



# RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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## FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT

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## WEDNESDAY, 15 JUNE 2016

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The Legislative Assembly met at 2.00 pm.

Mr Speaker (Hon. Peter Wellington, Nicklin) read prayers and took the chair.

### SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS

#### Absence of the Clerk of the Parliament



**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I have to advise that the Clerk will be absent from parliament for the remainder of this week's sitting due to illness.

#### Appropriation Bills, Rule of Anticipation



**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I remind honourable members that standing order 231, which deals with anticipating discussions, does not apply to the debate on the appropriation bills. Given that the Duties and Other Legislation Amendment Bill introduced is intrinsically linked to the budget and will be debated cognately with the appropriation bills, I intend to apply the exception in standing order 231 to that bill as well. Accordingly, members are at liberty to make statements or to ask questions that touch upon the Appropriation Bill and the Duties and Other Legislation Amendment Bill.

### PETITIONS

The Clerk presented the following paper and two e-petitions, lodged and sponsored by the honourable member indicated—

#### Mooloolah Valley, 43 Bray Road

**Mr McArdle**, from 1,990 petitioners, requesting the House to authorise either the gifting of the Mooloolah Valley Community Centre land, located at 43 Bray Road, Mooloolah Valley, to the Mooloolah Valley Community Association Inc; or grant a long-term 50-99 year lease to the community association which would allow for capital works to be carried out in the future [\[928, 929, 930\]](#).

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

#### Electrical Work, Unregulated

**Mr Nicholls**, from 2,189 petitioners, requesting the House to stop any Government plan to create a taxpayer funded corporation to provide unregulated electrical work in Queensland [\[931\]](#).

### TABLED PAPER

#### MINISTERIAL PAPER

The following ministerial paper was tabled by the Clerk—

Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs (Ms Grace)—

[932](#) Gazette Notice from the Queensland Government Gazette, dated 10 June 2016, advising that the Acting Governor, acting by and with the advice of the Executive Council and pursuant to the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003, has approved WorkCover Queensland's payment of \$92,508,439.55 (GST inclusive) to the Queensland Treasury

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

#### Back to Work Program



**Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (2.03 pm): My government is determined to get Queenslanders back to work. A key new initiative of yesterday's budget was the two-year \$100 million Back to Work regional employment package. Since January last year more than 50,000 new jobs have been created in Queensland. We can do more. We are doing more.

The Working Queensland Cabinet Committee has toured the state and, as a result of those meetings, we are prioritising jobs in regional Queensland. I thank my employment minister who has also toured the state and held a series of employment forums in regional Queensland.

The Back to Work program will support up to 8,000 direct regional jobs over two years. Employers who hire an eligible unemployed person—

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Kawana, those interjections are not appropriate.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Employers who hire an eligible unemployed person will receive a \$10,000 support payment, with payments rising to \$15,000 if they are taking on a person who has been unemployed for 12 months or more. Importantly, support payments will be staged in a way that encourages long-term, sustainable employment for the unemployed person. A first payment of 40 per cent will be made once the person has been employed for at least four weeks, with a second and final payment of 60 per cent on completion of 12 months continuous employment and a commitment to ongoing employment.

In addition, Back to Work teams will be on the ground to provide practical assistance and support in connecting regional employers with disadvantaged jobseekers. They will also be able to help identify training opportunities for jobseekers, including through the \$10 million Back to Work certificate 3 guarantee boost and apprentice and trainee pathways.

The beneficiaries of this package will be not only the direct employer and the jobseeker but also the local community and region. Back to Work will kick off on 1 July 2016, with employers able to claim for new, previously unemployed, employees who start work on or after this date. Other eligibility criteria will also apply and these will be made available for the 1 July commencement date.

I would like to encourage employers and jobseekers who are keen to find out more about our Back to Work program to call 13QGOV or visit the website—[www.qld.gov.au/backtowork](http://www.qld.gov.au/backtowork). Anyone who is interested in the Back to Work package will be able to register their interest and will be sent updated information as it is made available. I encourage employers who have been thinking about whether to take that extra person on or to give a go to someone currently out of work to take that step and employ that person to help regional Queensland.

### **Budget, Domestic and Family Violence**

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (2.06 pm): I am proud that my government has delivered a budget that demonstrates our strong commitment to preventing domestic and family violence in Queensland. Domestic and family violence is a violation of basic human rights and will not be tolerated in our society. Everyone knows someone affected by domestic or family violence. The sense of genuine desperation, fear and despair are just some of the feelings people suffering from domestic violence have expressed to me.

The thing is that domestic violence can happen to anyone. It does not discriminate. Yesterday, as part of my government's state budget, we announced an additional \$198.2 million in funding to address domestic and family violence in Queensland. This brings the total funding by my government to \$233.8 million over five years for domestic and family violence reform, protecting victims and holding perpetrators to account. This demonstrates my government's trailblazing commitment to addressing domestic and family violence since accepting all 140 recommendations of the *Not now, not ever* report of the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence led by Quentin Bryce. I would also like to thank the minister, Shannon Fentiman, for all of her work in making sure that the whole-of-government approach to this issue was addressed in this budget. Well done, Minister.

Our funding commitment provides a robust foundation for driving action through our 10-year Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy and Queensland says: not now, not ever. The reform package has a strong focus on prevention—stopping the violence before it happens and supporting those living with violence. This package builds on current successful practices and presents new responses to deliver generational change.

Domestic and family violence campaigner Rosie Batty has stood up to make sure people affected by domestic and family violence have a strong voice in the community. Rosie has put a spotlight on domestic and family violence and taken it out of the shadows. I was pleased to see that Rosie was invited to address the National Press Club earlier today. As I have said previously in this House, I met Rosie at a COAG meeting. I have to say that she is an incredible and amazing woman. She has so much strength and so much resilience. We should all be very proud of her efforts in this area.

I sought the advice of Rosie when our government was looking at trialling specialist domestic and family violence courts. I spoke to Rosie at length. She said that women are getting lost in the maze of law and having to tell their stories repeatedly. A specialist domestic and family violence court was adopted after our last budget. It is operating out of Southport. We will provide an extra \$42.4 million to

roll out an additional four specialist domestic and family violence courts in this state. That will be a huge help to women going through the system. It will give them a one-stop shop, ensuring they have the necessary supports around, and it is something that I hope the whole parliament supports.

We also have announced new signature initiatives—namely, \$9.3 million for a communication and engagement program to help change attitudes and behaviours of Queenslanders towards domestic and family violence; \$24.2 million to establish specialist teams to prioritise victims and their safety and to prevent domestic and family violence related homicides; and \$53.4 million for new or enhanced domestic and family violence services including perpetrator interventions to support those in need. The important work of the Domestic and Family Violence Implementation Council continues to be supported with the \$1 million allocated, and the government has committed to build the capacity of community justice groups in discreet Indigenous communities by allocating \$11 million.

In my role as Premier I have the honour of meeting many inspirational people, and I wish today in this House to acknowledge from the bottom of my heart all those who shared their stories with me. I say thank you to them. I also thank Dame Quentin Bryce for her leadership, steering our special task force on domestic and family violence. You are changing the lives of many Queenslanders. Today I make this commitment to those people experiencing or who have experienced domestic and family violence: my government will never forget you. We will never let you feel like you are walking alone. We will walk with you and stand side by side with you. As Rosie Batty said in closing at the National Press Club address today, 'Change cannot happen without you.' Together, we can help end the violence in our state.

### **Budget, Capital Works and Infrastructure**

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade and Investment) (2.12 pm): The second budget of the Palaszczuk government includes a \$2 billion investment in the State Infrastructure Fund, which we established in March this year. This investment is part of our four-year capital program which has grown from \$34.5 billion in the last budget to \$38.4 billion in this budget, or \$40.8 billion when including PPPs. Our capital program is a key plank of our plan for jobs and infrastructure in Queensland.

The State Infrastructure Fund is all about planning and delivering the transformational infrastructure Queensland needs to drive economic growth and productivity right across the state. Importantly, the State Infrastructure Fund ensures government has already set aside funding as a down payment on the major projects that will be identified by the state's independent infrastructure advisor, Building Queensland, when its first priority pipeline is released in the near future.

This is all about delivering on the infrastructure reform agenda: better planning, rigorous assessment and prioritisation, and then smarter investments. It means we are making every infrastructure dollar work harder for the best return—for jobs, for the community and for productivity. It is why the Infrastructure Association of Queensland yesterday said it was 'encouraged by the commitment to infrastructure in this budget' and that it supported the 'commitment of the government to adopt a statewide Infrastructure Plan properly costed through Building Queensland.' And it is why BDO Corporate Finance Partner Reece Edwards said—

Providing funding certainty for projects in the pipeline that meets Building Queensland's rigorous business case economic criteria will increase confidence in the infrastructure sector and provide a boost to economic productivity in Queensland.

The State Infrastructure Fund also provides an injection of new funding for strategic investments in economic and regionally significant infrastructure. This week I announced the projects which have received funding through our \$180 million Significant Regional Infrastructure Projects Program, which is expected to support more than 280 regional jobs. Through this program the government is fast-tracking key economic and social infrastructure projects in regional centres right across Queensland, which will increase business confidence, particularly in the downturn of the mining construction boom.

We know that investment in infrastructure is essential for healthy regional economies. Through these projects the government will ensure local residents are employed wherever possible. Projects allocated funding range from more than \$34 million for the Cairns Western Arterial Road; the Bill Fulton Bridge duplication; more than \$26 million for the renewal of school facilities in Central Queensland; to more than \$14 million in social housing and \$12 million in mental health facilities—just to name a few. As well, \$300 million has been already allocated to the Priority Economic Works and Productivity Program which is investing in seven critical road and rail upgrades across the state. This includes state funding for projects like stage 1 of the Ipswich Motorway, the Rocklea to Darra upgrade, and the North Coast Line Capacity Improvement Project—projects that will help boost capacity, reliability and productivity.

The budget's significant investment in the State Infrastructure Fund is a very clear demonstration of our strong commitment to delivering the right infrastructure in the right place at the right time. It will mean we can continue to drive productivity and jobs in Queensland, both here in the south-east and right across our regions.

## Budget

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Minister for Sport) (2.16 pm): Yesterday I was very pleased to deliver the Palaszczuk government's second budget. I refer to the positive feedback from stakeholders and industry groups. We know that this budget is well received by stakeholders right across the community. Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland has applauded budget measures to increased Advance Queensland funding, describing it as a win for small business and start-ups. The CCIQ is clearly supportive of the boost to investment in Advance Queensland from \$180 million to \$405 million. I quote from their release which states—

The additional \$225 million allocated in the budget is a significant and positive step towards transitioning Queensland's economy post the resources boom. The government's commitment to ensuring innovation remains a key priority for Queensland and will see us keep pace with our competitors and boost productivity.

The resources sector has also backed in the budget. The Queensland Resources Council has welcomed our recommitment to a review of financial assurance. They also welcome the additional resources for the Land Court in this budget and our commitment to maintain the dialogue with QRC on some modest reform proposals. I quote further from the Queensland Resources Council release—

The Treasurer is to be congratulated for agreeing to partner with the QRC on our Jails to Jobs proposal. The budget provides \$1.3 million for a pilot program to transition 30 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders from prison into employment in the resources sector. This program will be a feature of the renewed Memorandum of Understanding between the QRC and the Queensland government.

Mark Henley from the Queensland Council of Social Service says there are some good things in the state budget. He says the decision about transport concessions for jobseekers and asylum seekers is good news. He went on to indicate that there is funding for financial counsellors, encouraging financial resilience. Rail advocacy group Rail Back on Track was very pleased with the Fairer Fares policy. Rail Back on Track states—

They've done it! Cheaper fares across all zones. Significant savings for shorter trips; children five to 14 years travel free weekends; concession fares for unemployed; extended morning off-peak time.

We see this as a massive improvement to the current fare structure, with room for further improvement once the next generation ticketing system is implemented.

They go on to talk about the European train control system—

'It is very welcome to note the investment in an automatic train protection ATPETCSL2 signalling system for suburban rail in the 2016-17 Queensland state budget. We have long advocated for this. It is an essential upgrade, will allow a higher frequency of trains during the peak and will link with Cross River Rail.

The RACQ said—

Good to see overall roads investment increase to \$20 billion over four years—regions and South-East Queensland to benefit.

AgForce has welcomed drought support measures and mobile phone black spots funding in addition to new stamp duty exemption for intergenerational transfers of farm businesses. It went on to say—

More than 84 per cent of Queensland is still in the grip of drought, so it's important that governments at all levels continue to support farming families doing it tough.

The Rural Debt and Drought Taskforce, which included an AgForce representative, highlighted the financial and emotional challenges confronting farming families, so it is good to see some budget measures that go towards addressing those challenges. There are plenty more endorsements which time will not permit me to get to but to which I draw the opposition's attention. Those opposite have never been in touch with the community, so it is no surprise that they are not happy with the budget.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Before I call the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services, I inform members that we have students from the Chinchilla State School in the electorate of Warrego observing our proceedings in the gallery. Welcome.

## Budget, Health

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (2.19 pm): The 2016 state budget generates economic growth, attracts investment, builds infrastructure and creates jobs now and for the future. Despite ongoing revenue challenges, this government will continue to invest in services and job-creating infrastructure. The recent release of MyHealth Queensland's future, Advancing Health 2026, a 10-year vision for a healthier Queensland, provides the

platform we need to enable Queensland Health to strengthen its focus, decision-making and policy development over the next decade to address the challenges we face. Our vision is that Queenslanders are among the healthiest people in the world by 2026.

However, our health system faces significant challenges. In this budget we have continued to invest to build and rebuild front-line services. I am very pleased that a number of key initiatives have been included in this year's health budget to target specific issues—such as, \$9.6 million over the next three years to help hospital and health services build their capacity to prevent suicide; \$6 million over four years to expand pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP, trials, which have the potential to reduce the transmission of HIV in Queensland; and \$15.8 million over three years to address sexually transmitted infections in North Queensland.

I was pleased to see support from stakeholders for the budget, including the AMA Queensland president, Dr Chris Zappala, who said in relation to our commitment to address sexually transmitted diseases in North Queensland that it would be 'a lifesaving measure'. He went on to say, 'Sexually transmitted infections are at epidemic levels in north Queensland, which is unacceptable because most of these diseases are preventable and treatable. This strategy will go a long way to fixing the problem.' I also want to take this chance to acknowledge the ongoing collaborative work that is being done by the AMAQ and others in relation to the delivery of health services on the cape.

The Queensland Ambulance Service budget has also grown to \$673.1 million, reflecting increasing demand. The budget includes provision for ongoing work for ambulance stations at Collinsville, Rainbow Beach, Yandina, Bundaberg, Birtinya, Kenilworth, Coral Gardens, Wynnum and Thursday Island. The budget will allow the QAS to recruit an extra 110 ambulance officers and commission 170 new and replacement ambulances. This budget delivers for our state's health system and it delivers for Queensland.

### Budget, Education

 **Hon. KJ JONES** (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (2.21 pm): I am proud to be the education minister in a government that has delivered another record investment in education across Queensland. Our state schools are currently growing at 1.7 per cent, with 9,000 more students expected to enrol in 2017. This means we need to ensure we prioritise our spending in front-line services to meet this growth. We need to recruit more teachers and direct more resources to capital works in our schools. That is why we have employed more than 1,100 teachers and teacher aides this year to meet the student growth now and into the future. It is also why we have reversed the LNP's staffing model, which saw more than 500 full-time equivalent teaching positions cut across the state. We will never do what the LNP did and find budget savings by reducing the allocation of teachers in our children's classrooms. Our budget is also delivering a record investment—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms JONES:** Is your interjection disputing that? You changed the funding allocation model of teachers which saw a—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Members, we will not have a debate across the chamber.

**Ms JONES:** As I was saying, we will never do what the LNP did and find budget savings by reducing the allocation of teachers in our children's classrooms. Our budget is also delivering a record investment in capital works to cater for growth across the state. In Far North Queensland, we are investing \$58 million, including \$3.6 million to upgrade the home economics block at Ravenshoe State School in Dalrymple. In the Townsville region, we are delivering \$61 million in school capital works, including \$21 million to start construction of a new primary school in Burdell in the electorate of Hinchinbrook. In Central Queensland, we are delivering \$37 million, including \$9.5 million in the electorate of Gladstone to provide additional classrooms at Gladstone State High School and Clinton State School—and for the first time we have budgeted funding for a new high school in Calliope. We will spend close to \$29 million in Mackay, including \$5 million to deliver additional classrooms in Mackay District Special School.

On the Gold Coast, our \$155 million capital works spend includes \$8 million to provide additional classrooms at Highland Reserve State School and Pimpama State School in the electorate of Albert. In the very fast growing region of Moreton Bay, we will be spending \$22 million to build new classrooms at Mango Hill State School and North Lakes State College. In Brisbane we are investing \$64 million to meet growth, including close to \$4 million for new classrooms at New Farm State School in the electorate of Brisbane Central.

**Ms Grace:** Hear, hear!

**Ms JONES:** I take the interjection from my ministerial colleague. We will always prioritise front-line services and growth because we know that this is the investment we need to improve educational outcomes for Queensland students right across our state.

**Mr Watts** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Toowoomba North, you will have an opportunity to speak if you choose to. It is not appropriate to try to talk over the minister.

### Budget, Regional Queensland

 **Hon. AJ LYNHAM** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (2.24 pm): There is very good news for regional Queenslanders in the Palaszczuk government's budget. We are pumping an extra \$175 million into our successful Building our Regions program. This will create new essential infrastructure, it will create opportunities for more jobs, and it will boost regional economic development and prosperity. Another \$15 million of savings from previous programs will also be re-injected into Building our Regions in 2016-17. This comes on top of the existing \$200 million allocated in last year's state budget.

Regional Queenslanders can be confident that this will deliver more job-generating projects for regional Queensland for longer. I note that the Local Government Association of Queensland have recognised our commitment to regional communities. I quote from their media release yesterday, headlined 'Local government welcomes strong budget'. It said—

The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) has praised the Palaszczuk Government for delivering a Budget that focuses on innovation, investment and infrastructure while meeting critical needs of regional communities.

I table that document.

*Tabled paper:* Media release, dated 14 June 2016, from the Local Government Association of Queensland, titled 'Local Government welcomes strong budget' [\[933\]](#).

The LGAQ recognises that we are getting on with the job of working with councils to deliver job-creating projects. Building our Regions consists of four key funds—the fourth being the Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme under my cabinet colleague the Minister for Main Roads. My Department of State Development administers the first three funds, and those funds are already driving 42 projects that will support 700 jobs across the state. Some of these projects are already supporting real jobs, with construction underway on eight projects and 13 agreements yet to be executed. I am pleased to report that we have accelerated round 2 of Building our Regions by six months.

The response of councils has been extremely positive to my request to also accelerate projects funded under the first round of Building our Regions, or its predecessor program. Nine projects have been brought forward by a total of about 68 weeks, with construction underway for six, and three in design and tender. That means jobs and economic activity in regional communities. I remind members opposite of the scathing report by the Auditor-General on the previous LNP government's Royalties for Regions program. Acting on the Auditor-General's advice—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order!

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Do not interject while I am on my feet. You will be warned under standing order 253 if you persist. You know the rules.

**Dr LYNHAM:** Acting on the Auditor-General's advice, we have replaced their dodgy selection process—the one that consistently found favoured projects in LNP electorates—with one that is rigorous and transparent. A government panel now assesses these applications and gives shortlisted councils four weeks to prepare a detailed project application. Assessment is rigorously conducted by my department and then reviewed by an advisory committee of eight directors-general before their recommendations are presented to me. We can all be excited about the future and the much needed job-creating infrastructure that is going to come from this government's massive injection into regional communities.

### Budget, Access to Justice

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (2.28 pm): The Palaszczuk government is committed to providing accessible and effective justice—providing the support and courts system Queenslanders deserve. This budget will see the largest funding injection to the courts and justice system in more than a decade. This budget

provides funding certainty for Queensland's legal assistance sector. Until now, funds from the Legal Practitioner Interest on Trust Accounts Fund, LPITAF, and the Queensland government Consolidated Fund have been used for the delivery of these services. However, the revenue from LPITAF has been reducing over a number of years and can no longer meet these funding commitments.

In recognition of the vulnerability of that funding model, this government has moved to provide certainty and sustainability for these important services. As announced by the Treasurer yesterday, on 1 July 2016 we will commence implementing a long-term funding model. Funding of \$166.2 million over five years will be provided with ongoing funding of \$40.6 million per annum. In addition to providing that essential funding certainty, this government also recognised that Queensland legal aid funding was reducing in real terms.

We have delivered on our election commitment to review the available funding for LAQ with a view to increasing over time the funding provided for state funded legal assistance services to bring it in line with the national average. Legal Aid Queensland has been provided with increased funding of \$32.4 million over four years, with an ongoing funding increase of \$13 million per annum. This funding will enable Legal Aid to deliver vital domestic and family violence and child protection services and continue providing legal assistance for farmers experiencing significant financial hardship. It will also enable Legal Aid Queensland to respond to more of the general unmet legal need and facilitate crucial annual indexation on the fees Legal Aid Queensland pays to 300 preferred suppliers across the state.

This is the work of a government genuinely committed to improving access to justice for all Queenslanders and to an efficient and independent justice system and a government that is willing to work with the profession to deliver it. An amount of \$20 million over two years has been allocated to ensure that Queensland courts and tribunals have the resources they need to effectively deal with the workload issues. It is expected that these measures will assist with the pressure on our courts and accessibility to justice for Queenslanders and assist in effective and timely outcomes for practitioners and clients alike.

The justice system is also rolling out other crucial initiatives. As part of the government's \$200 million investment package to boost domestic and family violence services, the department has also received funding for the continuation of the Southport pilot specialist domestic and family violence court and independent evaluation til 30 June 2017 and \$13.6 million over four years commencing in 2017-18 to roll out specialist domestic and family violence courts to a number of other locations which were based on the Southport DV court evaluation. There is \$11 million over the next four years to build capacity in community justice groups in 18 discrete Indigenous locations, \$300,000 over three years to fund the Women's Legal Service Helpline and \$700,000 over the next yours for the professional development of magistrates so they can better deal with domestic and family violence matters.

These initiatives have been warmly welcomed by the community legal sector, the domestic violence sector, the Queensland Law Society and Legal Aid Queensland. It is a sign of this government's leadership in this field and our commitment to provide a fair, accessible, effective justice system for the Queensland community.

### **Budget, Domestic and Family Violence**

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (2.31 pm): I am sure that each and every member in this place has been hit hard by the shocking stories of domestic and family violence that we have heard over the past year. Our own and our community's exposure to the horrors of domestic and family violence have sparked a huge momentum for change. As Queensland's first Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, I have been overwhelmed by the community's response to tackling this issue and I am proud that the Palaszczuk government will deliver a package of almost \$200 million, a whole-of-government investment package, to tackle domestic and family violence.

Yesterday DVConnect Chief Executive, Di Mangan, said it was encouraging that the state government was making the additional investment at a time when front-line services are dealing with more family violence victims than ever before. Our government understands that we need to fill service gaps because every victim of domestic and family violence here in Queensland should have somewhere to turn to no matter where they live. That is why we will be providing \$43.1 million over four years for new and enhanced specialist and generalist services to address service gaps including counselling services, sexual assault services, a step-down women's health service and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In fact, the Community Legal Centres Queensland yesterday thanked our government for funding vital counselling services for victims of sexual assault.

We have also allocated \$8.7 million over four years to establish two new domestic violence shelters—one in Charters Towers where we have identified an immediate and urgent gap as well as another in a rural and remote location yet to be determined.

A large part of preventing further violence is, of course, identifying high-risk perpetrators early and reaching out to help victims of domestic and family violence as soon as possible. That is why we are investing \$10.3 million over four years for the rollout of perpetrator intervention services across the state as well as \$26.3 million to roll out eight high-risk teams as part of an integrated service response.

I participated as an observer in a men's domestic violence perpetrator program earlier this year. It revealed how vital these programs really are if we want to see generational change and a shift away from violence in our culture. Of course, it is vital that we continue to address those underlying attitudes and behaviours that feed the cycle of violence, which is why we have seen the allocation of \$9.6 million for a communication campaign that will really focus on challenging and changing those attitudes.

I look forward to working with my cabinet colleagues, department and stakeholders in rolling out these vital programs that will strengthen our commitment to reforming domestic violence policies and ensure that Queensland is a safer place for women and girls.

### Budget, Roads

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy, Biofuels and Water Supply) (2.34 pm): Yesterday we released a record funding investment for roads and transport infrastructure, investing \$20 billion over four years, as outlined in our Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program, otherwise known as QTRIP. As part of this, QTRIP outlines \$15.2 billion of planned investment in road infrastructure over the next four years, supporting an estimated 12,000 direct jobs over the life of the program.

We are building and upgrading roads all across our vast state to improve safety, reduce congestion, improve connectivity and, importantly, create jobs. Our budget investment into roads and transport has been well received and welcomed by important stakeholders such as the RACQ and the Local Government Association of Queensland. In fact, the RACQ Executive Manager of Public Policy, Michael Roth, said, 'The Palaszczuk government's QTRIP has been boosted to \$20 billion over four years, up six per cent on last year, and the State Infrastructure Fund has increased to \$2 billion, which is good news for future infrastructure projects.'

The Local Government Association of Queensland backed our budget boost to Transport and Main Roads by stating in their media release issued today that our \$90 million investment in the TIDS program—the Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme—fifty-fifty with local government is one of the most important features of the state government as it locks in funding for the entire Queensland local government term and gives councils the certainty they need to accelerate vital local road projects.

We are also investing in a number of important road projects across the state. This includes: \$200 million to six lane the Ipswich Motorway between Darra and Rocklea, stage 1; \$96.5 million for projects in North Queensland including \$76.9 million for the Gregory Developmental Road, including the Cape River bridge and \$19.6 million to progressively seal the Hann Highway in north-west Queensland; \$40 million for a timber bridge replacement package on the Dawson Highway from Gladstone to Biloela to assist our heavy vehicle industry and productivity; \$30 million for duplication of Riverway Drive in Townsville from Gollogly Lane to Allambie Lane—and I am sure the member for Thuringowa was very pleased to see that.

**Mr Harper:** Hear, hear!

**Mr BAILEY:** Thank you. There is also \$22 million for the Sunshine Coast University Hospital intersection upgrades package at Kawana Way and Nicklin Way, getting on with projects ignored for three years by the Nicholls-Newman government; \$10 million for the Rockhampton road train access stage 1; and we have also created another \$10 million for the Transport and Tourism Connections program to provide access to tourist sites and culturally significant sites to dovetail with our pro-tourism commitments right across government. We will also continue to progress the \$8.5 billion program to fix the Bruce Highway, jointly funded by the federal and state governments, as well as continuing our two-year \$40 million western roads program and our \$160 million commitment to the Gold Coast for the Commonwealth Games—a very good project.

We are making a record investment in Queensland roads in this state budget. We are committed to ensuring that our vast road network supports our industries, our changing regions and cities and creates the jobs for Queenslanders.

### Budget, Rail Infrastructure

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Transport and the Commonwealth Games) (2.38 pm): The Palaszczuk government values the importance of innovation and understands the need to invest in technology within our current practices to achieve greater outcomes. As Minister for Transport, I am charged with revitalising and reforming our rail services and making public transport more accessible. To do this, technology can play a part. That is why I was pleased that yesterday the Treasurer announced the Palaszczuk government will invest \$634 million over the next eight years to fund a world-class rail signalling system in South-East Queensland. This new signalling system, the European Train Control System, commonly referred to as ETCS, will completely modernise the inner-city rail network, boosting capacity by 20 per cent and allowing an extra 12,000 commuters through the CBD during peak rail periods.

Rail demand is expected to double by 2026 and triple by 2036, yet as many members know the current rail system will soon be approaching capacity. This new automatic braking technology will be installed between Milton and Northgate stations and allow Queensland Rail to safely run trains closer together which will create capacity for an extra eight trains—four in each direction—every hour. Every single train line in our city network merges into a signal corridor through the CBD, with every service stopping at Roma Street, Central, Bowen Hills and Fortitude Valley stations. This new system will allow trains to move far more quickly through this bottleneck. The ETCS initiative will be delivered entirely by Queensland Rail and will create more than 250 jobs throughout the life of the project.

While the new state-of-the-art ETCS signalling system will optimise the existing rail network and provide a much needed boost to capacity, a long-term solution is required. That solution is Cross River Rail. As the Treasurer said yesterday, Cross River Rail is Infrastructure Australia's No. 1 priority initiative for Queensland, and it is in the No. 1 infrastructure priority for the Palaszczuk government. That is why we are establishing the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority, injecting \$50 million into the authority over the financial year to undertake the preparatory work, to work with federal and local governments and other stakeholders to lay the foundations and drive the Cross River Rail project. Queenslanders cannot afford a delay to Cross River Rail.

