory system that will govern it. Can I also remind the member that the transfer of tenancies to the not-for-profit sector was fully supported by the federal Labor government. It has been acknowledged right across the country that this is the way to go.

Mrs Miller interjected.

Government members interjected.

Mr MANDER: We currently sit at 25 per cent of public housing managed by the community housing sector. The Labor driven federal target was 35 per cent by the end of next year. These are Labor driven targets from the previous federal government, but our target is very ambitious. We aim to get to 90 per cent by the year 2020.

I will just touch on the member for Bundamba's comments about the so-called retrospectivity involved in the transfer of tenancy agreements. The legislative amendments are designed to facilitate a smooth transfer of tenancy management to the not-for-profit community housing sector for the delivery of social housing. Community housing providers can provide a more localised, responsive and integrated service and are better equipped to engage the sort of wraparound support services many of our high-needs tenants require. The provisions of this bill mean that transferred tenants do not have to sign a new tenancy agreement since the amendments deem existing tenants to have a new agreement in place. This saves providers from having to undertake what would be a slow and expensive task, as well as placing a burden on tenants by asking them to sign a new agreement.

Before I move on, let us consider for a moment what the member is opposed to. She is opposed to tenancies transferring to not-for-profit organisations whose very reason for being is to provide supported accommodation to the most vulnerable members of society. She is questioning not-for-profit organisations like Mission Australia, Prescare, Churches of Christ Care—people who have worked in this sector for years and years and years.

Mrs Miller interjected.

Mr MANDER: She is aghast at the prospect of tenants continuing to have their rents capped at 25 per cent of their assessable income. She is appalled that tenants might have to pay a small bond or service charge for using excess water—never mind that they will have up to three years to prepare for these changes.

Mrs Miller interjected.

Mr MANDER: If the member truly believes that this somehow is a raw deal for tenants then she is even more out of touch than I thought. There are currently over 22,000 households on the waiting list for social housing. More than 4,000 of them are considered to be very high needs. The government considers that it is important that the tribunal also has regard to the needs of people on the waiting list awaiting housing assistance from the state. Existing public housing tenants will have until mid-2016 before being required to pay a bond and service charges such as for water that they use and they will therefore have two years to prepare to pay in the third year.

The member for Bundamba also claims that this new three-strikes policy goes too far. I am not surprised that she feels that way because the policy of the previous government barely made it around the block. It is amazing that she has learned nothing from the failures of the past. Obviously she would prefer to go back to the days when tenants could be issued with dozens and dozens of breach notices without putting their tenancy at risk. She would prefer to go back to the days when bad behaviour would be erased from the record if you behaved yourself for 30 days.

Mrs Miller: We brought in the three strikes, you ignorant person.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Berry): Order! Under standing order 253A you can leave the chamber.

Whereupon the honourable member for Bundamba withdrew from the chamber at 10.15 pm.

Mr MANDER: The couch surfers she was apparently so concerned about are precisely the people that this legislation is designed to help. Obviously the member cares very little for them because she would prefer to leave them languishing on the waiting list while we go back to the days where it was almost impossible to move people on no matter how badly they behaved. The member for Bundamba and her colleagues need to make a choice: are they on the side of rogue tenants or are they on the side of tormented neighbours? With regard to the member's concerns about vexatious complaints and her clumsy attempt to conflate suspicion with reasonable belief, I simply reassure her that complaints will be thoroughly investigated within principles of procedural fairness and natural justice so people whose interests might be adversely affected by a decision have an opportunity to be heard. Any decision will be based on evidence and without bias.

I would also like to point out that earlier on the member was extolling the virtues of housing service centre staff, calling them hardworking, highly trained et cetera, which I entirely agree with, but now she claims to be worried about these same people, claiming that they are so incompetent or so corrupt that they would be unfairly evicting people without any recourse to any sort of appropriate appeal or review process. The member for Bundamba cannot have it both ways. The department has well-established processes and practices to ensure that the tenant is afforded natural justice and has a right of reply before notices are issued. If the bill is passed, the department will, where appropriate, update its processes and practices to cover the new provisions of the bill. Of course, if people feel they have been unfairly treated they can feel free to put the case before QCAT.