### Budget, Fire and Emergency Services and Corrective Services

 **Hon. WS BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (2.41 pm): The Palaszczuk government went to the election with a commitment to keep Queenslanders safe, and the 2016-17 budget for police, Fire and Emergency Services and Corrective Services is one way we are delivering on that commitment. The amount of \$69.9 million has been set aside to target serious organised crime, and this includes \$39.1 million in additional funding over four years. It reinforces the Palaszczuk government's resolve to target serious and organised crime in all of its forms: drug trafficking, child exploitation, boiler room fraud and outlaw criminal motorcycle gangs. The extra funds will ensure that police have the resources they need to undertake operational and intelligence-driven activities, legislative reform and education and training. There is \$32 million for new and replacement police vehicles for front-line police officers and \$98.9 million to upgrade police facilities, information system and communications. These services and these resources are designed to support the Queensland police in what they do best: keeping Queenslanders safe.

The Palaszczuk government's commitment in the 2016-17 budget also supports our front-line fire and emergency services officers with \$74 million for new facilities, upgrades, new appliances and communications equipment. Funds have also been allocated for fuel and maintenance for Rural Fire Service vehicles—a measure that has been very warmly received by the rurals.

We are also addressing overcrowding in prisons. Under the previous government prisoner numbers rose by almost 30 per cent in Queensland. The budget has allocated an additional \$88.5 million over five years to make safe those older style secure cells at the Borallon Training and Correctional Centre. This funding will see the remaining 244 cells recommissioned. Borallon will be a tough new training facility for young prisoners to get their lives on track and discourage them from returning to their old habits. The amount of \$20.5 million has been set aside over two years to support the Probation and Parole Service. There is \$1 million for a business case to expand the Capricornia Correctional Centre and \$5 million to develop a business case for a counterterrorism centre at the Westgate Police Academy.

These initiatives in the public safety portfolio budget represent a significant body of work. It is our plan for the future. It is about delivering infrastructure, strengthening regional economies, supporting front-line officers and protecting jobs. I look forward to working with all of my agencies and delivering on these key projects. I thank officers, volunteers and stakeholders for their service and support.

## YOUTH JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2015

## YOUTH JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2016

### Cognate Debate

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (2.44 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That, in accordance with standing order 172, the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 and the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 be treated as cognate bills for their remaining stages, as follows:

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

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

### MOTION

#### Suspension of Sessional Orders

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (2.45 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That so much of the sessional orders be suspended to enable:

- (a) government business to take priority for the remainder of this Thursday's sitting after question time is concluded; and
- (b) one government member and one non-government member to each make a private member's statement for a maximum of three minutes, immediately prior to question time during this Friday's sitting.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

### MINISTERIAL PAPER

#### Office of the Public Advocate

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (2.45 pm): I table the Office of the Public Advocate's report titled *Decision-making support in Queensland's guardianship system*.

*Tabled paper:* Office of the Public Advocate: Decision-making support and Queensland's guardianship system—a systemic advocacy report [934](#).

### NOTICE OF MOTION

#### Youth Unemployment

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (2.46 pm): I give notice that I will move—

That this House:

1. notes that at the 2015 election Labor promised to help young people develop practical skills to help them secure a job;
2. notes that 5,500 less apprenticeships, traineeships and school based apprenticeships and traineeships have been completed in 2015-16 under Labor;
3. notes that youth unemployment has increased under Labor;
4. notes that 1,800 less apprentices and trainees commenced in Labor's first nine months as opposed to the same period in 2014; and
5. condemns the Palaszczuk Labor government for its poor record on youth unemployment and apprenticeship and traineeship completions over the past year.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Budget

 **Mr EMERSON** (Indooroopilly—LNP) (2.47 pm): 'Captain Risky' has done it again. Not satisfied with making three major blunders in the lead-up to the budget, the Treasurer has now ignored a clear warning from the State Actuary. While he delivered a budget that was all about raids, rip-offs and writedowns, we now know it was also about reckless behaviour. It is very clear the State Actuary only recommended that the state government take \$2 billion from the Public Service superannuation fund. Instead they ripped \$4 billion from the fund, which is double what the State Actuary recommended. We also know that when the State Actuary said, 'Take only \$2 billion,' this desperate and frantic government demanded that he consider what the impact would be of taking \$6 billion from the fund. They also demanded that he take a riskier approach and abandon the conservative approach that has made this fund the safest in Australia.

The State Actuary gave them the very clear warning that if they took \$4 billion from this fund there was a fifty-fifty risk that this fund would go into deficit—a toss of the coin—and that is what this desperate, reckless government did. They ignored the advice of the State Actuary, which was to only take \$2 billion, and they ripped \$4 billion from the fund. They put the state's Public Service fund at risk, and don't the Labor backbench know it! I have never seen a government backbench less impressed with a Treasurer's budget. Yesterday they were all but silent. Their heads were down, forlorn—

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Thank you, members. I call the member for Indooroopilly.

**Mr EMERSON:** The Labor backbench do not want him there; they want to get rid of him. The Labor frontbench do not want him there; they want to get rid of him. All the Treasurer can say to them is, 'Settle down!' Sadly, Labor knows they are stuck with the member for Mulgrave as Treasurer and sadly, for the moment, Queensland appears to be stuck with him as well.

### Budget

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Minister for Sport) (2.49 pm): The budget I delivered yesterday set out three very clear things we want to do: grow innovation, attract investment and build infrastructure. Through the economic plan we have devised and that we delivered yesterday, we will be advancing this economy. There will be some 31,000 jobs as a direct result of our \$40 billion Capital Works Program and 8,000 jobs as a direct result of the \$100 million we will be putting into the regional Back to Work program.

The member for Indooroopilly is quite astonishing. He comes in here and has a go on almost any topic but he leaves information out. Yesterday we heard him on the ABC with Emma Griffiths. It was a very interesting debate. Emma Griffiths asked—

Scott Emerson, would you be promising more on infrastructure and how would you pay for it? Would you sell the assets, raise the taxes or cut services?

Scott Emerson replied—

Well, look at what we did when we were in office there, Emma ...

Emma Griffiths replied—

You cut jobs.

That is exactly right: they cut jobs. Now they do not like our plan. If those opposite are going to continue to not like our plan—

**Mr Nicholls:** We thought there was a punch line coming.

**Mr PITT:** Oh, there is a punch line. The punch line is that the member for Indooroopilly went on to talk about the fact that he thinks we are not doing enough in terms of infrastructure. In the space of two minutes we heard the shadow Treasurer on 612ABC say that simultaneously we are not spending enough on infrastructure and we are on a spending spree. He cannot have it both ways.

The member for Indooroopilly was having a go at our government for deferrals and for having an underspend on infrastructure. What was the infrastructure underspend in the 2013-14 budget under Tim Nicholls, the member for Clayfield, former treasurer and now Leader of the Opposition? They had a larger underspend than us, with \$2.2 billion. Over the past five years that underspend has been continually up at around \$1.75 billion.

Yesterday the member for Indooroopilly went on radio to try to find holes in our budget. What he found—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members, I do not mind someone interjecting but, quite frankly, it is not going to disintegrate into just shouting across the chamber.

**Mr PITT:** He tried to find holes. He found that stakeholders were actually supporting our budget, as I alluded to earlier. We have had positive responses to this budget because people know that we are getting on with the job of growing our economy through hard work and supporting regional Queensland.

We know that the member opposite has problems understanding which came first. He is clearly looking at old advice from the State Actuary and not looking at the most recent advice. No doubt that will be the plan of attack of those opposite today. I will answer their questions very happily, because we on this side of the House know that this is a government that is getting on with the job. It is a back-to-work budget. I think those opposite need to get back to work, coming up with some policies.

*(Time expired)*

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Indooroopilly, you have had a pretty good go. I would urge you not to continue with that approach. Member for Chatsworth, I do not need your hand movements provoking government backbenchers to play a part in this silly game. It is a little bit over the top at the moment.

### Budget

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (2.53 pm): The Queenslanders I have been speaking to over the past 24 hours have told me how disappointed they are that Labor's so-called infrastructure budget has failed to launch. After promises about the budget being all about infrastructure, the poor old Deputy Premier must be slightly embarrassed. She has failed to deliver on the long-awaited big infrastructure budget. Not only do we see \$2.3 billion less in capital purchases—

**Ms Trad** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Deputy Premier, I would ask you to allow the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to make her contribution.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I direct the Deputy Premier to budget book No. 2 in relation to capital purchases. She has obviously not looked at the figures, which show capital spend down by \$2.3 billion. Infrastructure investment in the general government sector has also fallen by 2.2 per cent of gross state product—roughly half what it has been over the past five years and a long way short of Queenslanders' expectations.

This is all on the back of the Deputy Premier failing to deliver almost \$2 billion worth of the infrastructure spend that she announced last year. That figure represents an underspend of about 20 per cent. She was not able to deliver on the long-awaited infrastructure that their own budget papers talk about in the areas of health, infrastructure and much needed energy projects. Out in the regions we have had completely—

**Ms Trad** interjected.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** It is a shame that the Deputy Premier is laughing about that. She has been seriously outgunned by the Treasurer. The infrastructure spend has been completely slashed. In Wide Bay, \$400 million has been cut. In Toowoomba, \$220 million has been slashed. In Brisbane, what did the Deputy Premier get for the Cross River Rail project that she and the Premier so desperately talk about? There is a mere \$50 million towards that much lauded project. Obviously the Treasurer does not want to deliver that project, as he gave her only \$50 million. This is not a government that is delivering infrastructure for Queensland.

**Mr SPEAKER:** My finish line to the Deputy Premier is: I am sending you a clear message, as I did to the member for Indooroopilly. If you persist you will be warned and I will take the appropriate action.

### Budget

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (2.56 pm): Today is the day after the 2016 state budget. I have reflected on the days following other state budgets in Queensland. Honourable members might remember what happened the day after the

first Newman-Nicholls budget in 2012. Outside this building 8,000 to 10,000 Queenslanders rallied to protest the first budget handed down by Tim Nicholls. Honourable members might remember that. As the honourable member for Ashgrove might know, those rallies started in a park in Ashgrove and occurred simultaneously across Queensland—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members, I do not mind someone making an interjection if it is relevant, but I am not going to tolerate members just shouting and carrying on to the point that I cannot even hear what the minister is saying. That is my last comment in relation to unruly behaviour.

**Mr DICK:** There were rallies across the state—in Cairns, Townsville, Mackay and two on the Sunshine Coast alone. What did a manager in the LNP government say to workers? 'You, you and you have got jobs and the rest of you have lost yours.' What did one of the speakers at the rally of between 8,000 and 10,000 people outside this parliament say? 'Our workers are not numbers on a spreadsheet for Tim Nicholls.' Of course, inside the parliament the biggest debate was how many staff were going to be sacked from the Department of Health.

What about Budget Paper No. 2 in 2012, signed and authorised by the member for Clayfield? It contained provision for 4,140 full-time-equivalent redundancies in Queensland Health in 2013-14. Thank heavens the workers' friend the member for Southern Downs stood up and said, 'No, it's not 4,140. It's only 2,754. That is the number we are going to sack.' That is the legacy of those members. Flash forward: there was no change in the member for Clayfield. What happened in 2014? He flagged selling \$35 billion in state assets and also cut subsidies to pensioners and seniors. That is what he did. That is his form.

We know that the member for Clayfield was Campbell Newman's cutter in chief. That is what he was. That was his legacy as Treasurer and unless he says sorry to the people of Queensland we know nothing has changed. In less than 24 hours when he comes in here and does his budget reply he has the chance to apologise to the people of Queensland. How is he going to reduce debt without cutting services and jobs? How is he going to reduce state debt without reducing public assets and selling them? He must promise no job cuts. He must promise no asset sales or otherwise Queenslanders will get what they got before from a government led by the member for Clayfield—an anvil dropped on the Queensland economy, a wrecking ball through public services, including health services, in Queensland and thousands of Queenslanders left distraught and diminished because he has sacked them from the Public Service.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Before I call the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is now warned under standing order 253A for your continuous interjections.

## Budget

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (3.00 pm): If ever we saw an audition for the Treasurer's role, we have just seen it from the member for Woodridge, who stills lives at Greenslopes. We also know that the member for Woodridge is an expert at saying sorry, and he has a lot to be sorry for. He said sorry because they got the Health payroll wrong. He said sorry because 'we did not realise losing the AAA meant so much to Queenslanders'. He said sorry because 'we did not realise the effect of the debt and deficit budget'. He said sorry to the member for Mudgeeraba because he slanders her every time he comes into this place. He says sorry to this parliament because he cannot tell the truth in this place. There is a lot for the member for Woodridge to be sorry for but, most importantly, do members know what he is sorry about? He is sorry he is not in the Treasurer's chair! That is the greatest sorrow—other than the fact that the member for Woodridge thinks he should be in the member for Inala's chair. That is the place he wanted to be. That is the place the member for Woodridge really wanted to be.

Let us turn now to this budget—a budget that does so little to deliver for Queensland, a budget that was supposed to deliver jobs but sees unemployment rise, a budget that is supposed to pay down debt but sees debt rise, a budget that is supposed to build infrastructure but sees infrastructure spending as a proportion of gross state product fall to its lowest level in living memory, and a budget called a 'back to work' budget. The only person who should go back to work is the Treasurer. He is the one who should go back to work and deliver a budget that is actually going to provide jobs, that is actually more than just shuffling the deckchairs on the *Titanic*.

Today we heard from a variety of ministers opposite extolling their own virtues—and of course self-praise is the weakest praise of all, but that is all they have. What happened at the Ernst & Young budget lunch today? What did the host of the Ernst & Young budget lunch say? Paul Laxson is known to many people in this place, but what was his comment? He said that he does not understand the logic of raiding super to pay down general government debt—one of the most senior people hosting their own fundraising lunch saying he does not understand the logic, but that is because there is no logic. This is a dead budget. It is not a dead Norwegian Blue; it is a dead red! It has died on the perch. This budget is not going to vroom with \$4 billion of state superannuation funds and this Treasurer is a Treasurer who cannot deliver a budget. Domino's would not have this Treasurer deliver a pizza!

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

**Mr SPEAKER:** Question time will finish at four minutes past four.

### Queensland Investment Corporation, Sale of Public Assets

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (3.04 pm): My question is to the Premier. Premier, which assets will be sold by Queensland Investment Corporation to fund Labor's \$4 billion raid on super funds?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. Let me start by saying that the budget that was handed down yesterday by the Treasurer is responsible and it is measured, and it is a back-to-work budget. It is a back-to-work budget because it is focusing on communities across our state—communities that felt the wrath of the man opposite when he was in charge of the state's coffers, the man who still will not apologise and say sorry—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Premier, one moment. I would urge you not to debate the question. I know what you want to say, but could you come to answering the question please?

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I do not need your assistance, member for Callide.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** QIC makes its own decisions independently of government, but let me say this because there are a lot of untruths being put around at the moment and I want to set the record straight. Let me set the record straight: we have to get people back into work, so we had to make a decision and we made a decision that in relation to the defined benefit fund, which is fully funded—the only fully funded fund of its kind across the nation, and there is a surplus on top of that—

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I rise to a point of order. My point of order goes to relevance to the question in accordance with your repeated rulings, Mr Speaker—that is, if the Premier can tell us which assets will be sold by Queensland Investment Corporation to fund the \$4 billion raid on super.

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** I rise to a point of order. Surely the Premier is allowed to establish the context of the nature of that fund and the way that it is managed by Queensland Investment Corporation as part of the answer that she is giving to the Leader of the Opposition. Having this situation where ministers are not able to put a context and set a frame and a circumstance before they then go into addressing the specifics of a question is something that is not adding to the value of the debate in this House and I ask you—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, Leader of the House. I will allow the Premier to continue.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** As I was saying with regard to part of that surplus, we have decided to utilise \$2 billion to pay down debt and \$2 billion for infrastructure to make sure that we get people back to work. That is the responsible and the measured thing to do. As I have said about QIC, it operates independently to make investment decisions according to the mandate it has been given. That is its role. I am sick and tired of those opposite—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** No, I am. I am sick and tired of those opposite—

**Mr Nicholls:** Read the QIC letter.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I have read the QIC letter and I have read the State Actuary letter and those opposite are putting around a lot of misinformation.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Toowoomba North, you are warned under standing order 253A for trying to speak over the top of the Premier.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. In conclusion, let me just reiterate once again: this is a budget for families. It is about enabling people to get back into work. It is about looking after our communities no matter where people live across our state, and that is exactly my commitment to the people of Queensland. We made that commitment at the last election—that we would pay down debt and restore front-line services. We have a bold infrastructure plan and we will make sure that we give people that opportunity to get a job, because that is good for families and that is good for the Queensland economy.

### Budget, Superannuation

**Mr NICHOLLS:** My question without notice is directed to the Premier. Premier, I refer to the State Actuary's only recommendation, and that is that a maximum of \$2 billion be taken out of public servants' super, and I ask: can the Premier identify anywhere the State Actuary actually recommends a \$4 billion raid on public servants' superannuation?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** First of all, I suggest that the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition may be misleading, because he is referring to a set of advice that arrived before the State Actuary prepared subsequent advice to the government.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** No, that is right. The member is misrepresenting the facts to the people of Queensland.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members, I will hear the Premier's response.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. On 20 May he said—and I point out to the Leader of the Opposition that he might care to look at the bottom of page 3 or 4—

In conclusion, the Scheme is very well funded and there is scope to repatriate some of the surplus. Based on the revised criteria listed above, a maximum repatriation of \$5.0 billion could be undertaken whilst maintaining consistency with the APRA funding standards.

**Mr Nicholls** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Premier, one moment. Sorry, I apologise for interrupting. Leader of the Opposition, you will be warned if you try to speak over the top of the Premier, who is answering your question and quoting from a document that is relevant to your question. I am not going to have a debate.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Mr Speaker, thank you—

... allowing for the contribution suspension and a small buffer against adverse experience.

Five billion dollars. What did the government decide? Four billion dollars to get people back into work. Let us have a look at some of the commentary on this, because I think it is very important that people get the full story.

**Mr SPEAKER:** As long as the commentary is relevant to the question being asked.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Absolutely. They are in relation to this topic. This morning, John Birch from Fitch Ratings said that Queensland was in a better position than most states and said—

It's a pretty unique position for ... government to be in to have a surplus like that. We don't see it a negative to use some of that. In its budget analysis Deloitte Access Economics stated—

Unlike other States, the Defined Benefits Scheme in Queensland has a \$10b surplus—some of this ... money can be put to work. That is exactly what the government is doing. We are going to be very interested to hear what the Leader of the Opposition says tomorrow—

**Mr SPEAKER:** No, Premier. I do not want to have a debate about what the opposition will do tomorrow.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I want to hear it.

**Mr SPEAKER:** No, tomorrow. Thank you, Premier.

### Budget, Regional Queensland

**Mr PEARCE:** My question is to the Premier. What are the prospects for regional Queensland from the government's Back to Work program?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the member for Mirani very much for that question, because there has been some commentary overnight about our Back to Work program that I would like to share with members of the House. I would expect every member representing a regional area in this parliament to support our Back to Work program. We know that regional Queensland is hurting. Let me give a brief history. It is hurting because of the damage that was done to regional communities by that person sitting opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, when he was treasurer—the axing of more than 14,000 people in his first budget, as the member for Woodridge also alluded to earlier today.

The Back to Work program is designed very clearly to give hope and opportunity. We will have Back to Work officers on the ground very shortly to connect businesses with those people who want to get into work. Once again, I want to put out that call to action to businesses in regional communities who want to give a helping hand to those in need, to people in those communities who are doing it tough. We know that the people in the electorate of the member for Mirani have been doing it tough. I have been out there. I have spoken to him. I have met with members of his community. The downturn in the mining industry is having a huge impact on families. The program also includes a boost to the certificate III program and access to job readiness payments to help workers start a new job. Of course, the program will be effective from 1 July.

Today's Rockhampton's *Morning Bulletin* reported under the headline 'Builder backs State Budget \$10,000 jobs incentive' the following—

Rockhampton builder Scott Kilpatrick believes any incentive to get people into the workforce is a winner.

That's why the local owner of Affordable Quality Homes is backing the State Government's Back to Work Regional Employment Package which was announced in the State Budget yesterday.

He goes on to say—

Anything that encourages business to employ more people can only be good for everyone ... I believe anything governments can do to govern and create incentives for people to employ has a much longer term affect than not having it because once those people are employed most employers will be inclined to keep them on and further their training which also gives more people in the community a greater sense of worth.

I also have some clippings. Someone told me that this particular person—Scott Kilpatrick—could also have been an LNP candidate in the past. Let me double-check that. Let me just say that we have people like Scott supporting the program. I am sure that a lot of other people are going to—

*(Time expired)*

### Budget, Superannuation

**Mr EMERSON:** My question is to the Premier. I refer to Labor's \$4 billion super raid and the Treasurer's statement, 'What we have is advice from the State Actuary which says it's actually sensible.' On which page of the State Actuary's advice does it say that a \$4 billion raid is sensible, or has the Treasurer misrepresented the State Actuary?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the shadow Treasurer very much for the question. I have gone into detail about this particular issue. I have read out the advice from the State Actuary that talks about the fact that the government could repatriate up to \$5 billion.

Here is the advice. The Treasurer tabled it in this House yesterday as part of the budget. Perhaps the shadow Treasurer might like to read the advice. It says, 'Up to \$5 billion.' The government made a decision for \$4 billion. Let me say it again: \$2 billion to pay down debt and \$2 billion to go into infrastructure to create jobs for Queenslanders. I want to know: is there anyone in this parliament who is against creating jobs in Queensland? All of those opposite.

### Innovation and Investment

**Ms LINARD:** My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier update the House on the government's plan for innovation and attracting investment to Queensland?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the member for Nudgee very much for that important question, because we all know that this budget is focused on innovation, investment, infrastructure and advancing Queensland's new economy. We need to be part of what is happening in the rest of the world. As I have said time and time in this House, when it comes to innovation, Queensland has the opportunity to lead the nation.

Today, I was very pleased to join the Minister for Innovation, the Treasurer, and the Minister for Employment at QUT with Professor Peter Coaldrake and Johnson & Johnson. We had the pleasure of speaking with Johnson & Johnson at the last Bio conference. Today, I am very pleased to announce that I opened its brand-new offices here in Queensland.

Johnson & Johnson have a presence here in Queensland. Why is that important? Because Johnson & Johnson is one of the best pharmaceutical companies in the world that can commercialise research. Today, we were able to announce the three companies that were selected from over 100 applicants from throughout the world who want to have a presence in Queensland to commercialise their technologies. Why is that important? Because that has been the missing piece of innovation in Queensland. The first company is coming from Melbourne, the second company is coming from New South Wales and the third company is coming from Taiwan.

I want to see more companies move to Queensland. If we can allow them to commercialise in this state, it means jobs for Queenslanders and it means innovation. In particular, I want to congratulate Sydney based Atomo Diagnostics, which is looking to develop a prototype device for the early detection of cardiac damage. The device is based on a particular type of technology that will utilise cardiac markers developed by Brisbane based technology.

The technology offers up the possibility of providing an easy-to-use, accurate and rapid low-cost diagnostic test. The Taiwan based Golden Biotechnology Corporation will look to do pre clinical testing of a chemical compound which offers up hope as a possible drug for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease. Finally, the Melbourne based company has identified a chemical compound that targets the class of bacteria responsible for gum disease and tooth decay. I congratulate the three winners. Johnson & Johnson has now set up a biotech hub here in Queensland. It can only lead to further innovation and further research discoveries and that means jobs for Queenslanders.

### **Budget, Superannuation**

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** My question without notice is to the Premier. I refer to Labor's \$4 billion raid on super and the State Actuary's only recommendation that a maximum of \$2 billion could be taken out of the fund, and I ask: why is the government ignoring the one clear recommendation of the State Actuary?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I rise to a point of order. The question is deliberately misleading.

**Mr SPEAKER:** If you believe the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is misleading or cannot authenticate the basis of her question, I invite you to write to me about that. Deputy Leader of the Opposition, your question, please?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Do you want me to repeat the question?

**Mr SPEAKER:** One question, please.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** My question without notice is to the Premier. I refer to Labor's \$4 billion raid on super and the State Actuary's only recommendation that a maximum of \$2 billion should be taken out of the fund, and I ask: why is the government ignoring the one clear recommendation of the State Actuary?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Before I ask the Premier to answer the question, Premier, if you would like to write to me questioning the accuracy and authenticity of the question that has been asked—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I absolutely will.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I invite you to respond as you choose.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** The advice that was tabled by the Treasurer yesterday to Mr Jim Murphy from the State Actuary, which the member is—

**Ms Jones:** Ignoring.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I take that interjection: ignoring deliberately, and deliberately misleading this House—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Premier, please do not debate. I ask you to answer it.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Deliberately misleading. It is about telling the whole truth.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Premier, no, I do not want a debate over the question. Is there anything you would like to say in answer to the question, please?

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I do not need your assistance, member for Callide.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** As I said very clearly, on page 3 of 4 it says up to \$5 billion. This is selective smearing by those opposite, not even quoting from the advice that was tabled. You should be ashamed. You are deliberately misleading the House. You are deliberately misleading the people of Queensland.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Premier, it is not appropriate to use the word 'you'. Is there anything further you would like to add?

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** If you wish to write to me you are free to do so. I need to remind the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that you are on notice—first warning—under standing order 253A.

### **Budget, Regional Infrastructure**

**Mrs GILBERT:** My question is to the Deputy Premier. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on how the Palaszczuk government's budget is investing in significant regional infrastructure projects in Mackay and across the state?

**Ms TRAD:** I thank the member for Mackay for her question. I know that she has been a very strong advocate to make sure that her region gets its fair share out of the additional infrastructure money that the Palaszczuk Labor government has allocated in this year's state budget.

I can advise the House that the Mackay region will get some \$435.8 million in capital expenditure invested over the next year, creating up to some 1,500 jobs. The Mackay region will particularly benefit from the \$180 million Significant Regional Infrastructure Projects Program—for example, the \$7.5 million replacement of the Mackay Fire Station, which is a critical project to replace a 70-year-old ageing station. Also Mackay will share in that \$12 million Step Up Step Down facility which will be built to help people with a mental illness. Of course, Mackay, being a tourism destination as well, will share in some of the tourism infrastructure that has been available through the Significant Regional Infrastructure Projects Program, the SRIPP.

Right across regional Queensland we see projects being funded from the SRIPP that will drive economic growth, that will give Queenslanders better services, better front-line services and create jobs. That is what the Palaszczuk government is all about. For example, in the cape we are delivering important upgrades to drinking water and wastewater infrastructure in communities like Aurukun, Mapoon and Pormpuraaw. In the Cairns region, as I have already reported to the House, the Bill Fulton Bridge duplication will also be built from the SRIPP, as well as the Port Douglas and Smithfield fire station upgrades. In the west we are upgrading the McKinlay multipurpose health centre and refurbishing Boulia Community Hospital. In Townsville we will deliver the upgrade to the Townsville Hospital paediatric unit, the \$6.6 million project, and increase the number of beds for sick children from 23 to 29. We are also delivering additional tourism infrastructure in the Hervey Bay area through the Mon Repos Turtle Centre that will give people an opportunity to experience the turtle breeding season and the Great Barrier Reef all at once. We are also investing more than \$46 million from the SRIPP to build better school infrastructure right across the state and particularly in Central Queensland.

That is what Labor governments do; we invest in infrastructure that regional communities need because we know that is the way that we can deliver jobs, we can boost economic activity—particularly at this time: post mining boom—and give regional Queenslanders the services that they deserve in the communities in which they live.

### **Budget, Jobs**

**Ms DAVIS:** My question is to the Premier. I refer to the job estimates in last year's budget that would be generated by the government's infrastructure program and I ask: will the Premier now admit that Labor's inability to deliver almost \$2 billion of its infrastructure program has cost Queenslanders over 6,000 jobs?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the member very much for the question. Our infrastructure fund is important for growing jobs across the state. That is why we have a very strong capital infrastructure budget of \$40 billion over the next four years. That is very important. In relation to the member's specific question about underspends, we need to keep a very close eye on making sure that government departments meet the expectations of communities.

I draw the attention of the House to the fact that in the last year of the former LNP government its capital underspend was \$2.2 billion. An average underspend over the past five years has been \$1.8 billion. I have raised this as a serious issue with my director-general. He is speaking to all of the

other directors-general. I will also be writing to all of my ministers to keep a very close eye on making sure that that capital works money gets out the door because at this point in time we know how important it is to make sure that we can generate projects across the state. That is what we are doing: we are delivering for Queensland, we are delivering for regional Queensland right across the state, and that is through our very, very strong investment when it comes to a capital works budget.

We have also been working very closely with the mayors across the state as well. When I have been travelling out west and have met with regional and western mayors, they have said to me that some of the quickest ways that they can get people into employment is through road projects. I note that the Minister for Main Roads and the Minister for Transport have been working very closely with those mayors to identify projects that can be shovel ready and get people into work. Unlike those opposite who actually cut funding at a time when Queensland needed it the most, I understand how important it is to make sure that we have this capital works budget rolled out as quickly as possible.

### **Budget**

**Mr KING:** My question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer outline how the budget sets Queensland on a strong financial path?

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr PITT:** That is great: I had not even got to my feet and there was a reaction from those opposite. Obviously they are not used to seeing something in a budget that has common sense, pays down debt and does the things that the member for Clayfield could not do when he was treasurer. The budget that we delivered yesterday sets Queensland on a very strong path going forward. It is budget that, of course, deals with the challenges that we are facing, as well as the opportunities ahead. It is a budget that says that we are on track to delivering a surplus in 2015-16, despite the actions of the federal government in the budget it delivered last month. Going forward we are on track to deliver surpluses across the forward estimates. The combined surpluses will be \$3.2 billion over the forward estimates. We know that, going forward, there are other things that this budget will do. In 2016-17, the surplus will be \$867 million, which is the largest surplus in a decade. The Premier and the Deputy Premier have already spoken about the \$40 billion Capital Works Program that we expect will support 31,000 jobs.

Those opposite do not have a good record when it comes to employment. I am shocked every time I hear them criticise our government for bringing the unemployment level down by 0.4 per cent and creating an average of 1,200 full-time jobs each month, compared to the 340 jobs they lost each month. They have a real hide coming into this place and telling us that we are not focused on jobs and job creation, when each year we saw budget underspends in their Capital Works Program. As we heard from the Premier, over the past five years the average was \$1.8 billion. That is not unique to the last year that they were in government. We know that those opposite were very selective with their Capital Works Program. They put it into LNP electorates and when they did put it into other electorates they made sure that it was centred on South-East Queensland, ignoring the fact that regional Queensland had been ruined by the decisions that they were making.

Our strategy for this economic plan will take Queensland forward and advance our prospects. It will continue the great work we started with our debt action plan, through which we have already reduced general government debt by \$10.4 billion. Let us compare that with the absence of such work. What did those opposite do? When the current opposition leader was treasurer, he oversaw a \$14 billion increase in general government sector debt over his term in office. That is not a record to be proud of. While there are a range of things that the member for Clayfield should not be proud of, that is a particular one. They decry our gross debt figure for reaching \$80 billion, but guess what? We have not reached it, not even across the forward estimates of this budget. They are always embarking on scare campaigns. They have run a scare campaign about the defined benefit scheme and what will happen to members. They have scared public servants enough with sackings; they do not need to do that to the members of the scheme.

Tomorrow the member for Clayfield will have this chance. Tomorrow he will outline his plan, which will not involve asset sales. He does not like our plan and says he does not want to cut jobs and services. Therefore, his would be a government that would obviously raise taxes.

### **Building Our Regions Program**

**Mr CRIPPS:** My question without notice is to the Premier. Is the Premier concerned that under Labor's Building our Regions program regional Queensland has missed out on vital infrastructure projects, given that the government has spent just \$400,000 of the \$70 million allocated in last year's budget?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the member for Hinchinbrook for the question. We know that until the third year of the Building our Regions program there was no money allocated—

**Mr Pitt:** It was allocated in the third year.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** That is why we have increased the funding in this year's budget, to make sure that we have enough funds for Building our Regions. In relation to the member's specific question, my understanding is that some of the delays—and I will get the exact answer for him—may be due to the fact that local councils have had to gear up and get everything ready to get that money out of the door. Where there are problems, I am more than happy for our department to speak with the councils.

We know how important Building our Regions is for the state. We know how important the Back to Work employment program for the regions is. We will continue to support regional Queensland. The real test will come tomorrow when we learn what those opposite would do for regional Queensland. When the Leader of the Opposition delivers his reply, will he care about the regions?

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Callide, you are warned under standing order 253A for your interjections.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I rise to a point of order. When the Premier answers and takes a direct shot at the opposition, the opposition is entitled to respond to those direct shots. If the Premier chooses not to do that, of course the opposition will respect the position that the Premier is answering the question. However, when she takes shots against the opposition, it is the custom and practice of this place that the opposition is entitled to respond.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition and members, there is no point of order. Premier, do you have anything further to add?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I will add a few things. In relation to the two-year \$200 million Building our Regions program, we made a commitment to bring forward funding in the 2015-16 financial year, ensuring approved shovel ready projects could begin in early 2016. On 21 December 2015, the first round of successful projects was announced. Over \$70 million of government funding was committed to support those 42 projects. We will be working with the council to deliver those projects. As members are aware, across the state many councils apply for this money and it is their job to gear up and to get that money out of the door.

### Public Transport, Fares

**Ms FARMER:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and Commonwealth Games. Will the minister please advise the House about the impacts of the Palaszczuk government's Fairer Fares package? What does the package mean for my electorate of Bulimba and can the minister advise of any alternative policies for public transport fares?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Before I call the minister, there seemed to be a series of questions there. Minister, you are invited to answer one question.

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** I thank the member for Bulimba for her question. The member is a strong advocate for her community, particularly on public transport issues. As the House is aware, under the Palaszczuk government's Fairer Fares package, in South-East Queensland public transport patrons will travel further for less. Yesterday, I informed the House of big winners in Brisbane's northern suburbs and the Moreton Bay region. In answer to the member's question, I can advise that the south side of Brisbane will have strong benefits, as well, including annual savings of up to \$315 a year for those making weekly commutes from Morningside and Cannon Hill stations to the CBD of Brisbane. Bulimba residents will also benefit from the CityCat service now operating in a single zone of travel, meaning peak service adult fares will fall to just \$3.20.

Thanks to the advocacy of the member for Bulimba, public transport across train, bus and ferry services will all be cheaper. The member has already made some very strong representations to me about the final zone boundaries, particularly from Murarrie station. During the consultation period, those issues will be examined very closely. I encourage all members to look closely at the package and at how they can encourage their communities to be involved in the consultation process through to July 2016.

I was asked about alternative policies. I can inform the member that there were alternative policies being bandied about. I detailed the benefits to the shadow transport minister—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Minister, I urge you to keep your answer to one question.

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** In the context of those benefits that are being felt across South-East Queensland, it is interesting to hear what other people are saying about the impacts of the Palaszczuk government's Fairer Fares package. In February, the member for Indooroopilly said that commuters living in Jindalee, for example, would be slugged an extra \$250 a year.

I am sure the member for Mount Ommaney is pleased to know that the commuters travelling from Jindalee station to the city on a weekly basis will be saving up to \$578 a year. The shadow Treasurer's scare campaign was not only wrong but also wrong by \$798 per passenger per year. The shadow Treasurer sold the member for Glass House a pup when he told him that he was handing on the shadow ministry in good order. What we need is further good advocates for public transport like the member for Bulimba and all members on this side of the House.

### **Royalties for Regions Program**

**Mr COSTIGAN:** My question without notice is to the Premier. Can the Premier confirm that the LNP's Royalties for Regions program, which has been scrapped by Labor, actually delivered more money for regional Queensland for infrastructure this financial year than Labor's Building our Regions program?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I thank the member for the question. There was a good Auditor-General's report on the Royalties for Regions program. The member for Callide would know all about it. The Auditor-General went through it in fine detail. It is a pity I do not have a copy of it here. It raised a number of issues about the way money was allocated under that program.

Our program is about building our regions. In the budget that was announced yesterday—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Sorry to interrupt you, Premier. Minister for Police, you are now warned under standing order 253A.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** In the budget that the Treasurer announced yesterday there is an extra \$175 million for the Building our Regions program. On top of that, we are looking after western and rural Queensland as well with perhaps the largest injection—

**Ms Trad:** They couldn't.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** That is right. Labor is looking after the bush. I know that there are National Party members who are happy with what we have done. There is \$77.9 million for a rural assistance and drought package. Labor is listening to the bush. Labor is being the friends of the bush. Labor is delivering for the bush. In fact, Vaughan Johnson, who has become one of our wild dog commissioners, said that this government has done more for the bush than the former government ever did.

Is my government committed to building our regions? Yes, we are. Are we committed to looking after rural and Western Queensland? Yes, we are. We will continue to look after them because we promise to be a government for all of Queensland. I will tell members one thing that we will not do. We will not do what the former LNP government did. We will not slash. We will not burn. We will not cut. We will not sack. We will not do any of those things.

**Mr COSTIGAN:** I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker, on relevance. I have listened respectfully and intently to the Premier for two minutes. I specifically asked about Royalties for Regions funding and the—

**Mr SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. The Premier has finished her answer.

### **Budget, Health**

**Mr WILLIAMS:** My question is to the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services. Will the minister outline the budget initiatives for spending on capital works in the health sector?

**Mr DICK:** I thank the member for Pumicestone for his question. Thanks to the advocacy of the member for Pumicestone and the member for Morayfield we will be delivering a temporary car park at Caboolture Hospital. That is a great thing. We are building not only hard infrastructure across Queensland but also temporary answers too. Some 300 car parks will be delivered there. They were never delivered by those members opposite. They were promised for three years and never delivered.

I look forward to the \$2 million promised by Wyatt Roy yesterday being delivered to the Caboolture Hospital. I will be holding Wyatt Roy to his promise to the people of Longman. I will hold him personally responsible.

That is just one project out of the \$400 million Advancing Queensland Health infrastructure projects in this budget. There is a commitment of \$230 million for hard infrastructure over five years. Our total infrastructure spend in Health this year will be \$1.4 billion—a very significant investment not only in health infrastructure but also in terms of generating jobs across the length and breadth of Queensland.

In the Torres Strait we are redeveloping the Thursday Island Hospital. In Dimbulah, in the electorate of the honourable member for Dalrymple, we will be renovating the primary healthcare clinic. In Atherton we will redevelop the hospital, including a new emergency department and operating theatres.

I am delighted by the commitments made by the Deputy Premier out of the Significant Regional Infrastructure Projects Program: a primary health clinic at Palm Island that has been advocated for by the member for Townsville; a new paediatric ward in Townsville that has been advocated for by the member for Mundingburra, the member for Thuringowa and the member for Townsville; new Step Up Step Down facilities for Queenslanders transitioning back into the community after an acute mental health episode will be built in Gladstone, Bundaberg and Mackay—this is at a time when the federal government is about to slash money from transitional care for people with mental illness in Queensland—

**Mr Madden:** Shame.

**Mr DICK:** It is a shame. I take the interjection from the member for Ipswich West. On the Sunshine Coast we will safely open the Sunshine Coast University Hospital and the Sunshine Coast Health Institute, unlike the members opposite instituted a risky opening of a children's hospital and a risky closing of an adolescent mental health centre.

The Rockhampton Hospital car park project will go out to tender later this year. This was advocated for by the member for Rockhampton and the member for Keppel. There is \$12.7 million for an integrated community health centre in Wynnum. That was a project that was championed by the member for Lytton for a long time prior to the election and subsequent to the election.

This is a decent budget that delivers health care for Queenslanders and delivers infrastructure across the length and breadth of Queensland. It will deliver innovation. It will deliver jobs. It will deliver better health care for Queenslanders.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Before I call the member for Cairns, member for Mount Ommaney, you are warned under standing order 253A for your continual interjections.

### **Cairns Hospital, Nurse-to-Patient Ratio**

**Mr PYNE:** My question is to the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services. Will the minister confirm that the government's safe nurse-to-patient ratio will apply at Cairns Hospital?

**Mr DICK:** The short answer is yes. From my recollection it was part of the regulation that was tabled as part of the debate on the safe nurse-to-patient ratio legislation. From my recollection we are rolling this out through medical and surgical wards in up to 28 hospitals across Queensland. If I recall correctly, Cairns is one of those hospitals. Delivering this in our large hospitals is really important as a starting point, I say to the member to Cairns. We will deliver it in our large hospitals to begin with. We are also delivering it in regional hospitals throughout Queensland. We are going to do it in a staged fashion.

The experience with nurse-to-patient ratio implementation in other jurisdictions—for example, in California—was that they implemented it across the health system, in both the public health system and the private health system. What happened was that the large tertiary hospitals drew in staff from across the health system and that, of course, made staffing unstable for smaller hospitals and regional hospitals. We are doing this in a staged fashion.

I will confirm this again for the member for Cairns, but my recollection is that Cairns is one of those hospitals—an important tertiary hospital in the Far North of our state. This is part of the commitment we made as a government at the last election.

We are talking about the budget. We know that the previous government removed 1,800 nurses and midwives.

**Ms Jones:** They cut nurses.

**Mr DICK:** They did. I take the interjection from the member for Ashgrove and Minister for Education. They cut 1,800 nurses and midwives. This government committed to rebuilding the front line when it came to nurses and midwives.

**Mr Springborg** interjected.

**Mr DICK:** If I were the member for Southern Downs, I would not interject on anything.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Southern Downs, you will have an opportunity to put a question to the minister about the issue that you are talking about—

**Mr DICK:** No, the member for Southern Downs—

**Mr SPEAKER:** No, it is not an opportunity for you to debate the issue.

**Mr DICK:** His legacy is that he cut 1,800 nurses and midwives and closed an adolescent health centre when it was risky. The commission of inquiry will report shortly on his conduct and that of the member for Clayfield when he was treasurer with regard to why they cut funds to the Barratt Adolescent Centre.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Minister, please ensure that your answer is relevant to the questions being asked.

**Mr DICK:** The legacy of the member for Southern Downs is clear. I will confirm that again. My understanding is that Cairns is part of that process.

### Tourism

**Mr CRAWFORD:** Will the Minister for Tourism update the House on the Tourism Research Australia data released today and on any trends in Queensland tourism growth?

**Ms JONES:** It is a great day for Queensland and a great day for tourism in this state. I thank the member for the question, because today I am walking on sunshine and don't it feel good? Do members know why? We are seeing record growth in domestic tourism across this nation.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms JONES:** For goodness sake, can members opposite not even see this as good news? Come on, give me something! We are beating NSW. We are beating Victoria. More Australians are choosing to holiday in Queensland than anywhere else and the member for Everton is still miserable!

**Ms Trad:** We know all about them. We know why you are sad.

**Ms JONES:** I will take the interjection from the Deputy Premier. We know why the member is sad. Again, by how many votes did he miss out? We know that for all his gloating the member for Clayfield only got there by two votes; but back to the great news for Queensland. We have seen nine per cent growth in domestic tourism, which means more Australians are choosing to holiday in Queensland. The member for Barron River is excited, like me—unlike the member for Everton—because we know that this means jobs for the people of Cairns, the Whitsundays, Mackay, Gladstone, Bundaberg—

**Ms Trad:** And Western Queensland.

**Ms JONES:** And Western Queensland. I again take the interjection from the Deputy Premier. The government has made it very clear that we see tourism as one of the growth industries in this state. Unlike the Leader of the Opposition when he was the treasurer cutting funding for tourism, we reinstated funding to ensure that we could grow this valuable sector. Far from knocking down the pillar, we restored funding, and in the budget this week another \$33.5 million was invested in tourism. We know that this means jobs. Unilaterally, in the last 24 hours the tourism industry has said what a great initiative this is.

**Mr Ryan:** Nine out of 10!

**Ms JONES:** I take that interjection from the member. We know that QTIC said this is nine out of 10. We are very proud that at every single step we are focusing on creating the jobs in the tourism industry. We understand that, by working with industry, we can grow tourism jobs. This is the kind of collaboration we need to advance our economy and to create stability for the future. We will always fight to grow jobs, both here and in the region. It was not only QTIC that referred to what a great job we are doing in regard to tourism.

**Mr Nicholls** interjected.

**Ms JONES:** I take the interjection from the member for Clayfield. I do not need self-praise: I have pages and pages of praise from industry.

### Cross River Rail

**Mr POWELL:** I refer the Premier to the Treasurer's media comments about the European train control system as 'the system we hope is going to potentially push back the delivery of Cross River Rail if required.' Is Cross River Rail still Labor's No. 1 infrastructure priority, and who is wrong? The person to the Premier's left or the person to the Premier's right?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** As my government has said time and again, Cross River Rail is its No. 1 infrastructure project. What was the No. 1 infrastructure project of the former LNP government? 1 William Street! It is still costing taxpayers. How much is it costing taxpayers? It is costing \$2.6 billion. Those opposite wanted a tunnel. Who could forget that? They wanted a tunnel from the building to underneath Parliament House. I understand that was a fiery CBRC meeting that day.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Premier, I know you might like to talk about that but that is not the question.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I think the Premier has answered the question.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I am still going, Mr Speaker.

**Mr SPEAKER:** As long as it is relevant to the question.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** We are talking about tunnels, infrastructure—it all goes hand-in-hand. Cross River Rail is a very important piece of infrastructure for the south-east. I remember when I was transport minister there was the business case that was sent to the feds, and then when those opposite came in what did they do with Cross River Rail? They threw it out of the window and said, 'We will do something else. We will do the BaT tunnel. That is right. Let us scrap that and do something else.'

**Ms Trad:** The only ones to walk away from that.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I will take that interjection. They walked away from it. Are we committed to it? Yes, we are.

**Mr Nicholls** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I ask the Leader of the Opposition to allow the Premier to answer the question.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Building Queensland will work out the priority infrastructure projects for this government. It is independent. The \$50 million down payment will set up the delivery authority to get things moving. We will work with the industry, with whoever is the federal government, to ensure that not only is it Queensland's No. 1 infrastructure project but also it is the federal government's No. 1 infrastructure project, as it has been for many years in the past.

It is about time we worked collaboratively together to deliver this vital piece of infrastructure for South-East Queensland. What does it mean? It means faster commuting times. It will alleviate the capacity on the train network. It is needed and we will pursue it as much as we possibly can. We are committed to Cross River Rail. The budget has a down payment of \$50 million. We will hear from Building Queensland. I am quite sure there will be more good news on that front in the very near future, because it is a signature project for South-East Queensland.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Before calling the member for Stretton, the member for Glass House was warned under standing order 253A for continual interjections. The member has the opportunity to rise on a point of order if the member thinks the Premier is not relevant in her answer. The member did not do that. The member is now warned under standing order 253A. If the member persists, the member knows the action I will take.

### Advance Queensland

**Mr PEGG:** Will the Minister for Innovation, Science and the Digital Economy and Minister for Small Business outline how the acceleration of the Advance Queensland Initiative will benefit Queensland?

**Mrs Smith** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The member for Mount Ommaney has already had one warning. I ask the member to leave the chamber under standing order 253A for 30 minutes. Can you please leave and we will wait?

*Whereupon the honourable member for Mount Ommaney withdrew from the chamber at 3.58 pm.*

**Mr SPEAKER:** Can the member please repeat the question?

**Mr PEGG:** Will the minister outline how the acceleration of the Advance Queensland Initiative will benefit Queensland?

**Ms ENOCH:** I thank the member for Stretton for his question. I know how passionate he is about innovation in his electorate in particular and ensuring that small businesses are looking for innovative ways forward. I appreciate the question.

The Palaszczuk government has a plan to build a new economy. Our plan is called Advance Queensland—a comprehensive, whole-of-government innovation package. This year's state budget increases our investment in innovation across government and industry to \$405 million—an additional \$225 million to build on the achievements in supporting innovation across Queensland. This is all about creating the jobs now and the jobs of the future.

Expanding the Advance Queensland funding program has drawn widespread support from across the community. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland said, 'We are pleased to see the government has listened to the business community.' CCIQ's Nick Behrens said, 'Undoubtedly, the grants and support programs to be offered will enable small business to grow and employ more Queenslanders.' The list goes on.

Sunshine Coast mayor, Mark Jamieson, said that the increased funding for the initiative 'reflects that the future of our economy and our community's prosperity lies in ideas, innovation, creativity and driving entrepreneurialism'. Jemina Dunn, the Queensland director of the Australian Industry Group, said, 'We are particularly pleased to see Government's continued focus on innovation in today's Budget.' Ms Dunn also said, 'The strong focus on stimulating regional Queensland economies is also welcomed.'

Our commitment to our Advance Queensland program is a direct contrast to the opposition—which has chosen to knock Queensland's investment in innovation. Not satisfied with running down the economy of today, now they are looking to the future economies to run down. In fact yesterday a member asked a question that sounded like there was a bit of confusion about what innovation actually is. This might be because the LNP has no innovation policy. It has been more than 500 days since the last state election and still there is no LNP position on innovation or creating jobs.

Our new programs for accelerating Advance Queensland will build future generations. We will invest \$70.4 million to put Queensland at the forefront of entrepreneurship and equip our students with the skills for the jobs of the new economy. It will also grow our regions, with \$49.5 million invested in regional innovation to harness and build on our diverse regional strengths. Advance Queensland will also unlock the potential of business to innovate. In order to do this, we will invest an additional \$32.7 million to advance small business and invest in key platform technologies. Queensland is made for innovation, and innovation is at the heart of the Palaszczuk government's economic agenda.

*(Time expired)*

### **Police Service, Resources**

**Mr MANDER:** My question is to the Minister for Police. Can the minister advise why the actual strength of police officers at stations servicing the electorate of Toowoomba South has been slashed from 155 to 136 in the first year of the Palaszczuk Labor government?

**Mr SPEAKER:** I call the minister for a maximum of two minutes.

**Mr BYRNE:** This has been a repetitive theme in questions on notice from the opposition going back over many months. The opposition—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr BYRNE:** Just about every station in Queensland has been mentioned, with those opposite interrogating the staffing levels at individual stations—every single one. After all of that hoovering up that has been going on, bombarding with these levels—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Albert and member for Gaven, you are both warned under standing order 253A.

**Mr BYRNE:** After all of that exercise, all of that waste of questions in the box in front of us, what have we seen? We have found a particular station where there is a variation. I have said in every single response in this House and in writing to questions on notice that positioning of officers associated with

the Queensland Police Service is a matter for the Queensland Police Service. That is who positions officers around Queensland. Frankly, it is the separation of powers. The police minister does not direct the Police Service—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Mudgeeraba, you are now warned under standing order 253A. Member for Southern Downs, if you persist, you will be the next person.

**Mr BYRNE:** Mr Speaker, if only I could go further on this. The fact is that those opposite keep wanting to dabble in the positioning of Police Service resources over and over and over and over. It is not the role of the minister or the government to direct where police officers serve. That is why we pay a commissioner. The Leader of the Opposition knows it. Those across there should know it. The fact is that the Police Service responds to the situation on the ground with intelligence-led policing. I will give members opposite a lecture one day about modern policing because clearly they do not know anything about it.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Question time has finished.

## ELECTRICITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 14 June (see p. 2263), on motion of Mr Bailey—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr EMERSON** (Indooroopilly—LNP) (4.06 pm): I rise to speak to the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Let me start by indicating that the LNP opposition is very concerned about the lack of scrutiny and oversight of a merger that will create the largest electricity distribution business in Australia. Again, this government has failed in its promise to be open and accountable, open and consultative. This bill will facilitate the creation of a parent company with an asset base worth more than \$20 billion. We now know the Treasurer has spent a considerable amount of public money coming up with the moniker Energy Queensland for this new company. The Queensland parliament is yet to have its say on this plan, but the member for Mulgrave has not hesitated spending taxpayers' money on his public relations blitz. As Master Electricians put it—

The Government has tried to put a slick PR spin on this announcement, with a new name and a shiny logo. But it is an irrefutable fact that if a giant, taxpayer-funded corporation is moving into the market, then some small, family-owned businesses will be forced out.

While the Treasurer has been out there trying to sell the overstated merits of his merger plan, the committee with oversight of this major bill has held only one hearing to scrutinise this potential legislation. The committee spent less than an hour questioning public officials and other interested parties about this bill. That is just not acceptable. It is not just unacceptable; it is also inexcusable. Again, it highlights the duplicity of this government.

The LNP members of the committee were blocked in their attempts to extend the time frame for considering this bill. They were blocked in their attempts to hold regional hearings, considering the far-reaching impacts of these changes in regional Queensland. They were blocked in their attempts to get representatives of these companies to properly explain the impacts and costs of this merger. They were blocked in their attempts to reopen the submissions process so that stakeholders, like Master Electricians, could be given a proper say, considering what the government's much touted energy services business could mean for its members. They were even blocked from finding out who the committee asked to receive submissions from.

Despite being mentioned in both the explanatory notes and the Treasurer's introductory speech, questions relating to the government run energy services monolith were ruled out of order during the committee process. This once again highlights that this is a government that is not to be believed when it says it is committed to openness, transparency and accountability.

The LNP members will not be supporting this bill. We cannot in good conscience do this knowing the perverse outcomes this merger will produce. We cannot do this because we believe our mum-and-dad electrical contractors should not have to compete against the government run monolith for work. We do not believe union bosses should be put before independent sparkies here in Queensland. We cannot do this because we know the government's outlined savings for this merger are not to be believed. The detail behind these assumptions has never been properly provided.

We cannot do this because this government cannot be trusted with the stewardship of these businesses. Remember, this is the government that heavily increased the debt levels of these businesses, a move which drew the criticism of the independent Auditor-General. He stated—

This will take them above the 60 per cent benchmark set by the Australian Energy Regulator for efficient network businesses.

The three entities may have less funding to pay for capital works, and/or they may need to extend the life of their assets by increasing maintenance.

This is a government that has resorted to every single hollow-log raid and short-term sugar hit. They simply cannot be trusted to properly manage a merger of this magnitude. It is not entirely correct to claim that the merger of Ergon or Energex was an election commitment of the Palaszczuk Labor government. The Palaszczuk Labor government's election commitment was that it would merge power generators CS Energy and Stanwell and it would merge Ergon, Energex and Powerlink; the five government owned electricity businesses would become two. Of course, the government has since had to walk away from its harebrained scheme to merge the generators, a move which Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Chair Rod Sims said could drive up electricity prices. In the 2015-16 Mid Year Fiscal and Economic Review, the government announced its plans to merge Ergon and Energex. This was how the Treasurer spun the merger in his media release, and I quote from the headline, 'Electricity company mergers save \$680 million and drive regional jobs'—I am happy to table that press release.

*Tabled paper:* Media release, undated, by the Treasurer, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Minister for Sport, Hon. Curtis Pitt, titled 'Electricity company mergers save \$680 million and drive regional jobs' [935].

However, we know that the Treasurer's media release is factually incorrect. The electricity mergers will not save \$680 million at all. The \$680 million identified is the total savings across the government owned distribution, transmission and generation electricity business. According to the table at page 28 of the 2015-16 MYFER, only \$572 million of these savings relates to the distribution businesses. The line item at page 28 reads 'merger and efficiency savings'. I am happy to table page 28 of the 2015-16 MYFER.

*Tabled paper:* Extract from Mid Year Fiscal and Economic Review 2015-16, p. 28 [936].

The government has failed to outline the forecast savings from the merger as an individual line item. Why? We know the majority of the savings the Treasurer has so proudly publicised have nothing to do with the actions of the Palaszczuk government and have nothing to do with the merger; they are directly related to the decisions made by the Australian Energy Regulator. The LNP opposition always knew this, which is why within the very limited time we asked Treasury about the assumptions behind the figures identified in the 2015-16 MYFER. I would like to quote from the Queensland Treasury's response to the questions taken on notice as part of the committee's investigation into the bill. Savings are broken down into two sections: merger savings and efficiency savings. I quote from the information provided by the Treasury. It states—

Net efficiency savings for Ergon and Energex relate to efficiency programs the businesses need to make savings following their Australian Energy Regulator determinations.

These efficiency savings programs, which cover indirect costs, would need to be pursued to align the overhead costs of both businesses with lower operating and capital expenditure allowances from the AER.

I am happy to table that advice from the Treasury.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 27 April 2016, from the Assistant Under Treasurer, Queensland Treasury, Mr Gregory Tonks, to the Chair, Transportation and Utilities Committee, Mr Shane King MP, regarding the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 [937].

That aspect of the savings has absolutely nothing to do with the merger; they are the requirements placed on the businesses by the national regulator. The Queensland Treasury and the government have so far been unable to properly identify the savings as they relate solely to the merger. Why? Because the so-called savings simply are not there and because there are significant up-front costs associated with merging these businesses. Energex let the cat out of the bag in its submission response to the Queensland Productivity Commission's inquiry into electricity pricing. It stated, '... experience with similar utility restructures indicates that the up-front costs can be significant, and may outweigh any forecast savings.' We also know from the independent review panel on network costs that the up-front cost of implementing the government's merger proposal is almost \$170 million. I am very happy to table the briefing note that illustrates this very point for the benefit of the House.

*Tabled paper:* Treasury Briefing Note, undated, for the Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships regarding the merger of energy government owned corporations [938].

Instead of trying to combine numbers to overinflate the fiscal benefit of the merger, the Treasurer should be up-front with the people of Queensland about the true cost of this plan. Not only are there significant concerns about the lack of detail about the costs of the merger, the bigger concern is what it would mean for independent electrical contractors throughout this state. We know mum-and-dad electrical contractors are all worried about the new energy services business and what it could mean for their businesses. Here is what Master Electricians CEO Malcolm Richards had to say about the impact of the new government owned company—

Master Electricians has already expressed our grave concerns about the potential abuse of market power by the State Government setting up its own business to compete head to head with small electrical businesses. ...