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 8, as read, agreed to.

Clause 9—

Mr MANDER (10.19 pm): I move the following amendments—

1 Clause 9 (Insertion of new s 290A)

Page 9, line 9, 'interfered'—
omit, insert—

interfered significantly

2 Clause 9 (Insertion of new s 290A)

Page 9, line 17, 'the tenant'—
omit, insert—

anyone

I table the explanatory notes to my amendments.

Tabled paper: Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013, explanatory notes to Hon. Tim Mander's amendments [\[3930\]](#).

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 9, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 10 to 19, as read, agreed to.

Clause 20—

Mr MANDER (10.20 pm): I move the following amendments—

anyone

3 Clause 20 (Insertion of new ch 13A)

Page 17, lines 1 to 3—
omit, insert—

antisocial behaviour includes making excessive noise, dumping cars or excessive rubbish, vandalism and defacing property.

4 Clause 20 (Insertion of new ch 13A)

Page 21, after line 31—
insert—

(3A) The tribunal may make the order if it is satisfied the lessor has established the ground of the application.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 20, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 21 and 22, as read, agreed to.

Clause 23—

Mr MANDER (10.21 pm): I move the following amendments—

5 Clause 23 (Amendment of sch 2 (Dictionary))

Page 26, line 20—

omit, insert—

community housing provider, for a tenancy, see section 527B.

6 Clause 23 (Amendment of sch 2 (Dictionary))

Page 26, lines 25 and 26—

omit, insert—

existing State tenancy agreement see section 527C.

7 Clause 23 (Amendment of sch 2 (Dictionary))

Page 26, line 32 and page 27, lines 1 and 2—

omit, insert—

replacement lessor see section 527C.

replacement terms, for chapter 13A, see section 527C.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 23, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 24 to 31, as read, agreed to.

Clause 32—

Mr MANDER (10.22 pm): I move the following amendment—

8 Clause 32 (Amendment of sch 2 (Dictionary))

Page 37, lines 28 to 30—

omit, insert—

building contract—

(a) for part 3E—see section 67AAA; and

(b) for part 4A—see section 67AAA; and

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 32, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 33 to 45, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Hon. TL MANDER (Everton—LNP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works) (10.22 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. TL MANDER (Everton—LNP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works) (10.23 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.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr STEVENS (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Leader of the House) (10.23 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Glass House Electorate

 **Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection) (10.24 pm): It is with great pleasure that I rise this evening to speak about a couple of events that have occurred in the electorate of Glass House over the past couple of weeks. I start by thanking the Premier and my ministerial colleagues, including the Attorney-General, for joining me last Friday at the annual Walk for Daniel. It was great to be there to support Bruce and Denise Morcombe. It was rather sobering to know that this was the 10th year that the Walk for Daniel has occurred. It is also 10 years since my wife, our two children—we now have five children—and I moved to Palmwoods. Each and every year the Walk for Daniel reminds my children of the importance of the child safety message. I thank Bruce and Denise for the ongoing work that they do around our great state and, indeed, around the nation as they take their message into schools in other states. I commend them for that and I am here to support them throughout that.


It has also been a rather joyous time in the electorate. Spring and the early part of summer always keep us busy. We have had the Woodford community art show. Bobby put on a fantastic show. It was great to be joined by the member for Stafford, Chris Davis. We did not get him to buy anything this year, but next time we will have to make sure that he spends up big at Woodford, supporting the great local artists.

The following night was the Woodford rodeo. It was fantastic to be there to flick the switch on brand new solar powered LED lights—of all things. That was funded through the Gaming Machine Benefit Fund. In my role as the state member, it is wonderful to support community groups such as the Woodford Show Society and the rodeo team in terms of getting funding so we can all enjoy such a wonderful night.

The 10-day long Glass House Country Festival kicked off with an art show at the Glass House Mountains State School. It was great to see the kids putting so much effort into that. I commend the principal and her team for putting so much time and effort into the show. In particular, I recognise Bob McLean who, as president of the chamber of commerce, has done a lot of work to pull everything together over the 10 days of the festival. It was great to finish off with a New Zealand hangi on Sunday. I did not realise there were so many kiwis in the electorate.

I acknowledge that, after 11 years of service as principal to the Eudlo State School and 40-plus years of service to the education department, Principal Ian Webb has retired. He will be sorely missed by the community of Eudlo and he will be sorely missed by school kids from many generations. Ian, we thank you very much for all that you have done for the education of kids in our state.

Comments by the Premier

 **Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—Ind) (10.27 pm): In my time in parliament I have witnessed some disgraceful personal attacks on people by state politicians. However, the behaviour of Premier Newman today in his attack on Bob Katter Sr rates as one of the worst I have witnessed. As a member of this 54th parliament, tonight I apologise to all Queenslanders for the language and the behaviour of Premier Newman in his disgraceful personal attack on Bob Katter Sr when responding to a question from his son, the member for Mount Isa.

The member for Mount Isa asked the Premier a sensible question that deserved a straight answer. Instead of a sensible response, the member for Mount Isa's father was subjected to a disgraceful barrage of abuse and ridicule by the Premier. I congratulate the member for Mount Isa on his control during the Premier's tirade of abuse against his father. I am certain that there are many people in our state who would not have shown a similar strength of character to so control themselves if someone, irrespective of whether or not they were the Premier, spoke about their father in such a manner.

Before the 2013 election, Premier Newman promised to lead our great state of Queensland with humility, with grace and with dignity. Instead, I believe he has behaved with arrogance and should consider his position and his responsibility as the leader of our great state of Queensland. I acknowledge the Premier and his family were hurt by Labor's attack in the lead-up to the last election.

However, this does not excuse the Premier for his behaviour this afternoon. I know other people have also experienced similar hurt to their families by politicians' attacks. I call on Premier Newman tonight to reflect on the speech he made this afternoon and tomorrow to apologise to the member for Mount Isa, apologise to his father, the federal member for Kennedy, and apologise to all Queenslanders for his behaviour this afternoon.


Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Berry): Order! We need time to reflect just for a moment.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister! I call the member for Nudgee.

Wavell State High School; Health

 **Mr WOODFORTH** (Nudgee—LNP) (10.29 pm): I would like to firstly congratulate Wavell State High School for being selected as an independent public school as of next year. Under the leadership of Mr Jeff Major and his team of deputies, teachers, P&C and school council, this move is going to see this great school go from strength to strength. I look forward to working with Jeff and his team again next year.

A couple of weeks ago it was a pleasure to be asked to give a health talk at the Geebung RSL club to around 50 members. The audience were all old enough to know that back in their day there was less sickness, less disease and they ate real food. But now, as we discussed on the day, they feed their pets better than themselves. How crazy is that! It certainly made them rethink their choices and how they could make changes that would improve their health and take the weight off themselves and off the health system.

Whilst on health, I now move onto the member for Bundamba who, unfortunately—I should say fortunately—is not here tonight and her comment that I was dangerous when it came to my health comments and concerns during my last IMS. I note that the member for Bundamba even put me in her dissenting report on her vaccination bill. I do not think it hit the mark the member was after, so be sure to have another go. I look forward to it!

But any time the member wants a debate on what our food, drinks and lifestyle products full of toxic chemicals are doing to us on numerous levels then bring it on. Let us make sure we throw my favourite subject in there too, that of fluoride. The member can bring her mate Dr Folley from Queensland Health with her. The good doctor is spreading a campaign of fear to scare councils into putting poison in their water. But do not worry, a debate will never happen as those that try to destroy our health refuse to have a debate. I wonder why?

Our food, drinks and lifestyle products are slowly poisoning us. But ask someone like the CEO of Cancer Australia, Professor Zorbas, and we get her irresponsible comment last week, 'There are some definite misconceptions about what are risk factors but there is no evidence to support any of those.' Well just like fluoride, if you do not look you will not find. It is head in the sand stuff and we wonder why we are where we are.

Good nutrition will save this state and country in many ways. It will positively affect every minister, from the police minister to the minister for disabilities, from the agriculture minister to the education minister, and let us not forget the health minister. So many of our problems revolve around our food and drink and the lifestyle products we put on our bodies.