...

"Mum and dad businesses would never be able to afford to borrow money or sustain losses in the same way the State Government can. The only possible result from head-to-head competition would be small businesses being sent to the wall.

...

"It flies in the face of the fundamental beliefs of a free enterprise society—that people who invest in businesses will not find themselves competing with the government."

It is not just Mr Richards. We have heard from countless numbers of contractors who are worried about what this will mean for them. We have heard from people like Tammy and Barry Stanton, who are worried about what it will mean for their staff, '... if what they do affects my business, people are going to lose their jobs.' I table the article from the *Australian* titled 'Sparks fly as electricians worry about compensation'.

*Tabled paper:* Article from the *Australian*, dated 20 April 2016, titled 'Sparks fly as private electricians worry about competition' [939].

Why is the government doing this? Because they are looking after their union mates once again. In doing so, they are selling the state's independent electrical contractors down the river. Instead of listening to the likes of union heavies such as Peter Simpson and Stuart Traill, those opposite should be listening to the likes of Owen Blamires from Wondai Electrical Service, whose business plan revolves around installing new technology. He said, 'We are smart, we have survived this long but we can't take a hit like this.' I table the article from the *Courier-Mail* titled 'Annastacia Palaszczuk rejects electricians' concerns about unfair competition from new energy business'.

*Tabled paper:* Article from the *Courier-Mail* online, dated 20 April 2016, titled 'Annastacia Palaszczuk rejects electricians' concerns about unfair competition from new energy business' [940].

There are other people like Peter Worth from Peter Worth Electrical in Hervey Bay and Janelle Miller of A&J Electrical Services in Wishart—

**Mr Walker** interjected.

**Mr EMERSON:** I take the interjection from the member for Mansfield. The government should be listening to people like Janelle Miller of A&J Electrical Services in Wishart, Ian Kennedy from Kw Electric in Yatala or Chris Lehmann of Tradesmen on Time of Arana Hills. We have been overwhelmed by correspondence from people concerned about what this will mean for them. I would like to read from one letter from employees working in a Toowoomba solar business to illustrate the level of concern that exists out there in the community. The letter states—

I am concerned that the new entity, with its focus on unregulated work, will use its position to dominate the solar PV market, at the expense of local electrical contracting businesses.

...

An entity comprised of a merger between two large distribution businesses entering this market is an undeniable threat to the survival of the smaller electrical contracting business who specialise in this area of expertise.

We now know that the 'save our sparkies' petition received almost 2,200 signatures from people concerned about what this will mean for them. In their response to the question on notice I referenced earlier, Queensland Treasury also made reference to the impact of the new energy services business. They stated—

Opportunities to redeploy some existing staff to the proposed energy services business are currently being examined, which may reduce merger implementation costs (e.g. through the avoidance of voluntary redundancy costs).

Reading between the lines it would seem that the government is looking to minimise its costs by creating jobs at a new government run business. What impact is this going to have on contractors who do this work already across the state? Again, this all goes back to last year's decision by the Australian Energy Regulator about the annual revenue requirement and the cost of capital for these two

businesses. What the AER essentially did was restrict the amount that these businesses could spend. The businesses have been told to be more efficient and effective. Former Ergon CEO Ian McLeod said last year that the impact of the AER's decision could be 800 jobs going at the business. History will now show that Mr McLeod had been shown the door by the member for Mulgrave despite the independent Ergon board making the decision to extend his contract. Make no mistake: the government has proposed this energy services company at the behest of the ETU and in an attempt to live up to its promise of no forced redundancies at the GOCs.

In doing so they have sold out independent electrical contractors the length and breadth of Queensland. I know that the Treasurer and Labor speakers will get up and accuse the LNP of scaremongering about what services a new business will provide, so for the benefit of the record I will quote again from the MYFER. It states—

A new energy services business will be formed, combining the competitive elements from Energex and Ergon Energy to offer a broad range of new products and services, particularly in regional areas. These products and services could include solar panels, battery storage, energy management systems, smart meters, and demand management services that will respond to customer needs and innovations in energy technology.

These are all services that are delivered, and can be delivered into the future, by independent contractors. There are currently 10,000 independent contractors in Queensland, and they are concerned about what this means for their livelihood. There is absolutely no evidence of any existing market failure which would require such an overbearing and unnecessary intervention in the market. As the Clean Energy Council's solar accreditation site indicates, Queensland is already well serviced by almost 1,200 accredited solar installers. Our mum-and-dad electrical contractors do important work in our communities. They do not deserve to have the rug pulled out from underneath them.

Let me briefly talk about another part of the bill. Our position in relation to the amendment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities (Justice, Land and Other Matters) Act is clearly articulated in the Transportation and Utilities Committee's report into this bill. We have placed our agreement with those proposals on the record, but we will not be supporting this bill because we believe that small businesses should be able to operate free of government interference.

We do not support the government's merger; we do not trust their modelling; we do not trust their ability to drive this process; and we do not agree with selling out our independent sparkies in the interests of kowtowing to ETU bosses.

 **Mr KING** (Kallangur—ALP) (4.22 pm): I rise today to make a relevant contribution to this debate on the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. This bill has two objectives and they are quite simple: firstly, to facilitate the merger of our state owned electricity distribution companies, Energex and Ergon, which honours an important election commitment—more on this soon—and, secondly, it will modernise provisions which apply to the Island Industries Board, trading as IBIS, remove the current geographic limitations on the operations of this statutory body, change the body's name to Community Enterprise Queensland to reflect this change and amend provisions relating to board governance, membership, operations and administration. I will start by discussing the IBIS amendments.

This part of the bill was fairly simple and only had a few issues which needed clarification. One of these was in the makeup of the board. We recommended that a minimum of at least one member must be a consumer representative and a minimum of one member must be a community representative. Having representatives from both groups was considered necessary to address the concerns of food security, range and quality as well as price and affordability. The LGAQ raised some concerns about the potential impact these changes would have on the six government owned stores operating in the Aboriginal communities of Doomadgee, Kowanyama, Lockhart River, Pormpuraaw, Palm Island and Woorabinda. In response, DATSIP advised that this bill is not intended to regulate the operations of the other retail stores. While there have been a range of proposals considered regarding these six stores, a further analysis of operating models is required.

We also requested clarification about what would be required of the board to satisfy its obligation to publish any ministerial direction in a publicly accessible way. DATSIP explained that the term 'publicly accessible' was used to allow the board to be given the flexibility to determine the most effective and appropriate medium to disseminate this information. That was the only part of the bill we were able to agree on because those opposite do not seem to understand the other part of the bill. For clarity I will explain it again.

This bill is designed to help facilitate the business-as-usual operations of Energex and Ergon during the merger of these two network business entities, which was a commitment that the Palaszczuk government took to the last election. On 15 December 2015, Treasury announced that Energex and

Ergon would be merged under a new parent company by mid 2016. The parent company will be established as a GOC and incorporated under the Corporations Act. A regulation made under the GOC Act will declare the parent company to be a GOC and transfer the shares in Energex and Ergon to the parent company. Energex and Ergon will become subsidiaries of the parent company. Subsequent structural changes to the distribution business will proceed in a staged and orderly manner under the direction of the new board and CEO of the parent company in consultation with shareholders as appropriate.

In line with the government's announcement at the 2015 Mid Year Fiscal and Economic Review, the implementation of the new structure will create an opportunity to consolidate the corporate and administrative functions of Energex and Ergon. The operational functions of the business will continue to be undertaken by Energex and Ergon. While the bill is a preparatory step in facilitating the structural change announced by the government, the amendments could be described as technical or administrative and are largely about preserving the regulatory status quo. After all, we do need our power delivered in a safe, stable way during this process and in government hands—not sold. That is it. It is that simple; however, those opposite just do not appear to get it.

In January 2015 the people of Queensland made a decision. They had a clear choice: they could go with the LNP's fire sale of our assets, which the now Leader of the Opposition blew around \$70 million in taxpayers' money promoting through his failed Strong Choices program—and I do not think he has given up on this yet either—or the better choice that the people of Queensland did make in electing the Palaszczuk government, keeping our electricity assets in public hands and merging our electricity distribution companies. This merger is happening, and using this bill to re-prosecute the last election is not representing the wishes of the people of Queensland.

As a former supply industry worker I can see the benefits of this merger for many reasons. One that comes to mind is during abnormal circumstances when natural disasters strike and the entities need to work together to get the power back on as soon as possible. At the moment, the entities have different disaster management plans, fatigue and drug and alcohol policies. Attempts over the years to get consistency across the entities on these policies have been frustrating, to say the least. The savings and efficiencies gained from this alone, when quick and safe restoration of supply is necessary, highlights just one small aspect of what can be achieved by this merger.

During our public hearing questions were asked about the concerns of the Electrical Trades Union—who were, by the way, the only group to provide a written submission on this part of the bill—that clause 39 allows for the power to make a regulation to add to the list of acts to be amended by the bill. The department explained that this power was very limited and would only be used to include acts which are necessary for the business to continue to operate as at present and to the entities within the parent company corporate group. During the public hearing the member for Southport noted that, when he sat in a ministerial office in the last term of government as an assistant minister, his view was that regulation was just code for giving the minister direct power without the scrutiny of parliament. I am confident that we are a very different government from the one the member for Southport was an assistant minister in, and this power would only be used for what it is intended.

Questions were also asked about any proposed redundancies, and we were reassured once again there will be no forced redundancies during this process. During the public hearing the opposition members of the committee constantly tried to bring their new scare campaign into the discussion, which we have heard about already today. The opposition continues to run a fear campaign about smaller electrical contractors having to compete with a yet-to-be-formed division of the merged entity, the energy services business. Instead of debating the bill, they used much of the public hearing to try to debate and push a fear campaign that has no substance or merit whatsoever.

I have put this argument into an analogy that those opposite may understand. Imagine this asset merger is a new car and the energy services business is a tow bar. At the last election the people of Queensland gave us a mandate to buy them a new car. The LNP could, and should, help us choose the brand, colour and capacity of this car; however, they want to talk about what type of tow bar we may fit down the track to tow a future trailer that has not been designed yet because trailer technology is still rapidly developing. It is their choice, of course, but that is not part of what we are debating today.

As chair of the public hearing I tried to keep us on topic and on the bill and was accused of showing bias for doing my job as chair. This is highly inappropriate but typical of the behaviour we see in this place from certain LNP members, who cannot let the fact they are no longer in government pass. As the scare campaign about energy services business will no doubt continue to be the main debate

topic from the opposition, and as it is mentioned in the opposition's statement of reservation, even though it has not been 'quarantined', as stated by them, discussion on this issue was stopped because it has nothing to do with the bill before the House. I will make some more comment on it.

Realistically, there is no way an entity the size of this merged entity, with the overhead costs they will have, would be able to compete with small electrical contractors, even if they were to attempt to engage in the installation of domestic solar systems.

**An opposition member:** So you are going to talk about it anyway?

**Mr KING:** The member may learn something if they listen. Once again, for clarity, this will not be part of their business.

As the only electrician and the only person in this place at this time who has worked in the electricity supply industry, I can see how laughable this scare campaign is. The fact is that, amongst other roles, this division will address the uptake of emerging technologies as the network changes to embrace more renewables. The system has to be designed for the future, as our electricity supply needs change and as base load renewable generation becomes more and more a common part of not only our transmission network but also our distribution network. An example of this necessity is where rooftop solar has had a large uptake in older areas, where the local pole-top transformers were installed to export power and not to import from homes, which has created network issues. Prior design planning would have stopped this being an issue for our network, and this division will be vital for this type of work in the future.

In addressing the opposition's statement of reservation about their concerns that we did not travel to the north and regional Queensland to conduct public hearings, as I stated earlier, the whole of Queensland had a say on the electricity merger at the last election. The submissions were few: one submission on the regulatory framework for Energex and Ergon, which was in support, and two submissions on the IBIS amendment, one submission in support and another with queries—and that submitter attended the Brisbane public hearing. We cannot require people to make more submissions. With such a low uptake it would have been an extravagant waste of taxpayers' money to travel north when there was little interest from the north, judging from the submissions we received.

I reiterate: it was disappointing that members opposite—and they will continue—appeared to not want to debate the bill at the public hearing, and today no doubt, and largely wanted to argue issues not in the bill but attack the witnesses from the ETU. However, I finish by thanking the members of the Transportation and Utilities Committee for the good work we did do during our deliberations and, of course, I thank our incredible secretariat staff, Kate, Rachelle, Lisa and Julie. I proudly commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (4.32 pm): I rise to speak to the legislation before the House and the proposed merger. At the outset I say that we will be opposing this bill in its entirety, because we have grave concerns about the capacity and the capability of the government to handle this merger well. I remind the House about the previous Labor government and the magnificent job it did with the merger of water entities across South-East Queensland. What wonderful efficiencies we saw from that! We saw an extra \$6 billion to \$8 billion of debt racked up, councils in disarray and new water services providers having to be wound up and restructured. We saw so many efficiencies through that!

My concern in respect of this merger is that I do not think there has been enough scrutiny. I refer to the timetable for the public briefing and hearing program we undertook. We had a submission from Queensland Treasury. Officers from the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships were there and they answered a number of questions in respect of the proposed changes to the board. We had a very brief submission from the Local Government Association in respect of the restructuring of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders board. Then we heard from the ETU and then again from Queensland Treasury and the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships.

I will come back to the submission from the ETU and some of the other matters that were discussed. Firstly, I note that there is one amendment proposed by the minister. It is that at least one member of the board be a community representative. It goes on to provide a definition. It states—

**community representative** means a person who the Minister considers represents the interests of the communities in which Community Enterprise Queensland performs its functions.

The concern that the member for Whitsunday and the other LNP members of the committee held was that the proposed new board was not going to be truly representative of those communities it serviced, particularly in Far North Queensland, up in the cape and in the gulf. There was a lot of debate and discussion around the need for two community representatives and for those people to live in those

communities, to be people who are serviced by those stores and those services in these communities. What did we get back from the minister? We got a very nebulous, half-hearted response to what we heard from the member for Whitsunday, who had been out speaking to some of these communities in Far North Queensland and in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities—that is, we really need to have two members and the sort of community representation needs to be clear. It is very clear: the minister can decide who he thinks represents the interests. That could be someone from Brisbane. It could be a Labor mate who gets appointed to the board. Who would know? I do not believe that the proposed amendment truly reflects the desire of the Islanders Board of Industry and Service or that of the communities the member for Whitsunday spoke with as a part of this review.

The member for Kallangur said that not a lot of submissions were received. The time frame for submissions was fairly brief. As I stand before the House, I am concerned that we did not actively seek more submissions from across the state, given that this is such a significant merger. This is a \$25 billion entity that is to be created, yet the only people we heard from were Queensland Treasury and the Electrical Trades Union. I think that is a travesty.

I draw the attention of the House to the submission received from the ETU. They gave a bit of a summary. They said—

The merger is part of the Government's broader plan to make the electricity businesses more efficient and reduce debt, while retaining public ownership of the State's electricity assets, and we would like to take this opportunity to once again state our unwavering support for continued public ownership of Queensland's energy assets and congratulate the Government for its commitment in this regard.

I am not sure if they are a bit naive or if they need to be reminded, but it is not that long ago that a Labor government that went to the electorate saying they would never sell off assets quite conveniently sold off Queensland Rail and sold off our forests. They misled Queensland. I think the ETU are being somewhat naive in their resounding support of and trust in the government.

In the three years we were in government I travelled across the state. I attended community cabinet meetings across the state. I ran the gauntlet of the ETU people standing out the front. On one occasion I had the pleasure of having people bang on the windows of my car as I drove through, which, I have to say, made me feel a little bit uncomfortable. These people were there saying, 'No job losses. No sackings. We're standing up for the workers of Queensland. We don't want to see any redundancies.' They had a lot to say about that, yet in their submission to the committee they say—

... we applaud the Government's commitment to no forced redundancies through the merger ...

I am not sure what the difference is, but a redundancy is a redundancy. A job loss is a job loss. What we have heard in this House this week in the delivery of the new budget is that the new budget is all about jobs. This bill is all about getting rid of jobs, because in the report from Queensland Treasury we read that it anticipates that there will be at least 366 redundancies. In the public hearing I asked representatives of the ETU many questions—and I have to say they got pretty agitated and I thank our chair for his protection; there were some fairly raised voices, which is what we would expect from these bullyboy ETU people—but they could not answer the questions. The question I asked of the ETU was whether it was happy for those redundancies given that in its earlier submission it talked about the need to deal with inefficiencies and duplication. Here is the answer from Mr Traill—

We have not been given any indication of specific redundancy numbers that will occur out of the merger. Obviously there is significant duplication across both Ergon and Energex. Whether it is safety departments, industrial relations, boards of directors, CEOs or executive managers, there is significant duplication. Workplace practices is something that our members consistently find a hindrance ... There will be some removal of duplication, but that will be through a voluntary redundancy process, and we do support ...

Those are the ETU's words. On the one hand we have a union picketing community cabinet meetings across the state fighting against mergers and fighting against asset sales, allegedly standing up for the jobs of Queensland workers, and now on the other hand it is quite happy to support what Treasury says will probably be about 366 job losses. Is it not ironic that during the week when we have heard a budget being delivered that talks all about job creation in Queensland we stand in this House today being asked to support a bill which is about more job losses in Queensland? It is a shame.

I want to speak to some of the detail in the bill, although I am conscious of time. This is not new news to the House. In March of this year the Treasurer stood in the House and tabled his Mid Year Fiscal and Economic Review. Here is what the Treasurer of Queensland had to say—

A new energy services business will be formed combining the competitive elements from Energex and Ergon Energy to offer a broad range of new products and services, particularly in regional areas. These products and services could include solar panels, battery storage, energy management systems, smart meters and demand management services that will respond to consumer needs and innovations in energy technology. This business will be based in Townsville which could help create new jobs while delivering solutions for all Queensland.

I welcome any initiative that is going to create new jobs but, as we heard from the shadow minister earlier, not at the expense of mum-and-dad businesses across regional Queensland. I want to read the submission from the Master Electricians of Australia Queensland branch, which expressed concern.

**Mr King:** That's a union.

**Mr MOLHOEK:** No, it is a group of people in the community just like the unions that have the right to have a say and it has a right to be heard in this House. I take exception to the member for Kallangur's suggestion that Master Electricians Australia is just a union for the LNP. Here is what it had to say—

Master Electricians Australia is concerned about provisions of the bill that will establish a new energy services subsidiary as part of plans to merge Energex and Ergon Energy.

**Mr KING:** I rise to a point of order. I was misquoted then by the member for Southport. I take offence and I ask that he withdraw that comment.

**Mr MOLHOEK:** I withdraw. I go back to the submission from Master Electricians. It says—

The subsidiary's focus on unregulated work—namely, solar PV, batteries and energy efficiency solutions—will place it in direct competition with local electrical contracting businesses across the state.

That in itself is a concern, but I think it is somewhat hypocritical that the same government that came to this House and re-regulated the installation of water meters so that only qualified tradespeople were allowed to do that is now wanting to encourage unregulated work in the solar energy space. What a disaster we have seen in the past with unqualified people climbing around in roofs with the pink batts or the yellow batts disaster. Look at the challenges we saw out of the federal Labor government under Rudd.

**Mr McArdle:** A Rudd speciality!

**Mr MOLHOEK:** It was a Rudd speciality; I take the interjection from the member for Caloundra. Here we have a government that is happy to on the one hand say that we have to have qualified people undertaking work and now as a consequence of this proposed merger there is a suggestion that it will support unregulated work. It goes on to say—

Of further concern is the conflict of interest for such an entity being involved in the sale of solar PV and energy efficient solutions given that Ergon and Energex have the sole power to approve solar applications and set the meter charges. Clause 3 of the National Competition Principles Agreement, CPA, states that 'Government businesses should not enjoy any net competitive advantage simply as a result of their public sector ownership.'

**Mr Power** interjected.

**Mr MOLHOEK:** It is highly relevant because what is being proposed here is the supermerger of two entities, the sacking of some 300 or 400 employees across the state and then putting at risk the financial viability of small business operators in regional Queensland.

**Mr Bailey:** That's nonsense.

**Mr MOLHOEK:** Minister, are you denying the fact that there will be redundancies?

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Linard): Order! Member for Southport, I ask you to direct your comments through the chair.

**Mr MOLHOEK:** Sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker. With regard to the committee report, I want to draw the House's attention to the statement of reservation that the opposition submitted. I want to read it because I want to ensure that it is included in the *Hansard* record. It states—

The Opposition Members of the Committee acknowledge that the merger of Energex and Ergon was an election commitment by the Palaszczuk ... Government.

We get that. That was an announcement it made. The statement of reservation continues—

There have been serious concerns raised about the proposed legislation particularly in relation to last December's announcement by the Treasurer of the proposed merger and establishment of a new energy services subsidiary business.

Opposition members of the Committee are disappointed that the establishment of an electrical services retail business, mentioned both in the explanatory notes and the Treasurer's first reading speech, has been quarantined from Parliamentary scrutiny by the Government.

...

It should also be noted that there are concerning statements made in the Energex response to the Queensland Productivity Commission Issues Paper from 16 November 2015. The response notes the potential risks involved in this structural reform and Opposition Members are disappointed that Energex did not appear before the Committee so these statements could be better understood.

...

The non-Government Members were concerned about the low number of submissions—

and I touched on this before—

received and were disappointed that the Committee did not travel to North and Regional Queensland to conduct public hearings where the impacts of this legislation will be felt the hardest.

Given that the merger involves one of the biggest power entities in North Queensland, I think it is an absolute disgrace that we did not make the effort to go and hear from the people of Townsville and Cairns and some of the northern regions. I note that the member for Kallangur said earlier that we do not want to waste money and because we did not have a lot of submissions we did not want to waste taxpayers' money. Yet here we have a \$25 billion merger being proposed by a government whose track record in mergers is a little bit woeful. It has been woeful and the foreshadowed savings that we read about in the Treasurer's midyear statement and the further confirmation by Queensland Treasury are a concern given that those opposite are only foreshadowing savings of about \$500 million over many years. Given the government's track record, I am very dubious as to whether we will see savings or whether we will just see more blowouts.

The statement of reservation states further—

During the Public Hearing and Briefing Queensland Treasury was unable to adequately address questions raised by non-government members of the committee in respect of those savings foreshadowed by the Treasurer in his Mid Year Fiscal and Economic Review of 2015-16. Treasury's subsequent answer to the Opposition's Questions Taken on Notice identified a possible 366 redundancies.

I want to state that again, '366 redundancies'—in a week when the government has delivered a budget that allegedly delivers more jobs. The statement of reservations also notes that Queensland Treasury could not adequately answer our concerns about the impact of the energy services business and other unregulated activities and states further—

But in their own words, the final direction and business model for the energy services business is still to be finalised.

Here we are today voting on a \$25 billion merger, yet the details are still to be finalised. That is cold comfort for the electricity workers and Master Electricians across Queensland.

**Mr Dickson:** It sounds like the Health payroll debacle.

**Mr MOLHOEK:** I take that interjection from the member for Buderim. There is absolutely the potential for another debacle of that nature ahead of us. The opposition's dissenting report states further—

Also during the Public Briefing and Hearing representatives of the ETU were unable to adequately explain the basis for their applause for the governments planned merger and planned redundancies.

I never thought I would see the day when a union controlling a Labor government would applaud sacking people. That is what they said in their submission—'we applaud the government's commitment' to this. The dissenting report of the opposition states further—

Clearly the ETU were well aware there would be redundancies, they clearly support these proposed redundancies in spite of not being able to quantify or explain how many and or where these redundancies were planned.

Neither were they prepared to disclose what discussions or deals they had traded with the Government in exchange for their support for the sacking of potentially hundreds of Regional and South East Queensland electricity workers.

Frankly the response and reaction of ETU representatives can only be described as un-parliamentary and hypocritical given their past rigorous anti-government campaigns across Queensland.

With the behaviour of union representatives out the front, I did not feel comfortable attending some of those community cabinet meetings. Frankly, the behaviour within the public hearing was anything but appropriate. I acknowledge the protection of the member for Kallangur, who sought to mediate through some fairly hostile discussion. I thought it was an absolute shame that three ETU representatives could not speak civilly in a public hearing.

I restate that we will not be supporting this bill. We are not happy with the amendment proposed by the minister in respect of the board structure for IBIS, nor do we have confidence that this government can handle that merger well. Based on the government's track record with the sale of assets in Queensland, we do not trust them.

 **Mr WHITING** (Murrumba—ALP) (4.52 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This bill is to facilitate the operations of Energex and Ergon after they are merged into Australia's largest energy company, Queensland's own Energy Australia. It is crucial for Queensland that this bill is passed to make sure that the operations of this company work in the best interests of its shareholders, Queenslanders.

I want to talk about a couple of issues that have been raised in the debate. One is the amendment proposed in relation to the members of the IBIS board. I ask members to bear in mind that the amendment says that 'at least one member' must be based in the community. Certainly, that amendment gives the board the opportunity to have many community members. It gives the board flexibility. I do not understand why the opposition members are so perturbed by this amendment. It delivers what they say they want and they should support it.

The second issue that has been raised is why the committee did not travel to hear submissions on the bill. I point out to members that, in relation to that part of the bill that relates to electricity, we received one submission from the ETU and the ETU came to us to talk about it. We did not need to travel. For that part of the bill that relates to IBIS, we received two submissions and one of those submissions was from the LGAQ. To say that the committee had to travel when we had received this number of submissions would be really stretching it. Everyone could come to us. We could get the information. There was no need to turn this inquiry into a travelling circus. All the information was here. Everyone who had expressed an interest in this bill was here.

The member for Southport was perturbed by the presence of the ETU. Certainly, in the public hearing it became very clear why the members opposite could not wait to oppose this bill. From what they said, they had some real issues to settle with the ETU. I ask members to bear in mind that this was the first time those members had been in front of the ETU since the election. They definitely had some bones to pick with the ETU. There was some definite payback. They needed to show their face after what they regarded had been a hostile campaign that did them wrong. It was quite interesting to see how the members opposite faced off against the ETU. They were really hanging out for a fight. I thank the chair for protecting those ETU members from the hostile attitude of those members opposite.

This bill will facilitate the merger. I believe that it will help protect local jobs. We have heard that, apart from the local councils, the smaller depots for these energy companies are the major employers in rural and regional towns. This merger will keep those employees in towns. Those depots will stay in local towns. That will help drive local employment and the local economy. This bill will help create job security for these depot workers. We can do this because this entity will be government owned. As we heard in the committee hearing in relation to this bill, we need to support a government owned corporation being run as efficiently as possible and one that delivers for all Queenslanders, who are the shareholders in this entity. That is much better than the privatisation agenda of the last government.

I want to talk a little bit about privatisation. This newly merged body will be a bulwark against privatisation and sell-off. That is why the members opposite hate this bill. That is why they have whipped up a baseless fear campaign against it. If the LNP members oppose asset sales, they will support this bill. They will not do that. They are very open to selling off income-producing assets. They want to make a sell-off an option. They spent \$100 million on Strong Choices—on their proposed sell-off of these assets—and they do not want to waste that money. They want to keep their options open. What is the LNP's position? The member for Clayfield has refused to rule out privatisation. Can the member for Clayfield say that he will oppose privatisation? Can he send a signal to Queenslanders who want to hear if the LNP has shed its Newman-era baggage? It is simple. If the members opposite want to sell off the electricity companies, they will oppose this bill. If they have rejected the sell-off, they will support this bill. Queenslanders can see the pro-privatisation agenda of the LNP members by how they treat this bill.

This new entity and any subsidiaries will benefit Queenslanders. As the minister said in his introductory speech, this bill will help create an energy company for the future. I believe that we have a real need for this new entity. This new structure answers the question of how we are going to deal with rapidly changing electricity supply technology and the supply system. The whole electricity generation sector and the industry is changing. Instead of massive coal-fired power stations and massive steel towers pushing electricity out into the suburbs, whole suburbs are now producing their own electricity. We are transitioning from the sunshine state to the solar state. As at the end of March, we are now producing 1,500 megawatts of installed solar generation capacity. That equates to more than half a million rooftops. That effectively makes solar rooftops the second largest power station in Queensland. Thirty per cent of all detached houses in South-East Queensland now have a solar system. Not only that, the Palaszczuk government has a pipeline of proposed solar projects. We have short-listed seven Ergon renewable energy projects. We are testing and researching seven different battery storage systems. Our Solar 60 program will create 60 megawatts of solar generated power to kick-start a large scale renewal energy industry.