In a lab aspartame is a neurotoxin. Put it in a diet soda and it becomes a sweetener. We are just slowly poisoning ourselves with so many things and again we wonder why we are where we are and are lost for answers or cures—please. The only people being dangerous are those who support the lies, deceit and fraud and do not do their research. Let us put the health debate front and centre, where it needs to be.

Gold Coast University Hospital

 **Mrs SCOTT** (Woodridge—ALP) (10.32 pm): Today has been a red letter day on the Gold Coast with the official opening of the magnificent Gold Coast University Hospital, being one more fine addition to the health and education precinct at the Griffith University Parklands campus.

Ms Trad interjected.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Stop the clock for a moment. Honourable members, the member for Woodridge is giving an adjournment speech. Please give her the courtesy of allowing her to continue. I call the member for Woodridge.

Mrs SCOTT: It was planned as an integrated campus where students, professors, doctors, dentists, nurses, allied health professionals, teachers, specialists, researchers will have access to cutting edge equipment, in a modern facility and where the atmosphere for learning is enhanced at every level. Professor Allan Cripps, who has steered the development of these superb medical facilities, along with his team, in partnership with the three levels of government, notably our former Labor state and federal governments, as well as the Gold Coast City Council, should receive our highest accolades.

Last week it was my privilege to attend a breakfast at the invitation of Professor Cripps to hear of the important medical research taking place within the newly opened Griffith Health Centre, and it is this which I would like to highlight this evening. I am simply in awe at what is taking place within our research centres.

Developing healthy communities within local, national and international communities was the theme of Professor Cripps's presentation. Themes of their research included: chronic disease such as cancer, pneumonia and AIDS, heart disease and dementia; human behaviour and psychological knowledge, family interaction, and, importantly, a mobile app for anxiety and depression; Heart Foundation research centre, cardiovascular disease and improving therapies; and musculoskeletal research into arthritis and osteoporosis. My personal favourite was a white, soft, fluffy seal robot the size of an eight-week-old baby which a person suffering dementia can cuddle. With responsive movements and eyes with big eyelashes which close, this evokes the most amazing responses in the elderly. Yes, they cost \$5,000 each, but how much would you pay to see an aged gentleman who had not spoken for a long time suddenly reignite his interest and speak again.

Level 9 of the Griffith Health Centre could have held our interest for many hours. The patience required by researchers in their methodical search to unlock the secrets of stem cells, DNA, chronic disease will bear fruit and their rewards could be seeing thousands and millions of lives saved. In closing, I recommend each member in this place donate to medical research. That is the part that we can play.

Gold Coast University Hospital



Mr MOLHOEK (Southport—LNP) (10.36 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Just one moment, member for Southport. The speech was not controversial. Please allow members to speak in the adjournment debate. I call the member for Southport.

Mr MOLHOEK: This morning I had the pleasure of attending the official opening of the new Gold Coast University Hospital in my great electorate of Southport. I thought it would be fitting to share the words of Ian Langdon, Chairman of the Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service, who spoke this morning after the Premier and the Minister for Health opened the hospital.

Like the major cathedrals of the world, today's opening of the Gold Coast University Hospital has involved three generations of vision and dedication. Approximately seven years ago, the then chief executive, Jeff Hollywood, mooted the concept of a new university hospital. The government of the day provided support and the project planning commenced.

A second generation consisting of the then chief executive Adrian Nowistke, project leader Michael Allsop, the project team, architects, Lend Lease and contractors then proceeded to construct this magnificent complex. Throughout this process, our Gold Coast health services team ensured that clinical functionality remained at the forefront in all decision making.


Finally, a third generation chief executive Ron Calvert, accompanied by a board and supported by a 5,000 strong workforce, managed the completion and now assume the responsibility to capitalise on the magnificent facilities bestowed upon us not only here but also at Robina and Carrara, as well as throughout our many community based operations. The official opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony earlier today is thus the end of the process in which many individuals have all played a vital part. However, it is also the beginning of a new era—an era of increased community expectations for new services, innovation and ever-increasing standards of care.

Today, Mr Langdon commended the Newman government for our commitment to funding new services and growth. He noted that during the two financial periods he has been in his position, he has seen an increase of funding to service a nine per cent growth in activity year on year, with 91 per cent of such funding coming from the Queensland government. The cost of providing services through the Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service for the current year is \$940 million. Thus every two years their operating expenditures exceed the full cost of building a new hospital. This is why for the health board cutting the ribbon today and accepting the responsibility of operating and funding the service is extremely significant.