The question is how does this rapidly emerging Queensland solar industry fit in with the current system of generated and supplied power? What is the future for poles and wires streaming out from power stations? We know we need to be innovative and fast moving to be ready to adopt and to adapt

to new technologies and to respond to these new situations. That is where this merged business and the new business unit facilitated by this bill comes in. This is where it has such a vital role. This bill will help us make sure we can transition successfully into the solar state, to ride this wave of new energy technology instead of being swamped by it. Just as an aside, I point out that this bill helps make sure we have a strong and stable company that can continue to subsidise regional electricity prices. That is a very important way that this entity can support regional Queensland.

The implementation of this bill means that we can answer some of these questions that I have posed here. How do you connect up half a million to a million solar houses? How can you make your whole state get the benefit from solar rooftops? How do you deal with the second largest power station in Queensland with effectively half a million shareholders? Can we do neighbourhood distributions to connect up Queensland houses? What about new suburbs that are using marketing and renewable energy as part of their pitch? Could they go it alone and perhaps not need the same level of traditional infrastructure? These are the situations where we need the new entity, facilitated by this bill, that can work for the good of Queensland. Such a body and its subsidiaries can work on a large scale or a small scale to help transition whole areas to a renewable energy future. For those companies that are already working in the renewable energy sector at a household level and in the commercial space and in new suburban divisions, this is not a threat. In fact, I believe that such a newly merged company and any subsidiary facilitated by this bill will be an opportunity. They will develop the renewable energy sector, enlarge it and create more commercial opportunities for those wonderful Queensland companies already in this sector. Queensland companies are leading Australia in this sector.

This will embed renewable energy generation into the wider system of energy power generation and distribution within the state. It will utilise the services and experience of those smaller companies who are already leading the charge to turn us into the solar state. These are the same companies that the opposition has been badly trying to scare, the ones that they have been trying to mislead for their own political purposes. As the minister said, the opposition to this bill by those opposite has little to do with the bill itself and more to do with their political advantage and their political agenda. While this bill has been about facilitating the operations of Energex and Ergon after the implementation of this merger, the posturing of the opposition members has been about their opposition to publicly owned assets and their desire to one day sell them off.

 **Mr McEACHAN** (Redlands—LNP) (5.03 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Electricity and Other Legislation Bill. I would like to begin by acknowledging the excellent work of the committee secretariat ably led by Kate McGuckin. I would also like to acknowledge my fellow committee members: our chair, the member for Kallangur; our deputy chair, the member for Southport; the member for Murrumba; the member for Logan; and, last but not least, the indomitable force from the north, the member for Whitsunday and shadow assistant minister for North Queensland.

This bill has two components. The first part of the bill concerns amendments to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities (Justice, Land and Other Matters) Act 1984. It is proposed to modernise provisions currently applying to the Island Industries Board, remove the current geographic limitations on the operations of the statutory body and change the name of the body to reflect this change. It also seeks to amend provisions relating to board governance, membership, operations and administration to modernise these provisions and to more readily facilitate operations of the statutory body. This is done to accommodate potential changes to its operations as a result of the removal of the geographical limitations. However, because this component of the bill is corrupted by the merger component of the bill it cannot be supported.

The second part of this bill concerns the merger of Ergon and Energex. It has been described as purely technical to facilitate the merger. This merger is one of the biggest—if not the biggest—in Queensland's history and I am deeply concerned at the process and lack of scrutiny. The Energex response to the Queensland Productivity Commission Electricity Pricing inquiry outlined concerns in considering similar utility restructures. The Energex report outlined that up-front costs would be significant and may outweigh forecast savings. I table the report for the benefit of the House.

*Tabled paper:* Document, dated 16 November 2015, titled 'Energex—Response to Queensland Productivity Commission (QPC) Issues Paper' [\[941\]](#).

Due to the seriousness of concerns raised by Energex in this report, one would have thought further discussions with Energex and, indeed, Ergon senior managers made sense. However, the opposite is true. Rather than questioning experts in the field before the committee and hearing evidence, curiously, no submission was received from either Ergon or Energex. It is concerning that the committee had only one hearing to scrutinise this potential legislation. The committee spent less than an hour questioning public officials and other stakeholders to this bill. LNP members were lobbied by industry who wanted to extend the time frame for consideration of this bill.

As part of the 2015-16 Mid Year Fiscal and Economic Review, the Palaszczuk Labor government claimed savings of a very courageous \$562 million. I note that the majority of these savings are associated with efficiency savings required due to the Australian Energy Regulator's most recent determinations for these two businesses. The House should note that these cost reductions have absolutely nothing to do with the merger of these two entities. The real concern is that the Palaszczuk Labor government has not properly identified any savings from their proposed merger.

If we look a bit deeper into the background of the merger it gets more curious. The Electrical Trades Union is supportive of the bill in spite of the likelihood of at least 366 redundancies. In fact, they applaud the voluntary redundancies. Perhaps the establishment of the energy services retail business will have 366 budding solar power and alternative energy sparkies, an ETU-run business taking on the mum-and-dad private sector who have innovated, worked hard and created a vibrant emerging industry across Queensland.

The explanatory notes from this bill outline that a separate energy services business will be established under the parent company. The Treasurer spoke of it being established in his first reading of the bill. When LNP members of the committee asked about the detail, we were stunned to hear that Queenslanders will not get the opportunity to scrutinise this through the committee process. The establishment of Queensland's largest energy services business will have no parliamentary oversight at all.

To better understand this approach, I considered the motivation for such a move. In a fit of fiscal adventurism, I researched the Queensland Labor Party State Policy Platform 2015. Like Alice in Wonderland down the rabbit hole, I went to a strange and magical place overflowing with motherhood statements and Brezhnev clichés. Here I discovered a passage optimistically titled 'Economic Management'. There I found this edifying wisdom from our friendly socialists: 'If our economy is to reach its full potential and Queenslanders are to be supported in good times and bad then there must be an ongoing role for the government as the doer in the economy, not just the enabler.' Profound! Let us just recap on some of the most recent successful forays that the Palaszczuk Labor government has made into 'doing' private enterprise.

**Mr Bailey:** Are you going to come back to the bill sometime?

**Mr McEACHAN:** I appreciate your contribution, but I thought you were going to demonstrate some of the doing that you have done. I am still waiting. I am giving you time to think of a successful foray into private enterprise.

**Mr POWER:** I rise to a point of order. Is there any relevance to the bill?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes):** Order! Sit down. Member for Redlands, through the chair. Minister, it will be through the chair if you want to make any comments.

**Mr McEACHAN:** Those of us on this side of the House are not alone in our concern with this Labor proposal—not by any stretch of the imagination. Master Electricians Australia CEO Malcolm Richards has warned—

Emerging technologies are the bread and butter work for all electricians, whether they are based in the regions or in the city.

...

We believe the new entity can stimulate the market, actively enabling new emerging technologies to exceed by tweaking tariffs and incentives, and not competing with mum and dad contractors directly,

The Energy Retailers Association of Australia wrote to Dr Malcolm Roberts, the Chair of the Queensland Competition Authority.

**Mr Power** interjected.

**Mr McEACHAN:** Their correspondence raised concerns about this merger. Is that not relevant? Is the member saying that that is not relevant?

**Mr POWER:** I rise to a point of order. It was made absolutely clear in the hearings that this is not relevant to the bill. If someone writes, scaremongering and fear mongering about this, that does not make it more relevant to the bill for someone who knows the facts.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes):** Order! The title of the bill gives people latitude in this particular instance. We will proceed with the member for Redlands.

**Mr Power:** There is no latitude to mislead the House.

**Mr HART:** I rise to a point of order. I find that the member up the back has disrespected the chair. I suggest some action be taken.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I suggest that the member for Logan resumes his seat and remains very quiet for the next little while.

**Mr McEACHAN:** For the benefit of the member for Logan, I will repeat what I was saying. The Energy Retailers Association of Australia wrote to Dr Malcolm Roberts, the Chair of the Queensland Competition Authority. The correspondence raised concerns about this merger and the consequent establishment of an energy retail business and states—

If this was to occur it would create a more onerous market that was significantly less attractive for retailer participation relative to other jurisdictions. The Energy Retailers Association of Australia is therefore seeking further information from the QCA as to what actions it may take should these government policies come into effect during this notified price period.

Aren't we all? However, at every turn this parliament is denied an opportunity to scrutinise this proposal. What exactly are those opposite afraid of? Perhaps they are concerned that scrutiny will further reveal the absurdity of this proposal by the Palaszczuk Labor government.

The LNP committee members are gravely concerned about the low number of submissions received by this inquiry, perhaps as a result of a lack of engagement made by the committee. I note that the committee failed to travel to north and regional Queensland to conduct public hearings, that is, to the very areas where the impacts of this legislation will be most keenly felt. I acknowledge the tireless advocacy of the member for Whitsunday on this point. He continues to fight for his region and for the mum-and-dad sparkies who will be so affected by this proposal.

The concerns raised by the LNP have been echoed by Redlands sparkies, including Craig for Solarhart and Gavin from Goodhew Electrical. Mum-and-dad sparkies are worried about their future, their apprentices, and the clubs and community groups they sponsor and support. People from right across Queensland know what we on this side of the House know: Labor is not a friend of small business and private enterprise. Labor's focus, to the exclusion of all others, is unashamedly on the unions that empower them. It is a marriage of mutual benefit, but with no benefit for the people of Queensland.

The story is the same across-the-board with this Palaszczuk Labor government. Union influence has clearly proven to be too great. Forced to make a decision between the best interests of Queenslanders and the best interests of union mates, this Palaszczuk Labor government continues to choose unions every time, clearly scared of union retaliation should they take a stand. Of course, that is what one would expect from a government that made deals with the unions to get into power and makes deal with the unions to stay in power. What is the result? Mum-and-dad sparkies are sold down the river. Those are people who built their small businesses from the ground up; people who put in many hours every day trying to make ends meet for their families. Many of us on this side of the chamber have run small businesses ourselves. We know of the blood, sweat and tears put in just to keep food on the table and to keep our employees paid. It beggars belief that this government would forsake small business owners.

I do not support this bill. I do not support this merger and the establishment of an electrical retail services business. I put it to the House that Labor and the ETU want to be the doers in the provision of retail energy services to the detriment of local businesses across Queensland and to the detriment of mum-and-dad sparkies. Labor clearly wants to do in private enterprise for the enrichment of union members.

 **Mr COSTIGAN** (Whitsunday—LNP) (5.14 pm): I feel quite humbled to rise, after hearing the contribution of my learned colleague and good friend the member for Redlands in this debate on the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. As we have heard, the main objective of the bill is to facilitate the merger of electricity distribution companies Ergon and Energex under a parent company. It goes without saying that, on this side of the House, we are gravely concerned about the implications of the bill. I see the eyes of the member for Logan rolling. Well may they roll around, because right around regional and rural Queensland mum-and-dad sparkies and independent electrical contractors are watching this debate unfold tonight and, I dare say, are looking forward to seeing which way the crossbenchers will vote on the bill, because they stand to lose a great deal.

As we heard earlier this evening from the shadow Treasurer, we are not talking about chickenfeed; in terms of this new entity, we are talking about an asset base of \$20 million. As members on this side of the chamber have said, this energy services retail business is of grave concern to mum-and-dad sparkies from right across regional and rural Queensland. Certainly, in my own part of the

world of Mackay and the Whitsundays, it will affect people such as the Patroney family, the Pepper family, the Maxwell family in the Whitsundays and Ken Snell, whom I have known for a long time. They call him Bomb Head. He is at the top of the Whitsundays. He was a gutsy Rugby League player back in the day. I vividly remember him playing at Merinda. Since those days playing Rugby League right across the road from the now-defunct Merinda meatworks, he has built up a business. Recently, I caught up with him at the Whitsunday Cup race meeting at Ben Bolt Park in Bowen.

There is no doubt that a lot of mum-and-dad sparkies are holding their breath, wondering how this debate will pan out for them. We talk about putting food on the table, putting kids through school and paying mortgages. Those people all have commitments. We all have commitments and those mum-and-dad sparkies are no different. There is no doubt that the phone of Malcolm Richards, from the Master Electricians Queensland, has been running red hot. I dare say that it has been lighting up like a switchboard or a Christmas tree as concerned members ring him to vent their spleen and ask questions, because they are worried. People from right around regional Queensland are worried. Malcolm Richards has stated—

Master Electricians has already expressed our grave concerns about the potential abuse of market power by the State Government setting up its own business to compete head to head with small electrical businesses. Our e-petition to the Queensland Parliament calls on the State Government not to throw Queensland small businesses and their workers under the bus.

That says it all. Mr Richards is concerned and he has spoken on behalf of his members, just as members in this parliament stand up and speak on behalf of their constituents. If they are doing their job, they will stand in this place and show some spine by telling it how it is for the Patroneys, the Snells, the Peppers and people such as Lindsay McNeill and Paul Maxwell. Many of those people contribute to their communities. It is no surprise that a lot of the blokes whose names I have rattled off are very much involved with the Whitsunday Brahmans Rugby League Club. I wonder how many love jobs they have done at Les Stagg Oval, which hosted the Queensland State of Origin side 12 months ago. They also do a lot for other community groups and the not-for-profit sector around the Whitsundays.

We are very much opposed to the bill, because we do not believe it is in the interests of small businesses that work in the electrical game. We are concerned about the implication for them, their families and their local communities.

As the member for Redlands has touched on and as the member for Southport has touched on, and as a fifth-generation North Queenslander and the shadow assistant minister for North Queensland, it was very disappointing not to be able to go to North Queensland and hear the concerns of the mum-and-dad sparkies. This is a flashback to the days of governments owning butchers shops and setting up shops smack bang in the heart of Townsville and competing against their own people.

We know all about the economic downturn and the job losses in many regional communities. What has happened in the city of Townsville is well documented. Most recently we saw the loss of workers at Yabulu. This is a kick in the guts for the city of Townsville. In my part of the world we have only lost 8,000 jobs since the Palaszczuk Labor government came to office.

**Mr Millar** interjected.

**Mr COSTIGAN:** I hear the interjection from my good friend the member for Gregory whose electorate is on the banks of the Nogoia and in the heart of coal country—it incorporates places like Blackwater. I have a sister, a brother-in-law, nieces and friends there. The member for Gregory knows only too well how the economic downturn in the resources sector has impacted on a big chunk of regional Queensland.

Some 8,000 jobs have disappeared in my region across three local government areas. That is why I have said that I wanted to see an economic stimulus package from the Palaszczuk Labor government in the budget handed down by the Treasurer yesterday. It is like waiting for a Cronulla premiership, although I saw them Monday night. We never know. Maybe Cronulla will beat them. I will back the Sharks any day.

I am very concerned about this legislation. There is no doubt that we have seen evidence provided by Queensland Treasury to the committee, which I am proud to serve on, that indicates that the majority of the efficiencies—over half a billion dollars identified by the government during the 2015-16 MYFER—have nothing to do with the merger of those two businesses. It has been made abundantly clear by members on this side of the House that they are directly related to the determination of the AER, the Australian Energy Regulator, which directed both Ergon and Energex to lower their capital and operating expenditure over the 2015-16 regulatory period.

I will conclude by making it very clear that whether they are in Central Queensland, North Queensland or Far North Queensland mum-and-dad sparkies are wondering what is going on here. I certainly acknowledge the work of my fellow committee members in our deliberations in relation to this bill. I place on record our thanks and gratitude for the professionalism, guidance and support of the secretariat, led by research director Kate McGuckin. It goes without saying that I cannot support the bill.

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (5.22 pm): I served on the Transportation and Utilities Committee that considered the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. The bill set up the underlying legislation to facilitate the business-as-usual operations of Energex and Ergon following the merger of these two government service providers. Further, it broadens the remit of the Islanders industry boards, trading as IBIS stores, to enhance their governance and enlarge the area in which it is possible to operate.

With that introduction, one would think that these bills would be noncontentious and pass through this place with a diligent committee process and wide support. However, we see a negative opposition fixated on the past. They are fixated on asset sell-offs and cuts. It is disappointing. When they are a rabble led by 'Mr Strong Choices' himself, the member for Clayfield, it is not in the least surprising.

I note the members for Indooroopilly, Southport, Redlands, Whitsunday, Burleigh, Glass House, Nanango, Albert and Toowoomba North are all speaking today. They have something else in common other than just speaking to this legislation today: they all voted for Strong Choices and for asset sell-offs. Considerably fewer had in common their vote in the leadership ballot as only 14 voted for the member for Clayfield. The rest had to be stitched up in a deal.

They all strongly supported the Strong Choices Nicholls-Newman plan to sell off our assets. Today, they continue to support the sell-off of our electricity assets. I notice today that the member for Clayfield was going on about saying sorry, but we know he cannot say sorry for the plan to sell off Ergon and Energex. He cannot ever say he was wrong, because we know he will once again discover some reason for assets sales.

When I went to the election in 2015 I went with a clear commitment to keep income-producing assets in public hands. This bill is to merge two electricity entities into one corporate entity and to ensure the continuity of processes of supplying houses and industry with a stable supply of electricity. It is a simple instrument to ensure this. I commend it to the House.

I wish to outline for the benefit of the House that the Transportation and Utilities Committee advertised and called for submissions in the standard way. Indeed, we received submissions on the bill from several parties. The committee further advertised for public hearings and conducted a public hearing in this place on 20 April. The hearings were open to the public and broadcast in the standard way on the internet.

The member for Indooroopilly made irrelevant statements about electrical contractors. These scaremongering and irrelevant statements indicate that the member for Indooroopilly has failed to read the transcript of the public hearings. It should be noted that Mr Tonks, the Assistant Under Treasurer, made it 100 per cent clear in evidence to the committee that what the member for Indooroopilly was complaining about had nothing to do with the bill. I quote him for the benefit of members opposite. He stated—

In light of recent media commentary, it is important to note that the future operating model for the planned energy services business is beyond the scope of this bill.

Members may note that I made comments about the relevance of many of the comments of those opposite. Those on our committee should know better. I repeat what I said again—

In light of recent media commentary—

this was the fearmongering of the opposition—

it is important to note that the future operating model of the planned services business is beyond the scope of this bill.

Many potential submitters who may have been interested in the future operating model would have known this. That is why I would say they chose not to make submissions. In evidence to the committee Ms Christensen stated—

We reviewed the Queensland statute book to identify references to Energex and Ergon and ensured that they continue, from a business point of view, operate and do their business the same way once they are changed. It is a cautious approach to make sure that we have a mechanism to ensure that, if something is missed ...

The member for Whitsunday asked questions about this. The chair made it clear that the energy services business was clearly stated by Mr Tonks to be beyond the scope of the bill that we were asking questions about. What did the member for Whitsunday say? He said, 'I accept that.' It was quite clear to all members of the committee, but especially clear to the member for Whitsunday. So one would question why he seeks to mislead the House into believing that this bill is all about mum-and-dad Rugby League players in Townsville.

We have made it absolutely clear that it is misleading. Further and more serious than the irrelevant rubbish that we heard earlier—

**Mr WATTS:** I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Surely, if the member for Logan believes someone has misled the House he would be duty bound to put that in writing to you.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Elmes): I call the member for Logan.

**Mr POWER:** Further, the member for Indooroopilly made reference to alleged proceedings of the committee that were not in the committee report. While making no reference to whether they were part of committee deliberations, I state my intention to refer the member for Indooroopilly to the Speaker for a potential breach of standing order 211. It makes clear that proceedings of a committee that have not been authorised to be published remain strictly confidential. I know he breaches the standing orders by being irrelevant to the bill, but this further breach is disappointing. I look forward to his apology to the House as soon as possible for both these breaches.

Just as importantly, part 2 of the bill is to modernise the corporate structures of the IBIS stores. The committee heard this from several other speakers. We made references to note how we as a government have the balance of experts in retail and warehousing with local community and consumer representatives. I have noted that when we form these boards on this and other legislation we often use the language 'at least one' or 'at least two' members of a board. We need a form of language that states that 'at least one' should not necessarily mean just one, but instead form the basis to have a healthy community, or female, or Aboriginal, or, in this case, Torres Strait Islander or other people active on boards, especially when they have skills or perspectives to offer. I hope in the future that those who are constituting these boards refer to the debate in this place and know that the House did not seek to create a ceiling in making reference to the number of community and consumer representatives; instead, we are encouraging the board to have the requisite skills and also that valuable community input.

Despite the irrelevancy that we have heard from many of the speakers on the other side, I ask them to concentrate on the actual tenor of the bill. They should refer to the public hearings, because they were clear, open and transparent. They should support the bill because I think it adds to the benefit of this state.

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (5.32 pm): I rise to add to the debate on the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. It is always a pleasure to follow the member for Logan and his highly unusual rants. He has just spent something like 10 minutes talking about relevancy. This is a bill to merge two major companies in Queensland. According to the 2015 annual report of Energex, it is a \$11.5 billion asset to the people of Queensland. Ergon, as of September 2014, is a \$13 billion enterprise that the people of Queensland own via the Queensland government. Merging those two together means we are forming \$24.5 billion worth of new company here. This is the only opportunity members of this House will have to look at this situation, put it through the committee system and thoroughly investigate whether it is a good idea for the people of Queensland. That is why it is so important for us to debate this particular issue, to discuss the committee process and to figure out what has gone wrong with that committee process. I fully support the members on this side of the House who have spoken tonight and said that the committee process in this particular case was absolutely flawed.

The member for Logan should look at the transcripts of his own committee hearing. He should look at the explanatory notes of the bill that came to his committee. He should look at his minister's speeches. If he did any of that, he would see that everything that has been mentioned here tonight is on the public record. If he chooses to write to the Speaker about the issues that were raised in the House tonight, I think he is going to come to a very short stop on that one because all of this is on the public record.

I listened closely to the minister's second reading speech yesterday and I would like to quote what he said. He said—

This bill is to help facilitate the operations of Energex and Ergon following the implementation of the electricity distribution businesses merger. It is not a bill implementing the merger itself.

That is exactly right. This is a bit of facilitating legislation. It puts in place necessary bits and pieces to make this new company a GOC. That is what this is about, but this is the only opportunity that we are going to get to talk about whether the merging of these two vital companies in Queensland is a good idea—to see whether it is a good idea to form a \$24.5 billion entity for the whole of Queensland. The Transport and Utilities Committee were unable to reach agreement on that part of the bill. Those of us on this side of the House will be opposing the bill in its entirety because the committee could not agree that the merger of these two entities to create this \$24.5 billion new entity was a good idea. That recommendation does not appear in their report and that is why we are not supporting this bill in its entirety.

This government has a habit of coming into this place and telling us how accountable they are, how transparent they are and how much consultation they do. What have we seen with this bill? We have seen absolutely no consultation with the people of Queensland. Labor members one after the other are getting up in this place and telling us that the people of Queensland did not need to talk about this bill and that the committee did not need to travel to North Queensland. During the committee process, we did not hear from Ergon or Energex—the two companies that are being merged here. I wonder why that was. Were they directed by the minister to not in fact put in submissions? Possibly. Why was it that they did not put in a submission? Why was it that the committee did not have the opportunity to talk to the heads of Ergon and Energex about whether this merger of their two companies was a good idea? I do not know but it is certainly a question worth asking. We heard from the member for Logan that he thought this was a diligent committee process. If that is his view of a diligent committee process, I certainly have a different view.

This bill was put to the parliament on 16 March and submissions closed on 7 April, so people had only two or three weeks to look at whether this \$24.5 billion merger was a good idea and put in a submission. Is there any wonder there were only a few submissions? There was a public hearing on 20 April, the report was tabled on 12 May and here we are tonight, a short while later, debating this legislation and the merging of \$24.5 billion worth of state assets.

Let us have a look at the committee process. I read all of the transcripts and I stepped through diligently thinking that this was a major merger of a major entity worth \$24.5 billion so there was going to be quite a bit of discussion over this. The committee process started on 20 April at 9.09 in the morning and was scheduled to run for an hour. There were only two government entities there that presented to the committee. They gave their five-minute opening remarks. Half the members had their opportunity to speak and then the non-government members had their opportunity to ask questions. We saw very quickly that the questions that were asked by the members on this side of the House were shut down. They were shut down by the chair of the committee—

**Mr Power** interjected.

**Mr HART:** If the member up the back would like to read the transcript, it is open to him to review his committee's transcript and have a look and see that the chair of the committee kept—

**Mr Power** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Elmes): Member for Logan, you are getting very close to a warning.

**Mr HART:** The chair of the committee on several occasions pointed out that time was running short, that time was running out, that they had to move on with the process, that they could not be asking those questions. What is it that the Labor Party are trying to hide in this whole process? That is what we have to ask.

Since I have been the shadow minister for energy, biofuel and water supply, I have travelled around the state quite a lot and I have spoken to quite a few independent sparkies. In fact, I have one in my family who is very concerned about this new entity that could be put in place by this merger. They are scared. I know the Master Electricians have been quoted quite a bit during the debate tonight. I will table a press release that they made wherein Mr Richards, who has been quoted a few times tonight, says—

Today is a very dark day for a lot of small businesses and the people they employ.

*Tabled paper:* Media release, dated 2 June 2016, from Master Electricians titled 'What ever it's called, new energy body spells trouble for businesses and jobs' [\[942\]](#).

I have spoken to a lot of small electrical companies that are really scared about this new business that may be formed out of this merger resulting in a \$25.4 billion company. They are worried about the future for their employees. Any members opposite who think this is a trivial issue might want to watch this space over the next couple of days. I have spoken to some of these people who are very close

already to laying off staff. Because of the lack of infrastructure spending that this government is making at the moment, they are very close to laying off staff and this bill we are debating tonight will just tip them over the edge if it is passed and the merged company is formed.

In my few remaining minutes I would like to comment on the new name. The brains trust across the chamber have come up with a very flash name, Energy Queensland, and they have this wobbly looking logo. This is something that the member for Woodridge might have thought about after six o'clock at night I am sure. It is just a squiggly line on a bit of paper. It looks a bit blurry to me. I table that as well for the benefit of the House.

*Tabled paper:* Document, undated, depicting Energy Queensland logo [\[943\]](#).

*(Time expired)*

 **Hon. CJ O'ROURKE** (Mundingburra—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Seniors and Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland) (5.41 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. The Queensland public elected us on a mandate to keep our income-generating assets in state hands and to operate them effectively and efficiently, and part of that mandate was to merge the businesses and generate savings. The government has been very clear on its commitment to drive efficiencies and reduce networking costs. In December last year the Treasurer announced Energex and Ergon Energy would be merged under a new government owned parent company by mid this year. The merger will remove duplication in areas like administration, shared services, boards, management and corporate costs without any forced redundancies. It will also improve network efficiency and reduce pressure on electricity network prices, maintaining subsidisation of regional prices with well-run public power for regional customers over the longer term.

Merging Ergon and Energex into a single company is one of the biggest corporate restructures in recent history and will make a significant contribution to our state and to the north. With over \$24 billion in assets, this move will save around \$680 million over the 2019-20 period and help to reduce pressure on electricity prices. I am pleased to say that this new merged company will be based in Townsville, which is great news for our region. Our government has a strong focus on building our regions to ensure growth and economic opportunities are shared throughout the state. Unlike those opposite, we understand the importance of our regional areas and the considerable contribution that North Queensland makes to our economy. That is why we have based this new energy services business, Energy Queensland, in Townsville.

I was pleased to visit their headquarters last month with the Treasurer and the member for Townsville to unveil their new logo and welcome them to our city. There is no denying that times have been tough in our part of the state. With the downturn in the resources sector and the closure of the Queensland Nickel refinery, the people of Townsville have been challenged with unemployment and uncertainty. By basing the new energy services business in Townsville, we will be creating up to 500 jobs over the next decade. These are jobs that North Queenslanders need.

At the 2015 election we promised Queenslanders that we would not sell our assets, and merging these two companies into a new government owned parent company is a testament to that commitment. While the LNP went to the election and had only one plan—to sell our assets, sell our powerlines, sell our ports, sell our rail lines—we are keeping our power companies in public hands.

The objective of this bill is to facilitate the 'business as usual' operations of Ergon and Energex following the implementation of this merger. A number of consequential amendments to various acts will also be made to ensure that they can continue to operate under the same level of regulation without business disruption. The bill does not provide for the establishment of the energy services business; it is just about ensuring that Energex and Ergon can continue to operate as business as usual. This bill not only shows our government's commitment to jobs, growth and efficiency but also shows, once again, that Labor will not be selling our income-generating assets. It is for these reasons that I am proud to support the bill.

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (5.45 pm): I rise to oppose the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. I speak on behalf of hundreds of electrical contractors who run small businesses all across this great state but, in particular, within the Nanango electorate and the thousands more who are extremely concerned about this legislation and the impact it is going to have on these mum-and-dad businesses and their employees and also the offshoot of that—all of the small businesses across Queensland. Firstly, I think it is important to note in this great House that there is no recommendation by the Transportation and Utilities Committee to pass this bill in its entirety, and I agree: this bill should not be passed.

I also note that the LNP members of the committee were blocked in their attempts to extend the time frame for considering this bill. They were also blocked in their attempts to hold regional meetings. I note the comments from the member for Whitsunday in relation to the Mackay hearings. This is extremely disappointing for the people living in those regional areas who have, once again, been deliberately ignored by this Palaszczuk government.

This bill will severely impact our regional areas and I am very worried for those mum-and-dad electrical businesses who can only lose from this bad government policy. For example, Pete Stevenson, who owns his own electrical business in Toogoolawah, Let There Be Light, emailed me shortly after Labor announced this plan. If I may, I will read his words. He states—

We are writing to you as our Member for Nanango about alarming reports that State-government owned Ergon & Energex were developing their own business division to enter into the Electrical Contractors Market.

As an Electrical Contractor & Solar Installer in the Somerset Region, our business is our livelihood ... Having to compete with a tax-funded Electrical Contractor is a blatant abuse of power.

As well as competing for business, this may drive down prices for consumers in the short term and reduce our profits. In the event that Ergon & Energex reduce the competition in the long time, they could then drive prices up for consumers.

As our State Government Representative, please, I'm asking that you do everything you can for the local small businesses and employers. Our business success allows us to stay in this beautiful part of the country.

"Pete Stevenson, Let There Be Light, Toogoolawah.

That is why we are in this House: to represent our constituents. I would also like to note that my good friend and colleague the member for Callide has a constituent named Owen Blamires, who owns Wondai Electrical Services and also does a lot of work in the South Burnett area right through both of our regions. He felt so passionately about this issue that he joined the LNP's 'Save our Sparkies' campaign to speak on behalf of the hundreds and hundreds of mum-and-dad electrical businesses across Queensland. I was proud to run the 'Save our Sparkies' campaign across my electorate in support of our local contractor small businesses. Mr Blamires then travelled to Brisbane on several occasions to help us fight this move. He has taken valuable time out of his business to stand up and say that this simply is not fair.

In the South Burnett Wondai Electrical Services is just one of the many progressive electrical businesses working very hard every day to provide professional services to our region. These businesses have been forward planning and building their businesses with many spending much time and effort focused on the field of future electrical technologies and solar installations. However, they are now under threat from this Palaszczuk Labor government, which simply wants to steal their customers. There is no demonstrated need for a government sponsored, taxpayer funded organisation. I condemn this legislation.

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (5.50 pm): I rise to speak about the electricity distribution businesses of Energex and Ergon Energy. We have heard members on this side of the House, such as the member for Whitsunday, the member for Nanango, the member for Redlands and the member for Southport, discuss reasons why the LNP is against this course of action. In the 21st century Australia's electricity is essential to the participation of Queenslanders in our economy and in our communities. Queenslanders need to ask themselves how merging these two bodies can be of any benefit to them in terms of quality and cost of supply. In my electorate of Gregory, both of these issues are a constant barrier to business competitiveness and individual quality of life. Let me give you some examples of the main electricity issues businesses face in the seat of Gregory.

Between January 2015 and February 2016, Albro Station—which is on the Clermont-Alpha line—logged 41 quality-of-supply instances with my office. These include blackouts which last hours, and on one occasion up to 24 hours; brownouts, where lights and appliances flicker on and off for extended periods of time; and worst of all, multiple and sequential power surges which trip earth leakage devices and damage equipment and appliances. What does that mean to people in the seat of Gregory and to the people of Albro Station? When the power goes out it costs them thousands and thousands of dollars because they live about 80 kilometres from the nearest town with a local shop or IGA, so food goes to waste because of power outages. When we talk about damage to household equipment it is not just toasters and blenders: it is expensive appliances and tools in the shed such as welders and grinders which are affected.

Here is another example. I have written to the Premier about the dire situation of small businesses in west central Queensland due to the drought. For these struggling small businesses electricity supply is an essential and fixed cost. A publican in Longreach showed me his quarterly

electricity bill of \$9,000, which is the cost of opening his doors before he even sells a single beer. In this sense it is a fixed impost on his business because he has to sell an awful lot of beer to pay for that. We are losing small businesses across the west due to the extended drought, but one of the best ways we can help small businesses would be to get them a decent supply of electricity at a decent cost.

On the central highlands the story is the same. Emerald's high-value irrigation farms and orchards are a bright spot in the ongoing drought, but they are being slugged with such steep charges that farmers tell me they are seriously considering going back to diesel pumps to pump their irrigation water. It has become so bad that they are prepared to drop the electric motors out of the sumps and move back to diesel engines to try and draw water for irrigation. The problem for these people is that, when they seek to get off the grid, they may not get permission for their solar installation because of the condition of the network in their locality.

In regional Queensland there is no alternative supplier to Ergon: it is a monopoly. That is all we have out there. Like many of my constituents I fear that, by making that monopoly body bigger and extending its geographic territory, country Queenslanders can expect less attention and service with no relief from prices. This is a very important issue. We have Ergon in regional Queensland and Energex in South-East Queensland. Our biggest fear out there is that it will be the people who are on the Ergon grid who will suffer, who will miss the opportunity to have their say and who may see a lesser service than those who have Energex. That is a real concern. After all, the government will still be able to rip the dividends out of the new merged organisation, just as they did at the last budget. Those so-called dividends are really just a way of making people pay a tax on their electricity access and consumption. I cannot see that my constituents will be better off. I fear they will be worse off in terms of price, service and quality of supply and repair after natural disasters such as bushfire or flood. I also believe it will see even more government jobs ripped from the bush, further impacting our historic towns.

I know the Palaszczuk government has promised the ETU that this would not happen to their members. We all wondered what the point of the merger was if there would not be any savings in jobs. It all became clear when the government announced that it was setting up in opposition to private mum-and-dad electricity businesses who perform retail installations. Times are tough in regional Queensland, so it is not surprising that one constituent saw this as a chance for stable employment. Sadly, my staff had to explain that these jobs were being created for the electricians already employed by the Queensland government who would be made redundant when Ergon and Energex merged, so there would be no new jobs to apply for. The unspoken truth is the government risks sending family businesses in country Queensland to the wall with this merger. The concern here is that I do not think this merger will be of much benefit to regional Queensland. Not only are we seeing an alternative business set up against our hardworking electricians; we also saw a promise that there would not be any job losses or redundancies.

I can tell you now that there has already been a redundancy in my region of Gregory. In the heartland of the Labor Party, Barcaldine, a person who was a big supporter of the Labor Party does not have his job anymore because he was made redundant and had to compete for his job with someone in Rockhampton or Gladstone. This is a person who supported the Labor Party in your heartland: Barcaldine.

**An honourable member:** I'll bet he's had a drink at the Globe!

**Mr MILLAR:** He has had a drink at the Globe, he has had a drink at the Union and he has also had a drink at the Shakespeare. He is a man who has family in town, he is a grandfather, and now he has to consider whether he can live in Barcaldine anymore. He is approaching 55, 56 and he has to choose whether to move closer to the coast away from his family. I think how he was been treated is appalling. He was a true believer in the Labor Party, yet he has lost his job as a result of this merger. I think that is absolutely wrong.

**Mr Power** interjected.

**Mr MILLAR:** His job has gone. This person worked for Ergon but now there are no opportunities for him in Barcaldine, so the family has left and the children are gone from the local clubs and schools. I think it is absolutely wrong and I do not support this bill.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Thuringowa, you have three minutes to start and then I will ask you to adjourn.

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (5.58 pm): I rise this evening to speak in support of the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, and I support it 100 per cent. This is another great example of our Premier showing absolute commitment to the city of Townsville by locating the newly merged Energy Queensland in our great city. This exciting news is yet another boost of confidence for investment in North Queensland. Does it get any better?

**Mr Costigan** interjected.

**Mr HARPER:** I take that interjection from the member for Whitsunday. Does it get any better after the great news that we can build our stadium with funding made available in yesterday's budget? The answer is yes. I thank the Premier and acknowledge her vision and strong desire to provide our city with the nation's biggest power asset. After combining Energex and Ergon, which has a whopping value of some \$24 billion, the merger will create even more jobs in North Queensland. Conversely, as we know, the previous LNP government under Newman-Nicholls leadership wanted to sell off this great electricity asset. We know that the LNP are trying to frighten small business owners because they want to bring public ownership into disrepute so that 'Mr Asset Sales', the member for Clayfield, can fulfil his lifelong ambition and dream of flogging off assets that belong to all Queenslanders.

The new company, Energy Queensland, is on track to open its Townsville headquarters in coming weeks. I am sure the members for Townsville and Mundingburra join me in being very excited that this merger will bring even more jobs to North Queensland and looking forward to the economic activity this will bring to our region over the coming years.

Front-line staff will continue to operate in their respective regions to ensure the network businesses continue to be leaders in emergency response and to ensure the lights remain on for Queensland businesses and households. Energy Queensland will look at options to utilise renewable technologies in regional Queensland, particularly in remote areas of our state, to improve reliability and sustainability of electricity supply. This business will support the development of regional Queensland and will have a clear focus on providing regional Queenslanders with access to innovative new products and services available in other parts of Australia.

Debate, on motion of Mr Harper, adjourned.

## MOTION

### Youth Unemployment



**Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (6.00 pm): I move—

That this House:

1. notes that at the 2015 election Labor promised to help young people develop practical skills to help them secure a job;
2. notes that 5,500 less apprenticeships, traineeships and school based apprenticeships and traineeships have been completed in 2015-16 under Labor;
3. notes that youth unemployment has increased under Labor;
4. notes that 1,800 less apprentices and trainees commenced in Labor's first nine months as opposed to the same period in 2014; and
5. condemns the Palaszczuk Labor government for its poor record on youth unemployment and apprenticeship and traineeship completions over the past year.

The reason we move this motion is that the Labor Party are all talk and no action on jobs. They promised during the 2015 election campaign that they would create all these jobs, but nothing has eventuated in the past 12 months—nothing but words and rhetoric.

In the government's own budget, which is only 24 hours old, they say that 5,500 fewer apprenticeships have been completed in the previous 12 months. That is in their own document. In a little while the Minister for Training and Skills will get up and say that they are creating jobs, that they believe in apprenticeships, that she was once a federal politician and that they had the same commitment to jobs back then. Their own budget shows the figures. The facts are in their own budget.

If members do not believe their own budget—the Minister for Skills likes to refer to federal things, because that is where she used to serve—they need only look at 'Apprentices and trainees 2015', the Australian vocational education and training statistics. They show that under the former LNP government traineeship commencements were 2,000 more than during the Labor Party's first year in government. I have heard time and time again the Minister for Training and Skills get up in this place and talk about all of these apprenticeships they are supporting. The fact is that they are not. The fact is that apprenticeships and traineeships are on the decline in Queensland. The fact is that those opposite do not have a plan to increase apprenticeships and traineeships—so much so that the former LNP government's apprenticeship pledge did not even rate a mention. Apprenticeships did not get anything in yesterday's package.

Those opposite talk about jobs, jobs, jobs but did not create any positions for apprenticeships. All they created—12 months ago—was the document *Jobs now, jobs for the future*. It outlines ‘Major Working Queensland initiatives’. It refers to Jobs Queensland, which was to receive \$40 million over four years. It has not even started, although we hear it has a secretariat at Ipswich. The Premier said at the time that it was to give expert advice to the government. What have those opposite been doing for 12 months? They are asleep at the wheel. We know why. In 2014 the now Premier is quoted in an article as saying—

I’m not going to guarantee jobs growth.

The Premier said that when she was opposition leader. I table the article.

*Tabled paper:* Extract of article from the *Courier-Mail* online, dated 3 June 2014, titled ‘Annastacia Palaszczuk insists she is focused on unearthing Queensland’s next big growth industry’ [944].

A year ago she made a threat. She said, ‘If anyone stands in my way of job creation in this state, I am going to have an election.’ No-one is standing in the Premier’s way. She should go forth and prosper and create jobs. I table another document.

*Tabled paper:* Extract of article from the *Brisbane Times* online, dated 10 March 2016, titled ‘“Do as I say, not as I do”: Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk’ [945].

The statistics speak for themselves. I did a bit of research on YouTube. I searched ‘the minister for skills and training, Ms Yvette D’Ath, member for Redcliffe’. The first YouTube clip that came up is titled ‘Labor Drone & Gaffe Machine’. We know that, when asked the GST rate, Premier Palaszczuk did not know that Australia has a 10 per cent GST. I urge all honourable members to watch the video. Ms D’Ath, when she was a federal member, was asked what the deficit was. She said, ‘I do not know what the deficit is.’ Then, when she was parliamentary secretary to the climate change minister she was asked on national TV, ‘What’s the climate tax?’ Her response was along the lines, ‘Oh well, I think it’s about \$24 but don’t quote me on that. I’m not sure what it is.’ The parliamentary secretary to the climate change minister did not know the rate of climate tax. She did not know what the deficit was.

I guess the minister will stand up in a minute and talk about figures and statistics. Minister, quote your own budget figures, which show that apprenticeships and traineeships are on the decline.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Kawana, I urge you to speak through the chair. Minister, I would urge you to not respond. You will have ample opportunity later on.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** This government and this minister are asleep at the wheel. Is it any wonder apprenticeships have not increased? The Commsec *State of the states* report states in reference to Queensland—

While third ranked on dwelling starts, it is bottom ranked on construction work and seventh ranked on economic growth.

Is it any wonder apprenticeships and jobs are on the decline in Queensland? Is it any wonder the business community has no confidence in this Minister for Skills, the Minister for Employment and this Labor government? They are asleep at the wheel. Only the LNP has the expertise—

*(Time expired)*

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (6.06 pm): I rise to oppose this motion. On all measures of jobs and employment, those opposite failed. Let us look at their track record. They sacked 14,000 public servants. We are led to believe that they have a newfound concern about jobs and employment, but when it comes to credibility: fail. Perhaps I should pull out my red pen. Let us go through this. Unemployment was 6.6 per cent when we took office after peaking at 7.1 per cent when the Leader of the Opposition was treasurer: fail. Another red pen mark. Trend unemployment in Queensland is now down to 6.2 per cent, with an extra 52,500 jobs created since the election.

The contrast between the Palaszczuk Labor government and those opposite could not be clearer. We have committed to creating jobs. Those opposite were committed to destroying jobs. We have invested \$100 million on the Regional Back to Work jobs package, specifically targeting regional Queensland, where the LNP sacked front-line workers and gave up on creating jobs in my city of Townsville, in the city of Mackay and in the city of Rockhampton. The LNP gave up.

We have \$10,000 for employers who hire an unemployed person and \$15,000 for those who take on a long-term unemployed person—all because we are committed to regional Queensland and reducing youth unemployment. The member for Kawana cannot even get his facts straight on youth

unemployment. Youth unemployment is down since we took office—from 14.1 per cent to 12.8 per cent. And 14.1 per cent is less than what those opposite had. That is the 12-month rolling average for youth unemployment in Queensland since the state election, the measure preferred as the most accurate by the ABS. I repeat: the youth unemployment rate is down under Labor—not up, as claimed by the member for Kawana.

Of course we acknowledge that youth unemployment is a serious challenge, particularly in regional Queensland, but, unlike those opposite, who did nothing to tackle youth unemployment, we have a plan. It is a plan that invests in job-creating infrastructure, nowhere more so than in my electorate of Townsville and right across North Queensland. The state budget commits \$586 million for infrastructure projects in North Queensland—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Townsville, I apologise for interrupting you halfway through your speech, but, member for Burleigh, you know the standing rules. If you persist, you will be warned.

**Mr STEWART:** The state budget commits \$586 million for infrastructure projects in North Queensland, including \$140 million for the new Townsville stadium. I could go on about the new Townsville stadium, but we are investing in infrastructure right across the state because that is what we need to tackle youth unemployment. The state budget commits \$10.7 billion to a statewide infrastructure program. This will support 31,000 jobs right across Queensland. Make no mistake: Queensland jobseekers, particularly young jobseekers, have more cause for optimism under Labor. One only needs to look at regional youth unemployment figures to see that. We have made significant inroads in the youth unemployment rate in major regional centres.

Since the state election, youth unemployment is down. On the Sunshine Coast it is down from 14.9 per cent to 8.9 per cent, and I will say that again: down 14.9 per cent to 8.9 per cent. The member for Kawana should be shouting this from the rooftops, but unfortunately he is running a fear campaign instead. Youth unemployment in Toowoomba is down from 12.3 per cent to eight per cent—down—and on the Darling Downs it is down from 8.9 per cent to 6.6 per cent—down. Youth unemployment is also down in Ipswich, Logan, Beaudesert, the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast. We recognise that it is still too high, but that is why we are also investing in skills and training. We are restoring Skilling Queenslanders for Work, which was axed by the LNP—another LNP fail. We are saving TAFE, which those opposite brought to its knees—another LNP fail. Those opposite took the axe to skills and training—another fail by the LNP. We are also investing in the knowledge jobs of the future through the \$4.5 million Advance Queensland package.

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (6.11 pm): I rise in support of the motion moved this afternoon. One thing is certain: the construction sector is the lifeblood of Queensland. With the tragedy of the continued infrastructure freeze, we have seen 5,500 fewer apprenticeships and traineeships completed in the past 12 months under Labor. It gives me no pleasure that we are talking about a serious downturn in an area that I have dedicated most of my working life to—training and development in the construction sector. The construction industry is a great industry that provides terrific opportunities for young men and women and mature age trainees to get a start in the workforce and, in most cases, go on to forge a career in what should be a growing economy. In the first nine months of this Labor government, National Centre for Vocational Education Research figures indicate that 1,800 fewer apprentices and trainees commenced training compared with the same period in 2014 under the LNP.

It is important to remember the commitments being presented from those opposite about the so-called grand plan—that is, they claimed and they promised to create jobs. Still there is nothing happening, but we now have Labor's fingers all over a grubby, job destruction agenda making motherhood statements about things like well-directed investment, increased productivity, job creation and training and skills opportunities all delivering very little. We now know that Queensland will lose tens of thousands of jobs over the next four years because Labor has no courage and no real plans. Leading business analysts BIS Shrapnel forecast that public spending on important infrastructure projects will flatline between now and 2018, ensuring 40,000 workers will move interstate to the progressive booming state of New South Wales. It is time that Labor stopped blaming everyone else and took responsibility for its poor choices and no planning.

BIS Shrapnel also put out a study that shows that the value of government funded construction in the south-east has halved to \$4.1 billion and has no capacity to change over the next four years. When we add this to the private sector deserting Queensland under this government, we will see the workforce shrink from 230,000 to 190,000 by 2018. Since the Palaszczuk government started on its destructive agenda, we have seen a 15 per cent drop in investment in this state during the March quarter alone. Queenslanders need the thousands of jobs on desperately needed projects to deal with

the ever-increasing population boom in Queensland. This should not be hard. We have a federal government wanting to fund infrastructure and we have a state government promising jobs. Maybe if it was not Labor we could get on with it.

Key action items in last year's employment plan have either been scrapped or forgotten and do not seem to be a priority. Last year's employment plan contained a commitment to explore the establishment of a Rural Jobs Agency, but that seems to be just a thought bubble and has never been mentioned since. Labor's rash promises never lead to real outcomes, only more bureaucracy. We know that 21,000 jobs for young Queenslanders have been lost under this Labor government and there is no strategy in place to provide the help that young Queenslanders need to get ahead. Our population in Queensland is forecast to rise by two million to 6.4 million in the next 16 years, with seven out of 10 people living in the south-east corner. With no plan and the rejection of the Queensland Plan, those opposite can only hope to avoid the growing commuter chaos that is coming.

It is no wonder we see and hear of a dark cloud of no confidence around Queensland. There is a lack of information about what this government wants to do or how it is going to pay for any of it. We now know what will happen: as is the Labor way, just borrow more with no regard for debt management and put up taxes. We expect more hefty taxes on hardworking Queenslanders to come from those opposite. Queenslanders are now expecting debt to rise dramatically to way over \$80 billion in the short term. This comes amid mixed messages on the economy, with the recent Westpac CCIQ Pulse survey showing a 13 per cent drop in business confidence and a recent NAB monthly business survey showing little confidence in Queensland under this government.

With all the rhetoric being delivered this week, I was also wondering if anyone heard the Reserve Bank Governor, Glenn Stevens, recently reiterating that sustained investment for a number of projects was needed to improve capacity and help restore confidence in the economy. He also raised the state's debt position, highlighting the inability to continue to borrow without significant cuts to expenditure; otherwise, we are on target for future credit downgrades. Labor has a poor track record on regional and youth employment, and its actions and rhetoric are not delivering real outcomes for Queenslanders, with no funding to tackle training unemployment in the Palaszczuk-Pitt budget.

The Palaszczuk Labor government's budget failed to provide support to tackle a drop in apprenticeship and traineeship completions or to address youth unemployment. This government has no plan to combat the alarming youth unemployment rate or incentivise employers to take on apprentices. In the last year alone 5,500 fewer apprenticeships and traineeships were completed, meaning many Queenslanders are not getting the skills and training we need to deal with skill shortages in the future. With youth unemployment at 15 per cent and 20 per cent in my region alone, an increase of nearly four per cent since Labor came to power, it is the second worst in the nation, ahead only of Tasmania, and under a Labor government Queensland is the only state or territory heading in the wrong direction. More than 21,000 jobs for Queenslanders have been lost with this do-nothing Labor government and there is no strategy in place to provide help for young Queenslanders who need to get ahead. We have to remember the facts: 8,000 jobs have been lost in Townsville under the Palaszczuk government, 12,000 have been lost in the outback and many more across Queensland continue to be lost.

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (6.16 pm): Tonight's motion is an embarrassing attempt by those opposite to ignore the deliberate neglect and, frankly, outrageous and outright hostility to training and apprenticeships whilst the LNP was in government. This motion is based on a number of statistics trying to compare this government to the last, so let us do that. This is the LNP that axed Skilling Queenslanders for Work, that stripped TAFE of its assets and sacked tens of thousands of public servants. Yes, that is right: axed the successful Skilling Queenslanders for Work, stripped TAFE of its assets and sacked tens of thousands of public servants.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Lytton, one moment please. Pause the clock. Members may not remember, but, member for Kawana, you have had a good go. I would urge you not to push your luck. Many members have been given a warning under standing order 253A. I would urge you not to test my patience.

**Ms PEASE:** This is the same LNP when in government for whom the only employment program it could publicise was counselling and transition for the tens of thousands of public servants it sacked. Yet here we have the member for Kawana trying to strut his stuff, pretending the LNP has a solid record in this area. The member for Kawana might not realise how much he is undermining his colleagues

because, even after the 2015 election and the strong message the people of Queensland sent, the LNP refused to change its stripes on the importance of training and skills. In fact, the member for Everton—then the relevant shadow minister—spent much of the 2015 estimates hearing demanding justification of investing in training and skills, as if the government was committing some great crime by delivering on our election commitments to invest in training and skills. Indeed, the member for Everton asked time and again because he was confused about the very concept of investing in training opportunities and the importance that it had to economic growth. The member could not or would not accept the basic principle that building a highly skilled workforce not only was beneficial to those individuals but also plays a crucial part in industry development and growth. We have now all come to see that the member for Everton is not too flash when it comes to numbers, but we really should not have to be having this debate in 2015 or in 2016—that is, that investing in skills and training is a worthwhile pursuit for the benefit of individuals, for businesses and for the economy.

In comparison, the government is proud to invest in training and skills to build opportunities for apprentices. This government is committed to the training and employment of apprentices through the Queensland Government Building and Construction Training Policy, which requires contractors to employ apprentices and trainees and undertake other workforce training as a mandated component of being awarded work on eligible Queensland government projects. That means that a minimum of 10 per cent of the total labour hours on eligible projects must be undertaken by apprentices and/or trainees or through other workforce training programs.

From 1 July 2015, the Palaszczuk government introduced a new payroll tax rebate to make it more affordable for employers to hire an apprentice or trainee. That incentive will deliver up to \$40 million in payroll tax rebates for employers of apprentices and trainees. If we make it easier for businesses to be able to take on an apprentice or trainee, the business will be able to make a go of it. This boost, especially in regional Queensland, is vital to Queensland's confidence.

We have just delivered another record budget for training and skills. Meanwhile, the LNP mates of the member for Kawana are trying to undo all our good work—like the members opposite did when they were in government. Over the term of the Turnbull-Abbott government, there has been an absolute gutting of the funding arrangements available to apprentices and those who aim to employ and train them in Queensland. A longstanding funding arrangement for the group training organisation sector has been eliminated completely. After already suffering a 20 per cent cut the previous year, funding of \$2.53 million in 2015 is no longer there. Fortunately, the Palaszczuk government has continued to maintain its end of the funding bargain with a vital \$3.163 million in 2015-16 that assisted 26 GTOs in getting apprentices to work. At the end of 2014, the Abbott government again slashed the budget. Time and again we see the LNP cut training and skills, and it is left to Labor to pick up the pieces and deliver for the training and economic needs of Queenslanders. I urge members to vote against this motion.

*(Time expired)*

 **Mr PERRETT** (Gympie—LNP) (6.21 pm): I rise to speak in support of the motion. This government is playing games with the future of young Queenslanders. It is not really interested in helping them gain skills and find work. It only pretends to help and is being reckless with the futures of youth in regional areas. The only jobs the government helps are those of the big militant unions and their delegates at Labor Party conferences.

In the budget, which was handed down yesterday, we saw this government pay lip-service to addressing the appallingly high level of regional youth unemployment. With the rate of youth unemployment increasing under this government, there was no funding to tackle training and nothing to tackle the declining rates of those undertaking and completing apprenticeships and traineeships. In the past year, 5,500 fewer apprentices and trainees completed their training compared to those in the previous year. In the first nine months of this government, there were 1,800 fewer apprentices and trainees compared to the number in the same period in 2014 under the LNP. Key action items in last year's employment plan have either been scrapped or forgotten. Last year's employment plan contained a commitment to explore the establishment of a rural job agency. We have heard nothing since. The silence is deafening. After eight months of waiting, Jobs Queensland—the \$40 million advisory body that was a key election commitment to advise on skills demand and workforce needs—has not even started.

Those of us who represent regional Queensland are not surprised, because state Labor governments have never delivered. Their track record on regional and youth unemployment is appalling. Under Labor administrations, regional Queenslanders have frustratingly watched the loss of opportunities for local apprenticeships and increasing youth unemployment. Under Labor

administrations, we have watched the closure of industries that provided apprenticeships. In Wide Bay, we saw the closure of industries such as the meatworks; forestry, which was sold off by Andrew Fraser; the closure of railway yards; and the forced local government amalgamations with their subsequent closure of council workshops and offices.

Apprenticeships are one of the key drivers in training rural and regional Queenslanders to help them find meaningful jobs. Unfortunately, in the Gympie region, this government's narrow bureaucratic and visionless mindset is hindering a reduction in youth unemployment. Earlier this year, the Brotherhood of St Laurence identified the Wide Bay region as a Queensland and national youth unemployment hot spot. With a youth unemployment rate of 20.6 per cent, it is the second worst in Queensland and the third worst in Australia. The Brotherhood of St Laurence said that youth unemployment—

... needs sustained attention on all fronts: schools, vocational training and universities as well as welfare assistance and employment programs.

Regrettably, this government has systematically prevented and withdrawn increased education opportunities for Gympie locals at both vocational and university level. At the last election, the Labor candidate for Gympie, just like Labor candidates throughout Queensland, was furiously waving placards promising to save TAFE to help young people develop practical skills to help them secure a job. That candidate promised to not only maintain but also increase the number of courses at Gympie TAFE. Less than a year later, the government started closing courses. TAFE Queensland disbanded the delivery of nursing studies out of the Gympie campus. That is right: it closed down courses. Many distressed residents and students keep reminding me of Labor promises. As the continuation of courses was a specific commitment, last year I wrote to the minister seeking an assurance to rule out the removal of or reduction in nursing courses or any other courses from Gympie TAFE. The minister has never responded.

The nursing course was part of a collaborative arrangement that Gympie TAFE had with the University of the Sunshine Coast. It provided a pathway for students to advance to study for a Bachelor of Nursing at the USC at the same precinct. Since 2014, the USC has been trying to expand its Gympie presence so that it could offer more courses. However, since February last year, through sheer bloody-mindedness, the minister continually refuses to support the expansion of courses at Gympie TAFE and prefers to leave an empty and unused building whilst students are denied access.

The minister's paralysis and inaction on a decision regarding the precinct has impacted staff, students and courses. The minister is beholden to the union movement, which does not want to share the campus with anyone but is quite willing for buildings to lie empty and for courses to be gutted. This mindset is reckless. It does nothing for addressing the issue of apprenticeships. It is narrow, bureaucratic and lacks any vision for addressing future employment opportunities for young people. In the interests of young people in the Gympie region, I urge the members opposite to be fair dinkum in addressing apprenticeship issues in my electorate. I urge all members to support this motion.

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (6.26 pm): I certainly speak against this motion. It is disappointing that the shadow training and skills minister could not even speak for a whole five minutes on training. He had to go off and try to do some sort of grubby act and dig up any past stuff on me that he could find, because he could not even speak for a whole five minutes on training and skills. So I say: well done for that.