The provision of health services is never constant. For example, in 1966, nearly 50 years ago, the Southport Hospital reported total patient numbers of 3,299. The cost per inpatient day was \$9.19. The average cost per outpatient visit was just \$1.19. If only those costs were the same today. Last year the Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service had more births than the total number of patients in 1966, had 125,000 emergency presentations and serviced over 300,000 outpatient visits and over 12,700 postnatal home visits. Today, costs per day certainly exceed \$9.19.

Gold Coast health, on moving into their new hospital premises, will continue to focus on their culture of care. Everyone involved in the project and all of the staff who transitioned to the new hospital should be congratulated.

Scarth-Johnson, Ms V, OAM

 **Mr KEMPTON** (Cook—LNP) (10.39 pm): Vera Scarth-Johnson was born in 1912 in Yorkshire, very near the birthplace of James Cook. Vera was sent to finishing school in Paris, where she found little of interest except for the garden. Vera later took up modelling to support her studies at both the Leeds College of Art and the St Albans College of Art. She worked for a Leeds market garden until her grandfather, a wealthy manufacturer, by now resigned to her curious choice of career, gave her £2,000 to start a piggery and a market garden of her own.


In 1947 Vera emigrated to Australia, settling initially in the Wide Bay district, where she purchased a small property near Bundaberg and became the second woman in Queensland to obtain a sugar assignment. Vera sketched and painted flowers in her spare time and by the mid-1960's began her long association with Kew Gardens. Vera's collecting trips took her travelling over much of Australia and around the Pacific Islands. Captured by the beauty and rich flora of the Endeavour River Valley, in 1972, at the age of 60, Vera settled in Cooktown and, with the aid of Aboriginal friends from the local Guugu Yimithirr nation, began collecting and recording native plants of the region.

Inspired by the early botanical work of Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander and Captain James Cook's voyage of discovery, Vera set out to complete botanical illustrations of the flora collected by Banks and Solander. I met Vera in 1988 when asked to assist with the documentation of her gift of the collection to the Cooktown community. We became great friends and I would often go to extreme and often dangerous lengths to collect plant specimens for Vera only to see her cast them aside saying, 'I have painted that already.'

I became a trustee of the growing collection and, after nearly 10 years of community lobbying, we secured funds to build Nature's Powerhouse in the wonderful Cooktown Botanic Gardens. Vera was tall, slim, distinguished and very beautiful and was quick witted and quick to speak her mind. Vera did not suffer fools easily and there was no beating around the bush—she made her straightforward views known to all, from high-profile scientists and politicians to farmers, fishermen and children.

Vera was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday honours list in June 1996. A rare shrub, *Argophyllum verae*, commemorates her name. Vera died in May 1999. There are over 160 illustrations in her collection housed in Nature's Powerhouse. I was honoured to travel to Cooktown last Friday to attend the annual general meeting of the Vera Scarth-Johnson Foundation and officially hand over the trusteeship of the collection to them. I congratulate the enormous voluntary efforts of these friends of Vera who have preserved not only her collection but her memory.

World Teachers Day

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (10.42 pm): Last Friday, 25 October, it was my great pleasure to welcome the Minister for Education, the Hon. John-Paul Langbroek, to Miami State School to celebrate World Teachers Day—and didn't we have a great day! We went to see the year 7 coordinator Jackie Farrugia in her classroom and we handed out badges that the Miami State School

had made especially for that day for their students to give to their teachers, and we also handed out icy poles to the teachers. It was a little bit unfortunate that the students had to stand there and watch their teachers eat icy poles, but they thought it was a great thing to do for their teachers. We also went to the grade 5, grade 2 and prep classes. Some of the students sang us songs and read books. It was a fantastic day. Following that, we had morning tea with the staff and the P&C from that great school. We were welcomed by the principal, Kate Bentley, and the deputy principal, Greg Stanley.