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** One moment, Minister. Pause the clock. Member for Kawana, you have had a good go.

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Let me finish. Minister, I would ask you to come back to the motion.

**Mrs D'ATH:** As we know, the former attorney-general loves to quote figures. We heard it a lot when he was attorney-general. He used to throw figures around all the time. He used to cherrypick figures out of anywhere.

**Mr Bleijie:** Your budget delivered yesterday—your budget, by your Treasurer; your figures.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I refer this House to the budget and to the figures that the member for Kawana is quoting. Of course, as the member for Kawana does so well, he fails to then take the House to the note that is attached to the decline of those figures. The note says—

**Mr Bleijie:** The fine print.

**Mrs D'ATH:** The member for Kawana might want to read the fine print.

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Kawana, you are warned under standing order 253A. I want to hear the minister.

**Mr SEENEY:** I rise to a point of order. The minister is quite clearly attacking the member for Kawana.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Resume your seat. There is no point of order.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I rise to a point of order. I find the comments by the minister offensive and I ask her to withdraw.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thanks. That is what you could have done earlier. Minister, will you withdraw?

**Mrs D'ATH:** I withdraw. I refer to the budget papers. The member for Kawana failed to take the House to the following—

The target reflects the national trend of significant reductions in traineeships following a decrease in Commonwealth incentives for traineeships and a reduction in the number of traineeships opportunities in the job market. Overall vocational student numbers have increased since 2014-15 suggesting alternate Commonwealth and State-funded programs, including the Queensland Government subsidised Certificate 3 Guarantee program, are being chosen by students.

Let us also look at the LNP's actual outcomes when they were in government, not just cherry-picking certain figures. Under the LNP the apprenticeship commencements fell by 14,000 in the same period in 2013, dropping from 58,400 to 44,400, and another 12,400 in the same period in 2014. The member for Kawana also conveniently ignores the number of apprentices actually in training. There were 96,300 apprentices in training when the LNP came to office. By the time they left office this number had fallen to 68,600. That is 28,000 fewer apprentices in training than when they started.

We heard the member for Burnett talking about the importance of infrastructure investment, yet their only investment in infrastructure was 1 William Street. There were no other new projects. This government is committing to works right across this state. As members know, we have also committed to supporting up to 32,000 participants through Skilling Queenslanders for Work, a program those opposite scrapped.

I am very pleased that there are people on that side who are very supportive of this program. The member for Burnett has actually been out recently talking about his community.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mrs D'ATH:** Sorry, the member for Burdekin. My apologies, I correct the record. It would be nice to hear the minister for Burnett recognise this program himself.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Minister, through the chair, please.

**Mrs D'ATH:** The member for Burnett said there were no plans to deal with training or jobs by this government. However, in the *Bowen Independent* on 15 June this year an article stated—

A job readiness and life skills program co-ordinated and run by the Bowen PCYC has received accolades from the Department of Education and training and local politicians.

Who could they be? The article continues—

There are plenty of opportunities for all of the graduates to take part in upcoming programs. It's important smaller communities such as Bowen have the necessary support services and programs in place to ensure the same level of support.

It goes on to talk about the training opportunities that are available through this program. Thank you to the member for Burnett—sorry, the member for Burdekin—for acknowledging the importance of this program.

**Mr BENNETT:** I rise to a point of order.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I corrected the record, Mr Speaker.

**Mr SPEAKER:** What is your point of order, member for Burnett?

**Mr BENNETT:** Could you correct the record, please, through the chair?

**Mr SPEAKER:** No, what is your point of order? Do you find something offensive and ask for it to be withdrawn?

**Mr BENNETT:** I find the comments offensive and I ask for them to be withdrawn. It is not me, sir.

**Mrs D'ATH:** I withdraw.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Members, I am trying to hear the minister. Minister?

**Mrs D'ATH:** The member for Burdekin recognises the importance of Skilling Queenslanders for Work, as do others on that side who have also been out there talking about it.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Whitsunday, you are warned under standing order 253A for your disorderly conduct.

**Mrs D'ATH:** Obviously the member for Burnett is offended by the member for Burdekin supporting a government program. This government is investing in training and skills. We are proud of our investment. We will stand up for students and for our training centres in the state, unlike those opposite.

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

*In division—*

**Mr SEENEY:** I rise to a point of order. Last time a vote was taken in this House—

**Mr SPEAKER:** No point of order. Resume your seat.

**Mr SEENEY:** The standing orders say that I am allowed to take a point of order at any time.

**Mr SPEAKER:** What is your point of order?

**Mr SEENEY:** Last time a vote was taken in this House there was considerable confusion about the way that the member for South Brisbane voted and she came into the House and said she was confused. I think it is appropriate that the member for South Brisbane—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Resume your seat. Member for Callide, you run the risk of being in contempt of the Speaker. You know exactly what the rules are in relation to conduct in the House.

**AYES, 38:**

**LNP, 38—**Barton, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Costigan, Cramp, Crandon, Cripps, Davis, Dickson, Elmes, Emerson, Frecklington, Hart, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Mander, McArdle, McEachan, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Perrett, Powell, Rickuss, Robinson, Rowan, Seeney, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Walker, Watts, Weir.

**NOES, 40:**

**ALP, 39—**Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Byrne, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Donaldson, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Gilbert, Harper, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Lauga, Linard, Lynham, Madden, Miles, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Pitt, Power, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Stewart, Trad, Whiting, Williams.

**INDEPENDENT, 1—**Gordon.

Pairs: Furner, Nicholls; Grace, Simpson; Miller, Stuckey.

Resolved in the negative.

Sitting suspended from 6.40 pm to 7.38 pm.

## TRANSPORT (FEES) AMENDMENT REGULATION (NO. 1)

### Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (7.38 pm): I move—

That part 15 of the Transport (Fees) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2016, subordinate legislation No. 49 of 2016, tabled in the House on 24 May 2016, be disallowed.

It is disappointing that tonight we are yet again debating a motion of this nature. We have given those opposite, the Palaszczuk Labor government, ample opportunity to take a very sensible and a very simple but a very significant step towards reducing the cost-of-living burden on families throughout Queensland. However, on each occasion the Labor government has failed to take those opportunities and so once more we are stepping in, in an attempt to prevent families in Queensland having to pay more because of the Labor government's inability to manage its budget. Once again the LNP is moving to stop the Palaszczuk Labor government's unfair car registration hike on the family car. Last year we moved to stop it and we are giving Labor one more chance to give Queensland families a fair go.

Labor is increasing car registration by 3.5 per cent or double the rate of inflation. Just to be clear, the inflation rate, that is, the consumer price index or CPI, for the March quarter was 1.7 per cent. A doubling of that rate to 3.5 per cent will see the cost of vehicle registration in Queensland skyrocket. Under the frozen LNP car registration policy of 2014-15, the registration cost for a four-cylinder vehicle was \$280.05, for a six-cylinder vehicle it was \$433.45 and for an eight-cylinder car it was \$620.95. After the Palaszczuk Labor government came in and last year increased that by 3.5 per cent, those figures went to \$289.95, \$458.95 and \$642.70 respectively. Should this regulation pass, and we hope that following tonight's debate it will not, those figures will jump to the following: \$300 for a four-cylinder vehicle, \$475 for a six-cylinder vehicle and \$665.20 for an eight-cylinder vehicle. I point out that none of those costs include CTP or the traffic improvement levy, which are added to car registration bills.

I note that at least once the minister has attempted to interject that it was in our budget. Let me dispel a myth that is being perpetrated by the minister. Yes, 3.5 per cent was the increase at that time, but why was that set? It was set because at the time the inflation rate was over three per cent. How was it set? It was set by the government of the day in accordance with increases in CPI. In the same way that it was done in the LNP's term of government, this government has the ability to adjust the CPI increase of vehicle registration to a figure that they determine and we are proposing that that figure should be the CPI, consistent with what the LNP did following freezing it for the length of our term. Any suggestion otherwise demonstrates that the minister and the government are incapable of adjusting a regulation such as the one we are seeking to disallow this evening.

The increases that I have spoken of are an unfair price slug and a broken promise by the Premier, who promised not to increase fees, charges or taxes. After what we have seen over the past couple of days with the 2016 budget, why are we surprised? The Palaszczuk Labor government is clearly asleep at the wheel. They have no plan, let alone a plan to get the cost of living under control. Their only plan is to squeeze more money out of Queenslanders and, in this case, they continue to treat motorists as cash cows.

However, it really should not be that surprising, because the Labor side of politics has form. They have history when it comes to sneaky taxes and increasing things such as registration by far more than the CPI rate. Under the last four years of the Bligh Labor government, a period in which the now Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk, the member for Inala, served as the minister for transport, car registration increased by 30 per cent. I repeat: 30 per cent. That is not unlike public transport fares under the same term of then Minister Palaszczuk, which increased by 15 per cent year upon year upon year. Again, we should not really be surprised.

It has been a while since we have heard from the old Mythbusters #1 fact sheet, put out by the member for Mulgrave and now Treasurer. One of the myths that the now Treasurer was trying to dispel several years back stated—

MYTH: All the Government had to do was increase taxes across the board because Queensland is a low tax state anyhow.

FACT: In the last three Budgets, the government has taken significant steps across the board to fund new services.

Already we have:

- raised land tax and stamp duty at the top end—

It is already starting to sound familiar; it sounds a bit like the budget we heard yesterday and some of the activities undertaken last year.

- increased taxes on casinos and introduced new liquor licensing fees—to help meet the cost of alcohol abuse
- increased coal royalties—

And importantly—

- increased motor vehicle stamp duty and we have recently introduced a rise to car registration.

That is a quote from the member for Mulgrave. Let me remind the House: that rise culminated in a 30 per cent increase over the four years of the Bligh Labor government. Labor has form when it comes to sneaky cost-of-living increases. This attack on the registration costs of the family vehicle is the latest in that long line of historical increases.

Only the LNP has a track record of keeping costs low for Queensland families. That is why in 2012, in accordance with our election commitment, we froze registration of the family vehicle for our entire term of office. We did not increase it by CPI and we certainly did not increase it by double the rate of inflation; we froze it. That is why after three years of an LNP government the cost of registering a four-cylinder vehicle was only \$280.05, before CTP and the traffic improvement levy. We know that

those kinds of costs and expenses do hit the hip pockets of mums and dads, families and, indeed, small and large businesses throughout this state. That is why the LNP has committed to keeping registration increases for the family vehicle to the inflation rate, so that Queenslanders can get a fair go.

At the end of the day, that is exactly what we are asking the Palaszczuk Labor government to do: peg the rate of registration for the family vehicle to CPI. As I said earlier, currently CPI is 1.7 per cent. We say: do not increase registration by 3.5 per cent; do not make the cost of registering a four-cylinder family vehicle \$300 or a six-cylinder vehicle \$475. Tonight the Palaszczuk Labor government and members of the Labor benches have an opportunity to vote with the LNP to disallow this part of the regulation of the subordinate legislation, to prevent an unfair and sneaky tax from being imposed on Queensland families. I implore those opposite to stand with the LNP and vote down this piece of regulation.

 **Mr KING** (Kallangur—ALP) (7.48 pm): I rise to oppose the motion moved by the member for Glass House. It has been a year since the last time the opposition tried this. They are stuck in the past, trying the same tricks and spreading the same myths. It is groundhog day in the Queensland parliament, due to the LNP opposition. The fact is that, when in government, the members opposite had no intention of continuing the pause on registration. How do we know that? Because it was in their own budget papers. The final budget of the member for Clayfield clearly showed not only that they had committed to removing the freeze but also that they had built in increases from 1 January 2015. Not only that, the then treasurer reiterated it in his midyear review, which was released just weeks before the election. Let us hear no more the myth that members opposite had any different plans.

To come in here now and move this motion shows just how desperate members opposite are to wreck the Palaszczuk government's positive agenda. If successful this motion would leave a hole in the budget that the LNP needs to come clean on how they would fill. Not increasing registration fees would cost the state over \$53 million in 2016-17 and more than \$563 million over the forward estimates.

Tying it to CPI would also be fiscally irresponsible—assuming a steady rate of 1.7 per cent would cost the state over \$26.5 million in 2016-17 and more than \$288 million over the forward estimates. The LNP needs to come clean on how they plan to fill those holes. Is it a return to asset sales? With the new Leader of the Opposition, who wasted \$70 million on his failed Strong Choices plan, I think that could be on the cards. Will it be slashing roads funding? In which case they need to outline each and every road project they would scrap if this disallowance motion were to proceed. The fact is, reducing the annual indexation of the registration and other fees is to reduce the amount of funding available to TMR for investment under the Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program.

The forward program of work in the Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program is based on expected funding over four years, including revenue from motor vehicle registrations increasing every year by the government indexation policy amount. QTRIP provides confidence to industry and other major stakeholders about forward infrastructure projects and is a major job generator.

For 2016-17 to 2019-20 QTRIP has no discretionary funding component. Funding across the forward estimates has been fully allocated to projects and/or programs. Reducing QTRIP funding by this amount will require cuts to the Queensland government commitment to upgrade, maintain and keep safe the state's transport network.

Even with the increase in registration fees this year, Queensland families still have relatively low registration fees for the most popular selling cars, including compulsory third party insurance premiums. For the most popular selling medium sized four-cylinder car, such as a Toyota Corolla, Queensland is the second cheapest state in the country. For a dual-cab four-cylinder utility, like the Toyota Hilux—the unbreakable Toyota Hilux—Queensland is the third cheapest state in the country.

The Palaszczuk government is aware of the cost-of-living pressures Queenslanders are facing. In the last 12 months the government introduced a new payment option that enables customers to make regular direct debits toward their vehicle registration renewal and provides a convenient set-and-forget direct debit payment option. Customers can take up three-month registration pay terms that allow customers to make smaller and more manageable payments. The scheme also assists families struggling with the cost of living to meet the cost of their next registration by these instalment payments rather than six- or 12-month payments. Another payment option is also available to customers. It is called the planned payment scheme, PPS, and is available through Australia Post.

It is a bit rich for members opposite to paint themselves as the champion of battlers after the excesses of the Newman-Nicholls budgets. I challenge them to come clean on just how they plan to plug the budget black hole they are threatening all of Queensland with with this motion tonight.

In summary, the LNP's registration freeze was only ever intended to be for three years. They made no election commitment to continue the freeze. In fact, their 2014-15 forward estimates showed a 3½ per cent increase in fees. We all know the record of the LNP on cost-of-living expenses. It is a joke they are expressing concerns after their efforts when in government. I oppose the motion.

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (7.53 pm): I rise to support the family car registration disallowance motion moved by the LNP opposition. Here we are again. We have another 3.5 per cent tax increase on family car registration. If you want to put it another way, we have a tax increase that is double the rate of inflation.

The LNP moved last year to stop this incompetent government's registration hike and now we are giving the members opposite a chance to give families a far go. Confidence is at a low due to the downturn in the resources industry and the effects and restrictions from the worst ever vegetation management legislation. Families on the land are doing their best to deal with the effects of drought and deficit and they are concerned about the ongoing job security in their communities. The last thing they need is a state government tax increase on an essential mode of transport, the family car.

These families do not need more pressure from a government initiated cost-of-living increase. They are trying to survive. Despite some welcome rain relief we should be conscious that about 80 per cent of the state is still drought declared. Not only are families doing it tough in my electorate, there are others who are doing it tough in about 80 per cent of the state.

The family car is an essential mode of transport in south-west Queensland as it is in Central Queensland and North Queensland. These people do not have public transport. They cannot walk down the road. They cannot catch a bus, a ferry or a train. It reminds me of a lady I met in Glenmorgan whose car had mechanical problems. She had no way of getting to her doctor other than driving her car because there are no public buses, no public ferries and no public trains. There are no alternatives.

For many rural and regional Queenslanders their only option is to use the family car to travel to and from work or to take the children to the doctor or the dentist, to pick up the groceries or take children to school or travel the very long distances that so many of them do to take their children to sporting activities. Mums and dads will be the ones who bear the brunt of this 3.5 per cent tax increase. It is an unfair price slug on an essential mode of transport for many families who will feel the pain of this broken Labor promise.

Mums and dads are being treated as cash cows by this state government. Those same mums and dads are trying to pay off the mortgage, pay the rent, educate their children, send their children away to boarding school. They get slugged with a registration tax from the Palaszczuk Labor government that is frozen at the wheel and has no plan to get the costs of living under control. Queenslanders, particularly in regional areas, already pay more for fuel and now they will be paying more for their family car registration. Queenslanders are back on that slippery slope of tax increases with this registration tax increase.

Let us not forget that under the last four years of the Bligh government registration increased by 30 per cent. It is only the LNP that has a track record of keeping costs low for Queensland families. That is why in 2012 the LNP froze registration on the family car when in office. The LNP did this after three years of huge increases under the Bligh Labor government.

The LNP opposition has committed to keeping registration increases to the CPI rate while the state Labor government has increased registration by 3.5 per cent in 2015 and again by 3.5 per cent in 2016. The LNP are standing up for families. We are standing up for rural and regional areas and those communities because the members opposite do not and will not; they do not know how to.

 **Mr WHITING** (Murrumba—ALP) (7.57 pm): I rise to oppose the disallowance motion on the Transport Legislation (Fees) Amendment Regulation. I note that I rose to speak on a disallowance motion about the same time last year. I heard the same arguments from the LNP then and I will counter them with the same arguments that I used then. I am looking forward to them bringing this back again next year. I can then say that I have delivered the same speech each June for the last three years. That surely must be a record for a first term MP.

Whether it be 2015, 2016 or 2017 their motion will have had the same effect, and that is nothing. What a waste of our time in this parliament. All they can do is bring up the same old ideas because they have nothing else. I have heard nothing new from the LNP in 2016. That emphasises that there is nothing new since the Campbell Newman era. They have not moved on. They will go on to the next election with a rehash of the Campbell Newman era policies.

A couple of issues were raised. It was said that only the LNP can keep down the cost of living. There is one figure that comes to mind: the 43 per cent rise in electricity prices during the Campbell Newman government. Another figure also comes to mind: 4.75 per cent, the rate of the increase in rates under the LNP Brisbane City Council. No-one said a word about that. Let me address the flimsy substance of this motion, as I did last year. Fact—if the LNP had won in 2015 they would have introduced a 3.5 per cent car registration increase from 1 July 2015. They factored that into their midyear review, released on 18 December 2014. Table 18 on page 25 of the LNP's last midyear review clearly shows the revenue from car registration increasing by 3.5 per cent along with the volume growth assumption for more cars on the road.

Under the LNP government, the forward estimates across all years reflects a 3.5 per cent increase in fees and charges post 30 June 2015. I will keep pointing this out. They planned a 3.5 per cent increase and they put it in two documents. They liked a 3.5 per cent increase so much that they spelled it out twice. Fact—their registration freeze was only ever intended for three years; the LNP had no plan to continue it. They said nothing in the election campaign about keeping the freeze on car registration. Another fact: Queensland families still have relatively low registration fees for the most popular selling cars, including compulsory third party insurance premiums. For a small four-cylinder car such as a Mazda2, Queensland is the fourth cheapest state in the country. For the most popular selling medium sized four-cylinder car such as a Toyota Corolla, Queensland is the second cheapest state in the country. All other jurisdictions excluding the Northern Territory will increase their fees from 1 July 2016 from one per cent to five per cent.

As I said last year, our opposition to this motion is responsible because we need to keep the funds to build the roads here in Queensland. If there is no price increase, it will cost the state over \$53 million in 2016-17 and more than \$563 million over the forward estimates. Tying this to CPI would also be fiscally irresponsible. Assuming a steady rate of 1.7 per cent, it would cost the state over \$26.5 million in 2016-17 and more than \$288 million over the forward estimates. What will that mean for our roads projects? Already our multibillion dollar investment in the roads network is under way. Does the LNP want to threaten that by stripping funds from our roads projects through this motion?

For example, in Albert there is more than \$32 million in this budget for the Pacific Motorway Coomera Exit 54 interchange upgrade. What would have happened to that project if this same motion succeeded last year? In Beaudesert there is \$1.6 million in the 2016-17 budget for pavement rehabilitation on the Cunningham Highway at Warrill View, or in Burdekin more than \$5.7 million for the Bruce Highway Sandy Gully bridge upgrade. How would they have felt if the funds for that had dried up and those projects were deferred? What about the North Brisbane Bikeway Stage Two along McDonald Road, which is expected to start in August 2017? Should the member for Clayfield dump that? What will this registration freeze mean for the approximately 28,000 workers on all our road building projects throughout Queensland? Then again, if one oversaw the loss of 14,000 jobs in one night as occurred under the former treasurer, the member for Clayfield, clearly generating or preserving jobs is not a priority.

The member for Indooroopilly has form when it comes to job losses due to cuts. As a former minister for transport, he presided over the loss of 2,000 jobs from his department; that was 22.4 per cent or one in five workers. He said the restructure of Road Tech would mean a reduction of 600 full-time-equivalent positions as the jobs were tendered out to the private sector. Let me emphasise that members cannot come to this House demanding road projects for their area if they oversee the stripping of funds and staff from Main Roads.

With this motion, potentially they want to strip from the budget \$563 million over the next four years. If members opposite were ever to get this motion passed, their next Labor opponent would say to their constituents that they voted to remove money from roads projects in those areas. Remember, road building is hideously expensive. Road building costs do not increase by CPI: it is usually a few per cent more than that. Wages growth is obviously more than inflation, and the cost of road building material increases by more than CPI. I learnt that in council. If we are not collecting enough from car registration, we are always falling behind in our capital works programs. Projects get put back year after year. It is even more expensive in Queensland due to the sheer size of our main roads network. I remind those opposite that we have 33,000 kilometres of main roads in Queensland, 1,800 bridges and 1,000 intersections. If we get behind in funding, it is hard to renew the cost at a reasonable rate. Then again, I said this all last year and will have to keep on saying it, because I think members opposite will continue pursuing this motion as they have nothing else to offer the people of Queensland.

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Albert—LNP) (8.05 pm): I support the car registration disallowance motion of the member for Glass House. Motor vehicles are a necessity in many parts of the Albert electorate. It is not a choice. It is not a want. In fact, it is a need for residents as choices in transport in certain areas are very limited. I refer to petition No. 2527-15 lodged with the Legislative Assembly on 15 March 2016 concerning the need for adequate public transport in the Pimpama region and in surrounding areas. I shall quote the minister's response—

There are a number of community-based transport services that may be of assistance to the elderly and less mobile residents. These include council cabs, which assist older people over 60 and those with a disability with their travels to local shopping centres.

If the minister did his homework, he would realise that, as outlined in the Gold Coast Cabs brochure of February 2016, council cabs do not service the Pimpama region. These residents have lived in the area for most of their lives and have paid taxes all their lives but are forced to own a motor vehicle as there are no other modes of transport in that area. Slogging these individuals, those who are least able to afford it, is a kick in the guts, and the minister should be ashamed of his response to the petition.

With unemployment continuing to place Queensland in a precarious situation and with apprenticeship creation falling from 44,000 in September 2013 to 30,000 under this government, the last thing we need is to place further pressures on individuals who cannot afford it. On top of this, I quote from the *Australian* of 18 May 2016—

The Australian Bureau of Statistics reported seasonal adjusted wage growth of 0.4 per cent for the March quarter.

This is the weakest wages growth in 18 years and the first thing this government does is increase car registration to double the rate of inflation, or 3.5 per cent.

Residents want value for money. They want to see where their money is going. At many a community roadside event I am asked, 'Where are our registration fees going?' It took an LNP government to organise funding for the first major Pacific Motorway interchange upgrade in a decade within the boundaries of the Albert electorate at exit 54. We achieved this major upgrade without kicking motorists in the guts.

Residents have a right to know where their taxes are going and they expect value for money. I must say that residents were certainly dismayed reading today's *Gold Coast Bulletin* which spoke about the deadweight there, where taxpayers are forking out for 32 extra fat cat bureaucrats to shuffle government papers ahead of the 2018 Commonwealth Games. To make matters worse, 31 of them are actually based in Brisbane, with only one temporary Gold Coast hiring. There was an announcement of a \$46 million black hole in this financial year for the department of major events, small business and the Commonwealth Games. Residents in the Albert electorate would love to have \$46 million. It would go a long way to fund an upgrade at the Pacific Motorway exit 41, or exit 45 or exit 49 or to fix the dangerous sections of the Beaudesert-Beenleigh Road south of Wolffdene.

In steep contrast, the LNP whilst in government froze the family car registration for three years, after the huge increases from the Bligh government. We are committed to keeping car registration to CPI, while this Labor government wants to slog families with a 3.5 per cent increase. All I can say to my residents is that this government will do it again next year.

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (8.11 pm): I rise not so much to speak against this motion from the member for Glass House.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr POWER:** I rise not so much to speak against it—though I will. I speak in defence of the former treasurer and now, at least briefly, the Leader of the Opposition. I speak in defence of his economic legacy. This motion is a direct attack by the member for Glass House on the new opposition leader—his policy, his treasurership, his economic credentials. This is the moment when the economic credibility of the alternative LNP government is trashed. They surrender any pretence that they could run the economy of this state.

What is worse is that this is not the first time they have put into this House an attack on the Leader of the Opposition. Many may be thinking that this is a 'Libs up the front and Nats up the back' attack, but there are further divisions on show tonight. We know that in the last budget of the Newman-Nicholls government—or should we say Nicholls-Newman government, because we know that the member for Clayfield was behind so many of the disasters of the previous government—they put this budget initiative in place. We know that the entire frontbench voted for it. We know that all who

are speaking on it today voted for it. We know that it was contained in the member for Clayfield's final midyear economic review. With this evidence in hand, we know this must be an attack on the member for Clayfield himself—and, frankly, I will not stand for this dastardly attack by the member for Glass House.

I said I would not stand for it and the reasons for this motion. I will not stand for attacks on this basis when they are so hypocritical and when we know there are so many more good reasons why we should be attacking the economic credibility of the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Clayfield. Let us give the ambitious members of the opposition frontbench—who know about the member for Clayfield's failed economic legacy—some more cutting criticisms. Perhaps they could use this in further motions of this sort designed to undermine their own leader. They could undermine his continuing plan to sell assets, which definitely was included in his last budget, which is something that they are again attacking today. We could say his sacking of people, which we know is what the member for Clayfield is most famous for—

**Ms LEAHY:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I ask you to rule on relevance. I am not too sure that sacking public servants is relevant to a registration debate.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Miss Barton): I remind the member for Logan that this is a specific motion with respect to one particular regulation. I ask him to contain his comments to that particular motion.

**Mr POWER:** We could say that they could look at the way he made all of these economic disasters—not just this one. In this case, we see that the Liberal National Party went to the last election with a failed economic plan to sell off \$30 billion of Queensland assets, but now they have junked that. This is an act of economic vandalism of their own budget. Indeed it is only matched by the vandalism of the assets of Queensland that the LNP took to the last election.

I rose to speak on this motion, as the member for Glass House said, last time. Honestly, it is like groundhog day. We come into this place, the alarm buzzes and the only certainty when the light comes on as the alarm buzzes is the hypocrisy of the—

**Mr Watts** interjected.

**Mr POWER:** Trevor, it is the hypocrisy—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the member for Logan, firstly, to refer to members by their proper title. Also, 'hypocrisy' is an unparliamentary term and I would ask that you withdraw.

**Mr Cripps:** Is it?

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** That ruling has been made by other Deputy Speakers, member for Hinchinbrook. I would ask that you withdraw the unparliamentary term.

**Mr POWER:** Member for Hinchinbrook? You said—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Logan, I have told you that you have used an unparliamentary term, and I would ask that you withdraw it.

**Mr POWER:** My apologies, Madam Deputy Speaker. You said 'member for Hinchinbrook', but I am happy to withdraw. Your ruling said 'member for Hinchinbrook'.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I have asked you to withdraw. Please do so unqualified. Withdraw and continue with your contribution.

**Mr POWER:** I withdraw. You instructed the member for Hinchinbrook to withdraw. I withdraw.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Logan, I have asked you to withdraw unqualified.

**Mr POWER:** I have withdrawn unconditionally.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Now I would ask that you continue with your contribution. You have strayed very, very close to reflecting on the chair. I would ask that you continue with your contribution.

**Mr POWER:** I merely said that you said 'member for Hinchinbrook'.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Logan! I now warn you under standing order 253A. I would ask that you continue with your contribution.

**Mr POWER:** They went to the election pretending they had a plan for growth. I said this last time because it is groundhog day. We have now found that in the last quarter of the member for Clayfield's dictatorship of the Queensland economy we had reduced growth. We now know that their pretence of growing the economy has been junked too.