On that day my staff prepared little boxes full of cakes and treats for all the schools in my electorate, and I would just like to mention those schools. At Burleigh Heads State School we have Principal Peter Tong and his wonderful staff. At Caningeraba State School we have Principal Ray McConnell and again a great bunch of staff. At Marymount Catholic College we have Principal Chris Noonan. I have just been there to celebrate their academic achievement night and it was a wonderful night. At the Marymount Primary School we have Principal Greg Casey and his wonderful team. At Miami State High School we have the well-renowned Jim Baker as the principal there, and he has a great team as well. At Palm Beach State School we have Principal Ed Marconi. At St Andrew's Lutheran College we have Principal Tim Kotzur, and at Varsity College, which has just been made an independent public school, we have Principal Jeff Davis. That is a school that I share with the Leader of the House. He has the college and I have the junior school. They are on separate campuses.

My daughter is a teacher. I have very high regard for the teachers in this state. They are doing a wonderful job of bringing up our children. We will be debating issues about discipline in our schools, and I have mentioned quite a few times that it is at school where children start to get discipline. They do not get it from their parents; they definitely get it from their teachers. I would like to really praise the teachers in my electorate and the teachers in Queensland—in fact, the teachers worldwide.

Sentencing Advisory Council



Mr JUDGE (Yeerongpilly—UAP) (10.45 pm): In May 2005 there was a private member's bill introduced by now Minister McArdle to create a Sentencing Advisory Council. The bill's second reading failed on 29 September 2005. Of interest, then opposition members speaking in favour of the bill included the now Deputy Premier, among others of the Newman government.

Somewhat ironically, after opposing the now Minister McArdle's private member's bill, the Labor government established the Sentencing Advisory Council in 2010 by passing the Penalties and Sentences (Sentencing Advisory Council) Amendment Bill. The primary objectives included to give the Queensland Court of Appeal power to issue guideline judgements and to strengthen the penalties imposed upon repeat offenders, importantly child sex offenders and other offenders who commit violence upon young children and/or who cause the death of a young child.

Unfortunately, and presumably against good advice, the Premier and Attorney-General moved quickly to dissolve the council after coming into government. It would appear that this decision was taken principally by the Premier and the Attorney-General. I draw this conclusion based on other LNP members, like now Minister McArdle and even the Deputy Premier, earlier supporting the establishment of a Sentencing Advisory Council. The Premier has placed himself on a very slippery slope indeed by imposing his views upon the courts. This has been confirmed by Justice George Fryberg.

In recent times the Premier has also insulted many Queenslanders who disagree with his laws by labelling them as 'supporters of sex offenders and paedophiles'. He simply cannot cope with differing opinions. He is not suited to being the leader of a political party and he is not suited to being the Premier of this state. He has dangerously placed himself in a position of being the cause of delays in the justice system. He has placed our criminal justice system in crisis under his rule. For this reason I call on the Premier and the Attorney-General to stop playing politics with our criminal justice system. I call on the Premier to respect our courts. I call on the Premier to respect Justice Fryberg's recent remarks.

A fundamental component of our system of government is the independence of the judiciary from the executive and the legislature, where the Premier is first among equals. The Premier needs to make a 100 per cent pledge of loyalty and respect for our judiciary and legislature. He can do it in here in parliament or he can do it in writing or he can do it in the media, but he needs to do it. He also needs to learn that he is operating in a democracy, not a dictatorship, and that not everyone will yield to his rule, especially judges like Justice Fryberg.

Unlike the Premier, I respect our judiciary. I respect ordinary Queenslanders, even those who may disagree with my views from time to time. I affirm that I am here to serve my community by putting people ahead of politics. I call on the Premier and the Attorney-General to restore the Sentencing Advisory Council as a legitimate voice for public opinion and support for the judiciary.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr JUDGE: I have spent more time catching paedophiles than the Attorney-General. I know a little bit about this and he has got no idea.


Government members interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr Hopper: Put that in your pocket!

Madam SPEAKER: Order, members!

Kingaroy Rugby League Football Club

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (10.48 pm): I rise in the House tonight to call on the Queensland Rugby League to grant our wonderful community of Kingaroy, who have provided so many wonderful players and future NRL players, an Intrust Super Cup day in 2014. The Kingaroy Red Ants rugby league club are one of the superb country rugby league clubs across—

Mr Mander: The old Red Ants.


Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The old Red Ants, absolutely. This week we had the second annual parliamentary country versus city touch match—and of course country won again for the second year! I would like to thank the QRL for their support for our country-city touch match. It was wonderful to be able to see Jamie O'Connor from the Queensland Rugby League and Arthur Eustace-Earle from the NRL, so I was able to lobby for the Kingaroy Red Ants to get one of these amazing days.

QRL has stated that, by relocating matches to rural and regional areas, it has become a vehicle for delivering some of the game's elite players to areas that would otherwise be deprived of the privilege. I say that QRL should be giving Kingaroy this wonderful privilege. Our area has provided amazing players—Matt Ballin; Chris McQueen; Chris Sandow; Steve Renouf; Gavin Cooper, who plays for Northern Queensland; Willie Tonga; young players like Esikeli Tonga, who plays for the Titans; and previous players like Dave Brown, Brian Preacher Smith, Bryan Niebling, Bunny Pearce, Mike Burns and Tony Marshall.

The wonderful member for Gregory, Vaughan Johnson, an ex-rugby league player himself, has agreed to come to Kingaroy for the Intrust Super Cup should we get it. Not only that, I have just had the opportunity to speak to a previous NRL referee, the honourable Minister for Housing, Tim Mander, who has also agreed to come to Kingaroy if we are able to secure the Intrust Super Cup.

This initiative is not only about the delivery of players and the game. This is about the community and the economic development it can bring to my wonderful town of Kingaroy. These games have an average TV viewership of some 68,000 people. What a wonderful way to showcase the beautiful town of Kingaroy and everything that we can do. It is about investment in our local area. It is about providing opportunity for our people. It is also about providing the youngsters of our region a view into a future in the NRL.

Retrieval Services Queensland

 **Mr COX** (Thuringowa—LNP) (10.51 pm): As I was not expecting to make an adjournment speech tonight, I will talk about something which I am very parochial and proud of: the fact that I am a North Queensland. I will always fight for services that should remain in North Queensland, something which I am proud to say this government lets me do and speak freely about.

Last week I talked to the media and was quite happy to be involved in ensuring that the northern arm of Retrieval Services Queensland was retained in Townsville. Retrieval Services Queensland is an essential part of our health system in regional Queensland which never gets mentioned. At the regional Queensland Plan summit, which the honourable member for Glass House admirably ran, all of Queensland said that we need to grow and develop the regions. I stand here tonight very proudly saying that I have fought for the past 16 months to retain the services of Retrieval Services Queensland to Townsville through the hospital, which not only looks after Townsville but right through to Cape York.

This service coordinates clinical services in any emergency. It could be on a highway south of us at Ayr; it could be at a cattle property in Mount Isa; or it could be on a fishing trawler in the gulf. This is a team that is coordinated and organised through our proud hospital, which is now kicking goals thankfully under a new government and a new system of health boards. I would like to thank the minister, who has listened to me several times over the last 16 months. I have knocked on his door every time I come down here—

Mrs Frecklington: It would be more than several.

Mr COX: It would be more than several. I want to mention Niall Small, who is the director of our ED and who first brought this to my attention. These services are essential to North Queensland and to our regions. Our government listens when members from the regions speak to any member of our cabinet. This is one just example which I am proud to stand up here and speak about tonight.

While I would like to be home tonight to be present at my biggest local high school's awards night—and I am saddened that I am not allowed to be there through the lack of ability to get leave—I take this opportunity to acknowledge the fact that I have been able to make this speech and talk about services to the regions which I will always fight for.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.54 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Barton, Bates, Bennett, Berry, Bleijie, Boothman, Byrne, Cavallucci, Choat, Cox, Crandon, Cripps, Crisafulli, Cunningham, Davies, C Davis, T Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Dillaway, Douglas, Dowling, Driscoll, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, France, Frecklington, Gibson, Grant, Grimwade, Gulley, Hart, Hobbs, Holswich, Hopper, Johnson, Judge, Katter, Kaye, Kempton, King, Knuth, Langbroek, Latter, Maddern, Malone, Mander, 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, Watts, Wellington, Woodforth, Young