As members of parliament, we keenly feel that we wish to provide the services and the infrastructure that the people of the state need, especially the road funding that Queensland drivers rely on. I know on this side we are also keenly aware of the cost that Queenslanders face in the household budget. It is difficult that we must balance the two, and that is our challenge in this place. However, if we cynically attack any measure that raises the revenue needed to provide essential services—and we do so when we know that it was put into their own budget—then we would fail the very Queenslanders who have entrusted us to be here. The public is more and more cynical of those who seek to represent them, and this disallowance motion would further feed into the cynicism that Queenslanders feel about politicians—especially the LNP members opposite who are so cynically seeking to mislead the public through this disallowance motion. They are cynically misleading because they themselves—and we cannot run a counterfactual—put it in their budget to take to the election.

We have heard in this place that the LNP made it clear through their budget, through their campaign, that they had no intention and had not budgeted for anything else other than the same increase. The cynicism of this action is simply breathtaking. Firstly, we all agree that motorised vehicles that travel on Queensland roads should be registered and that the cost of registration should be used to contribute to the cost of those roads that the cars travel upon and for the safety measures that keep car drivers safe. This is the principle that is accepted in all Australian states, so it is worth comparing the most common types of cars that appear on Australian roads. For instance, for the registration of a four-cylinder car, such as the Mazda2, Queensland is the fourth cheapest state. For a popular selling medium four-cylinder car, such as the Toyota Corolla, Queensland is the second cheapest state. These are cars that many of my constituents drive. I know they feel the burden of the cost of registration, but I also know that they value good roads.

We all live in a huge state and we are rightfully proud of the work needed to connect the whole state through our network of 33,000 kilometres of roads. We recognise that the cost of building these roads increases each year. We know the cost of plant and equipment increases each year, as does the cost of concrete and reinforcing steel bars to build these bridges and flyovers, the cost of traffic light installation and the cost of wages for workers. I know those on the other side have worked hard to make the wages of ordinary workers lower and lower through their attacks on the rights and conditions of workers.

**Ms LEAHY:** I rise to a point of order in relation to relevance. The cost of wages is not necessarily relevant to the cost of registration.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Miss Barton): Order! Thank you, member for Warrego. Member for Logan, this is the second time that I am asking you to be relevant to the motion that we are debating tonight. It is a very specific motion with respect to part 15 of the regulation. If you do not remain relevant I will have no choice but to ask you to resume your seat. Please continue your contribution.

**Mr POWER:** As I said, the cost of plant and equipment and the cost of concrete and reinforcing steel bars to build those bridges and, to make it clear for the member for Warrego, the cost of wages for those workers involved in the construction of roads also increases each year. I was interrupted before I could get to that point. I know that those on the other side have worked hard to make the wages of ordinary workers lower and lower through attacks on their rights and conditions. These workers who build our roads endure the danger of fast-moving traffic to build the roads that some—but not on this side of the House—take for granted. We know that being a traffic controller on road sites is one of the most dangerous jobs in Queensland. I say to the member for Warrego that we know that every road, every bridge and every intersection is built by hardworking Queensland workers who support their families, pay their taxes and build their communities.

I represent outer growing suburbs of the western part of Logan. We know that the Wembley Road overpass over the Logan Motorway, the Mount Lindesay Highway, Camp Cable Road, Teviot Road and so many other roads are very important so that people can get home to their families and so they can get to hospitals such as the Logan Hospital, which I know has had increases to the size of the car park that every Logan member values. These are vital for Logan residents to get to work, to shopping, to sport and to visit friends.

We must maintain budget measures. We cannot cynically attack them. I ask the House not to allow this disallowance motion.

 **Mr DICKSON** (Buderim—LNP) (8.21 pm): I rise to speak to the car registration disallowance motion put forward by the member for Glass House. What this motion should be about is the cost of living. That is how this really impacts on all Queenslanders. I want to go through a few statistics and make the House aware of why we are where we are today. On 26 May 2016 an article in the *Courier-Mail* quoted Paul Hateley from the Salvation Army. The article stated—

The Salvation Army surveyed more than 1600 of its clients across Australia for its latest National Economic Impact report.

A staggering 85 per cent of those surveyed nationally are living on less than \$17 a day after accommodation expenses.

If we go back in time to the last four years of the Beattie-Bligh Labor government, we see that 30 per cent increases in car registration occurred during that period. That had a devastating impact on many Queenslanders. We are talking about the family car and that really cost people a lot of money. Then we move forward to 2012 when the LNP came to government. We made a commitment to the people of Queensland—and we keep the promises that we make—and that commitment was to not make any impact on family car registration, and we kept that promise. Then we move forward to today and the last year that has gone by under the Palaszczuk government and we have seen increases above CPI. This year they are double the CPI. The CPI is 1.7 per cent and the increase last year was 3.5 per cent and it is 3.5 per cent again this year.

I take honourable members back to the officer from the Salvation Army who made that statement. So many people are living on \$17 a day, yet the cost of living that the government wishes to impose upon those people is going to go through the roof. They may think it is a small consequence, but it is a huge consequence for very many people. At the very same time they are imposing this on the people of Queensland, they are reaching into their pockets with both hands and taking money out. They are reaching in and taking away their superannuation as well.

The world economy is suffering, the mining industry is suffering and there are many, many downturns in the industry across Australia and throughout the world. At this time the government wants to impose another impact on the cost of living for everyday Queenslanders. They went to the polls and made great promises about, 'We're here for the people. We're going to look after the people.' I think they misled the people of Queensland extremely badly.

I was always of the understanding that registration was actually collected to build roads. There is a really important road on the Sunshine Coast that needs to be built which is the Mooloolah River Interchange. I want to quote an answer from the Premier of Queensland. On 27 March 2015 she said, in part—

I am advised that the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) is now finalising planning for the MRI project to include a new land-based road crossing of the Mooloolah River through the Hideaway Waters area and duplication of the Sunshine Motorway.

I thought I would pass that on to the main roads minister so that he is aware when he continues to tell this House that the planning is not completed yet. I would be extremely disappointed if the planning was not completed 14 months after the Premier of Queensland made a statement at the beginning of last year saying the planning is just about finished. Let us see some trust; let us see some faith; let us see some reality brought forward to this House, not the spin, not the taking away of money from Queenslanders' pockets by the government reaching into them and stealing money by stealth and taking the easy route. It has never been the case that the easy way is the way to make a success of any business, regardless of whether it is government or private enterprise. The easy way is not always the best way. I make that point when we are talking about the \$4 billion that is being grabbed and scooped up. Getting back to the motion before us—

**Mr POWER:** I rise to a point of order. I do not understand the relevance of this and I would ask that you rule on it.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Logan, I was about to direct the member for Buderim to be relevant and then he returned to the motion before the House.

**Mr DICKSON:** Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you very much. I was doing that just as the member for Logan rose to his feet. It was very intuitive that he was talking about hospitals and so was I. I was talking about a road to a hospital that needs to be built and I am sure that is what he was speaking about earlier tonight. I am sure that he wants to see that road constructed as soon as possible. He did say that registration money is so important to go towards the construction of road networks. I do not want to misquote the member for Logan, but that is pretty much what he said.

As I was saying a moment ago, getting back to this motion, the impact on Queenslanders of this abhorrent increase in car registration is well in excess of the 1.7 per cent CPI. This government really needs to look at itself and the impact it is imposing on all Queenslanders. It should look at that when it is bringing down its budget.

I will finish on this statement. I got this glossy little brochure yesterday. I think it relates to the Sunshine Coast and the budget. However, I did not see any dot points in there on Buderim at all. I did not see any bitumen in Buderim at all. I did not see anything except increases for my residents and impacts on so many different people. I urge members opposite to think about that quote from the Salvation Army when they go to bed tonight.

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (8.27 pm): I rise to speak against the disallowance motion of part 15 of the Transport (Fees) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2016 as I did when it was raised in 2015. I will begin by saying that I am surprised that the opposition has moved again to disallow part 15, which relates to the increase in registration fees.

The Palaszczuk government went to the 2015 state election with a commitment that we would not increase taxes beyond the level already set by the previous government, and we have not. The reason I am surprised is that the previous government seems to forget that they, too, committed to return to regular registration increases under the government indexation policy and they also proposed this motion in 2015. Therefore I am happy to remind them of their own policies.

These rises were in the LNP 2014 budget forward estimates and also in the December 2014 MYFER, which was delivered by Tim Nicholls as the treasurer of the day. This disallowance motion is cynical given that the opposition had themselves budgeted for an increase. The impact of this disallowance motion would cost the state over \$53 million in 2016-17 and more than \$563 million over the forward estimates.

We have applied the fee increase for the 2016-17 financial year at the same rates as the increase applied to the 2015-16 financial year. All other Australian jurisdictions, apart from the Northern Territory, will be increasing their registration fees from 1 July 2016 ranging from one per cent to five per cent. In Queensland from 1 July 2016 registration fees for light vehicles will increase in line with the government indexation policy of 3.5 per cent.

The Palaszczuk government made a commitment to stop the LNP's cuts to services. We have done this and we have reintroduced services. We are also committed to investing in transport infrastructure for regional jobs and safety. I remind you again that the LNP's own budget documents say they built in increases from July 2015, so how can the opposition disallow something that they were committed to themselves?

Queensland is not the most expensive state for registration fees. Compared with other states Queensland's registration fees are still relatively low for most popular selling cars. For example, Queensland is the fourth cheapest state in the country to register a small four-cylinder car such as a Mazda2; for the most popular selling medium sized four-cylinder car such as a Toyota Corolla—'Oh, what a feeling!'—Queensland is the second cheapest state in the country; and for a dual-cab four-cylinder utility like the Toyota Hilux, Queensland is the third cheapest state in Australia.

The Palaszczuk government is introducing a new payment option scheme which will enable customers to make regular direct debit payments towards their vehicle registration renewal and will provide a convenient set-and-forget direct debit payment option. The department also offers a payment option called the planned payment scheme—available through Australia Post—which allows registered operators to pay registration renewal fees in instalments by making regular instalments of \$40 throughout the year before their registration expires. From 24 June 2014 a further suite of enhancements and services will be available, including: e-correspondence, e-reminders, a Queensland rego check app and an e-contract and authentication program.

I am proud to be part of the Palaszczuk government, proud of our commitment to workers and families and delighted to be part of a progressive government that is about cutting the cost of public transport, creating jobs and returning services to our communities. This disallowance motion is mischievous, a waste of parliamentary time and would leave a huge hole in the budget if it succeeds. The Palaszczuk government's new schemes offer families options to manage their budgets, and it makes sense to be able to roll out registration into family budget planning with the added incentive of reducing surcharges. This is part of the Palaszczuk government's commitment to improving services for all Queenslanders. I urge the House to vote against the motion to disallow part 15 of the Transport (Fees) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2016.

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (8.32 pm): I rise tonight to speak in support of the disallowance motion introduced into this House by the member for Glass House and the shadow minister for transport and main roads, Andrew Powell. This motion opposes the proposed increase in vehicle registration by 35 per cent, which is double the rate of inflation. This flies in the face of oft-repeated promises by this Labor government that there will be no increases in fees, taxes and charges. This Labor government did not take the voters into their confidence before the election and tell them that they intended to once again make the cost of registration in this state the most expensive in the country.

The Labor Party has always treated the motorists of this state as a soft target to be slugged whenever the Treasurer needs a quick boost to the bottom line. This is not a new strategy by the Labor government: we all remember too well the previous Bligh government's record, under which car registration fees increased by 30 per cent over the last four years. In the first two years of this term we have seen a seven per cent increase by this Palaszczuk government, so motorists have every reason to be nervous. We have all seen it before. Let us not forget that the transport minister in the Bligh government was the former member for Inala and current Premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk. Given the Premier's past record on registration fees, motorists would not be holding out a lot of hope for a change of form now.

Contrary to what this Labor government may believe, motor vehicles are a necessity—not a luxury—and are expensive enough to run as it stands. Fuel, insurance, tyres and general maintenance, not to mention the initial outlay to purchase a vehicle in the first place, are among the largest expenses that any household faces. This is even more so for a young motorist purchasing their first car, who is already faced with high insurance costs. For a young apprentice who needs a vehicle to get to and from work this is especially so, as the cost of registration for them will rise at the same rate as every other motorist. On an apprentice's wage every cent is precious. This government does not seem to understand that not everyone has access to public transport and most families own at least one car, if not two. Many families need a second car, particularly if both parents work, to do the school and after-school activities run.

This is especially so in rural and regional areas of the state. In these areas a second vehicle is a must, and quite commonly a four-wheel drive is the preferred vehicle to handle the road and weather conditions—not the four-cylinder Corolla we have heard so much about from those opposite tonight. There are also the added hazards of kangaroos, pigs and wandering livestock. These vehicles incur a higher registration cost. Many drivers in Condamine would question the justification of this cost increase given the dreadful condition of some of the state roads in the district. The roads from Dalby to Cecil Plains, Oakey to Pittsworth and Nangwee to Pittsworth are in a very poor state. The road from Bowenville to Norwin can only be described as dangerous. These roads and others are difficult enough to navigate in fine weather, but they are extremely difficult in times of wet weather and floods. Given the condition of these roads, one can imagine the reaction of motorists to any registration increase.

Heavy vehicle transport is vital to agriculture in the seat of Condamine. Most produce is transported by road in B-doubles and road trains, and this cost increase will be another blow to the trucking industry. The cost of running and maintaining their trucks already makes for slim profit margins, and this registration increase will be another financial impost upon an already struggling industry. The cost of registering a B-double is already in the vicinity of \$15,000. This 3.5 per cent increase will lead to an increase in registration costs for B-doubles of some \$472. The transport industry will have no option but to pass this cost increase on to the customer. This will be another cost increase for our agricultural producers which they will have no option but to absorb.

The LNP understands the impact of high registration costs, and that is why registration fees were frozen under the LNP government. Only the LNP supports motorists. I support the member for Glass House's motion. There is no justification for any increase above the CPI.

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (8.37 pm): I rise to speak in opposition to the disallowance motion moved by the member for Glass House. I am surprised that the opposition are revisiting the motion they put up last year, as it only exposes once again that they had no intention of keeping a freeze on vehicle registration. The opposition are grandstanding: the bottom line is that the previous LNP government planned to end the freeze. The LNP's own 2014-15 budget confirms it had a 3.5 per cent increase in registration fees. As they pointed out last year, the increase was included in the LNP's forward estimates—not once, but twice. It is the height of hypocrisy for members of the opposition to stand in the House again tonight to condemn a registration increase that they in fact had planned in their own budget.

The Newman government planned to sell off vital assets and increase registration. They need to stop pretending to the voters of Queensland. The Labor government is up-front with the public of Queensland about increases. Without the increases the state would lose over \$53 million in the 2016-17

budget and more than \$563 million over the forward estimates. Even with the increases to registration fees this year; Queensland families will still have relatively low registration fees for most popular selling cars, including their compulsory third-party insurance premiums, compared to other states in Australia. The Palaszczuk government is committed to ensuring that households are able to manage their cost-of-living pressures. Queenslanders have the option of using the payment plans introduced by this government, including the option to pay registration fees every three months. Last year, with the introduction of the new payment plan, the surcharge for six-monthly payments was reduced. I know that families in my electorate have taken up this option for cars, motorcycles and trailers.

Being able to continue to build and improve our roads in North Queensland is important to reduce serious accidents and improve our ability to grow our region's industries with a reliable supply chain network. The Palaszczuk government's budget 2016 injects much needed funds into the northern road structures. In my electorate of Mackay and in the electorate of Mirani, much needed funds have been allocated: \$31.9 million this financial year to realign the Peak Downs Highway at the Eton Range; \$26.2 million to continue replacing timber bridges between Mackay and Nebo; and \$5.3 million this financial year to contribute to the replacement of the two Vines Creek bridges. To the north of Mackay, in the Whitsunday electorate, the Mackay-Habana Road at the Glenella-Richmond Road intersection has been allocated \$1.8 million for improvements.

The road improvements do not stop there. In the Burdekin electorate, the Sandy Gully bridge upgrade between Bowen and Ayr has been allocated \$5.7 million. Also, the widening of the Bruce Highway between the Billabong Sanctuary and the Sunbird Motel is allocated \$762,000. These road projects are necessary to continue the growth of the north.

The member for Hinchinbrook has announced his support for the Palaszczuk government's road programs. He has said—

I welcome the continuation of a busy program of capital works on the Bruce Highway in the Hinchinbrook electorate, as ... several new projects secure state budget allocations for the first time.

After a long campaign to secure funding from the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments, I am delighted to confirm that \$8.7 million has been allocated to upgrade and reconfigure the intersections of Bowden Road and Church Road with the Bruce Highway.

He also said—

I also welcome \$12.4 million to widen sections of the Bruce Highway between Ingham and Innisfail, while the replacement of the Arnot Creek Bridge north of Ingham (\$10 million) and new overtaking lanes south of Ingham (\$9.6 million) are in the budget for the first time.

Given the member for Hinchinbrook's pleasure with the road projects announced in his electorate, I hope those opposite will not put them in jeopardy by supporting the motion.

As I said, the freeze on registration for the next four years would lead to a loss of revenue of \$563 million. That is more than half a billion dollars. Members opposite would put at risk road projects so that we could make up this massive shortfall. That spells bad news not only for projects in the electorates of Mirani and Mackay but also for projects in my electorate such as the Vines Creek bridges replacement. The planning for and building of the Mackay Ring Road, servicing the electorates of Mirani, Mackay and Whitsunday, will also be in jeopardy. It is a \$565 million investment that will deliver 600 jobs. I do not want to see these projects end up on the scrap heap because of those opposite. Stage 1 of the Mackay Ring Road includes an 11-kilometre, two-lane highway bypass which means motorists will avoid 10 sets of traffic lights from Stockroute Road to Bald Hill Road. There will also be 14 new bridges, local road overpasses and major water crossings over the Pioneer River and Fursden Creek flood plain. Planned projects for the north are vital for our prosperity and safety. I urge all members to support the north by rejecting this motion.

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (8.43 pm): I rise to add my voice to those of my colleagues who have spoken of their disappointment on behalf of all Queenslanders with the intended rise in the cost of vehicle registration that will occur on 1 July this year. The LNP is moving once again to stop the Palaszczuk Labor government increasing car registration by twice the rate of inflation, by 3.5 per cent, from 1 July this year.

It was the LNP government that froze car registration after the excessive hikes under the Bligh Labor government. Who could forget those dark Bligh and Beattie Labor years of failed public administration? Queensland is already the most expensive place in Australia to own a car, and the Palaszczuk Labor government is treating Queensland motorists like cash cows. The Newman LNP government delivered on its election promise to ease the cost of living for Queensland families when it

approved the introduction of cost-of-living reforms as part of its commitment to save Queenslanders having to face excessive increases in the cost of electricity, car registration on family vehicles, stamp duty and public transport fares.

The LNP opposition understands the strain that increasing car registration by 3.5 per cent will put on the family budget. This is an unfair price slug and a broken promise by the Palaszczuk Labor government. When the Newman LNP government froze car registration fees, it saved money for some 2.5 million families throughout Queensland. Today these same families will now struggle, being hit with a further increase for the second year in a row. In dollars and cents this will amount to a rise of about \$12 for a four-cylinder car, \$17 for a six-cylinder car and \$23 for an eight-cylinder car. This comes after an increase of 3.5 per cent in 2015 and, then again, another 3.5 per cent in 2016. This is an unacceptable impost on the family budget. Labor should give families a fair go. The LNP will always give families a fair go.

Sadly, we all remember how under the Bligh Labor government car registration rose by 30 per cent. It was a different time and a different Labor premier but the same old Labor Party—higher fees, higher charges and higher taxes. We on this side of the House understand the many financial burdens of families, and we will work hard to be fair to them. The Palaszczuk Labor government is, as usual, asleep at the wheel, with no plan to get cost-of-living pressures under control.

The current inflation rate or consumer price index, CPI, for the March quarter is 1.7 per cent, and the Palaszczuk Labor government is putting this increase at 3½ per cent—double the rate of inflation. Running the family car is expensive, and the family car is certainly not a luxury item. We the LNP members are committed to keeping car registration increases for the family vehicle to the inflation rate so that Queensland family budgets will not be subjected to an unnecessary strain. We acknowledge that this is a difficult time for many Queensland families—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Farmer): Order! Members, the level of conversation in the House is rising rapidly and I am finding it quite hard to hear the member. I am sure that it is very distracting for him. If people could keep their conversation to a minimum, that would be great.

**Dr ROWAN:** We acknowledge that this is a difficult time for many Queensland families, and we want to ensure fairness is front and centre of the equation when decisions about car registration increases are made.

This is another example of a government with no plan and no initiatives, making it up as they go. This must be seen in the context of increasing overall cost-of-living pressures being created by this asleep-at-the-wheel Labor government; unemployment, which is predicted to increase, with youth unemployment already at 15 per cent; a \$4 billion raid on Public Service superannuation; increasing debt and deficit, with debt forecast to rise to \$78.9 billion by 2019-20; billions of dollars of general government debt already transferred to government owned corporations; infrastructure spending down by 4.7 per cent; and a blow-out in public sector wage costs, with an additional \$3.1 billion in public servants' wages over the next four years. It is the taxpayers of Queensland and my constituents in Moggill who cannot afford to be milked like cash cows with respect to higher car registration. Only the LNP has the experience, the energy, the enthusiasm and the plan to keep car registration fees in Queensland low. I certainly support the LNP's disallowance motion as moved by the member for Glass House.

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy, Biofuels and Water Supply) (8.48 pm), in reply: What a dreary effort from opposition members! They seemed to have a little more passion last year. Having to repeat the same old speeches from last year, it was a little more flat—going through the motions: 'We have no new ideas this year. We will just rehash what we did 12 months ago.' That seems to be the temperament and the tone from the opposition. The words were the same but the energy was a lot lower.

Let us be clear about what we are talking about here. We are talking about something that was in the member for Clayfield's last budget. It was in black and white. I tabled it in the previous debate, so I will not bother doing that again. This is a policy that was in the member for Clayfield's last budget under the Newman government. It was in the member for Clayfield's last midyear economic review. It was locked in there and we said very clearly that we would not introduce any new taxes into this term of government, and we are not. This is something that was already existent and it was admitted as such by the member for Glass House. He protested that it was not an LNP policy and then admitted that, yes, it actually was in the last budget and then went through some verbal gymnastics trying to defend why it was justified and why it was there. I think he doth protest too much.

The key issue here is that if this disallowance motion was agreed to we would see a huge black hole emerge in the budget—a \$26 million black hole in the budget this financial year. While there is not a direct relationship, it is clear that raising revenue is related to expenditure. In this budget under the Palaszczuk government we have made a \$42 million commitment to the merge upgrade on the M1—something that was needed for a long time, and I note that federal Labor would also like to work with us to get that job done to get the M1 flowing. There is \$160 million on the table going towards the Gold Coast in preparation for the Commonwealth Games. There is \$200 million for the Ipswich Motorway to get Ipswich Motorway congestion going with stage 1. There is the Bruce Highway starting this month and the Robert-Foster roads just south of Cairns. There is the Hervey Range Road upgrade. There is Riverway Drive coming up this financial year. There are the Bruce Highway upgrades. There are the roundabouts on the Sunshine Coast near the hospital—something that the member for Kawana could not achieve in three years. There is \$10 million for the Rocky beef roads to get road trains through Rocky with more direct access. There are the five bridges on the Dawson Highway being done. There is the Toowoomba second range. There is the Warrego Highway. There is the Gateway Arterial upgrade. There is the western roads package. There is Exit 54—something the opposition could not achieve during three years in government. It dithered but it could not get it done. It took the Palaszczuk Labor government to do so.

There is the Mackay Ring Road coming up and funded in this financial year as well as the Cape River bridge, the Gregory Development Road, the Hann Highway and the TIDS program working with local government. There is the Urraween intersection—something that we have funded and that is coming and another thing the Newman government could not achieve in three years. There is funding on the Minden intersection and the Rothwell roundabout where the federal government left us in the lurch, but the member for Murrumba and the member for Redcliffe certainly did not leave their communities in the lurch. There is the Caboolture River Bridge and the Vines Creek bridges in Mackay that the member for Mackay has achieved in her first term. There is the Eden Road upgrade—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Farmer): Order! I ask the minister to stop. It is actually not the interjections that I am terribly worried about. The volume of conversation is really quite significant and it is quite difficult for me to hear what the minister is saying. If members need to have a conversation, please take it outside.

**Mr BAILEY:** It is clear that the investment in the Queensland road system by the Palaszczuk government is extensive and we are being fiscally responsible to ensure that it is paid for by continuing a policy that was there before we were elected—a policy that the member for Clayfield instituted in his last budget and in his last midyear economic review.

The opposition waxed lyrical about the CPI in this motion, yet is that the sort of principle it applied when in government? When we look at electricity prices, did it stick to the CPI? I do not think so—43 per cent increases. When it came to bus fares in South-East Queensland, was that its guiding principle under the Newman government when it was in power making real decisions? No. We saw two 7½ per cent bus fare increases under the member for Indooroopilly. Let us not hear members wax lyrical about the principle of CPI, because when those opposite had power they certainly did not stick to it and that is one reason why they are in opposition because they did not look after people on the costs of living and they did not use it as their guiding principle. I certainly will not be lectured by those opposite given their record in that regard.

As the Minister for Main Roads, I have the great privilege to receive lobbying from MPs about roads in their electorates, and I get a few letters here and there from opposition members. They sometimes find me via other ministers. One would think the term 'main roads' might be a bit of a hint around what my responsibilities are, but I still get letters that are sent to the Minister for Transport about road issues very commonly from the opposition. One would think that they would be able to read a sheet of responsibilities and get that right. Last month I even got a letter that was addressed to Jackie Trad, the minister for transport, six months after the reshuffle—a sterling effort from that member whom I will be kind to and not mention specifically. The point is that we get a conga line of opposition MPs demanding that roads get done in their electorates. They want them funded, but what do they do here? They try to impair our ability to fund roads with their stunt. They want the roads but they want to defund them. It is a pretty contradictory kind of position and it does not make a lot of sense whatsoever. Let us look at what the projections would be for the budget if this motion was to be carried and extended over the years. It would mean a \$26½ million black hole in this year's budget that would have to come from somewhere. It would mean \$55 million over two years, \$85 million over three years and \$120 million by the time you get to the end of the forwards—a \$288 million black hole if applied for this year and in every year over the forwards.

The other sense we get from the opposition was that under its government there was a freeze. Did the freeze apply to all motor vehicles? No, it did not. Those opposite are quite happy for other vehicles to increase at 3½ per cent, but apparently not family vehicles. Their cost-of-living argument seems to have some holes in it. Under the Newman government, did it freeze compulsory third party? No, it did not. I have heard members in here keep repeating the line that we are the most expensive state in Australia, and that is simply not true. When it comes to the annual cost of motoring, we are not in any shape or form in that kind of category. We are simply not. That is not the case. For instance, when you look at a Toyota HiLux dual cab three litre, there are three other states that are more expensive than us when you take in all the compulsory annual costs of motoring. Other states charge on different bases, but they are the compulsory costs of motoring. When you look at a Holden Commodore with six—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Redlands, your interjections are excessive. Please allow the minister to speak. He is not taking your interjections.

**Mr BAILEY:** When you look at a six-cylinder Holden Commodore, New South Wales is nearly \$300 more expensive than Queensland. When you look at a Toyota LandCruiser, it is a similar case where New South Wales is more than \$300 more expensive than us when you take into account all of the annual costs of motoring. When it comes to a Nissan Micra, an economical car, we rank fourth behind New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. When you look at a Mazda2, a 1.5-litre car, again we are the fourth ranked state compared to New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr BAILEY:** The opposition does not like to hear this because it is the truth. What we are talking about here is the cost to motorists and this idea that somehow Queensland is the most expensive is simply not true and I cannot go on in this debate without correcting that point. When we look at affordability, the Palaszczuk government has brought in the direct debit system for registration—again something that the Newman government could not achieve in three years—to enable people to pay their bills quarterly to allow them to manage their registration in a way that is sympathetic and allows them greater access. That was well overdue.

When we look at other jurisdictions we see that, with the exception of the Northern Territory, the increases in fees from 1 July 2016 range from about one per cent to five per cent. When we compare the fees in the other states we see that, in fact, Queensland's fees are midrange. Even with the increase in registration fees this year, when we take into account all fees, including compulsory third-party insurance premiums, we see that Queenslanders still have relatively low registration fees. In fact, around 50 per cent of Queensland's registered vehicles are charged a registration fee at the four-cylinder rate, which reflects a trend towards smaller vehicles. As I outlined specifically in my speech earlier, coupled with compulsory third-party insurance, that means that many Queenslanders are benefiting from having either the second or the fourth cheapest registration cost. In fact, the cost of owning and operating a car in Queensland has fallen to the cheapest level since 2010.

If the members of the opposition were really honest about supporting this motion, they would be bringing forward the road projects in their electorates—or anywhere in the state, for that matter—that they would like to see cut. Do we see them coming into this chamber and offering a sophisticated policy? No, we do not. It is the joy of opposition that you can take both sides of an argument, make no sense whatsoever and for that to not matter.

This disallowance motion is fiscally irresponsible. It is a rehash of last year's motion. I would have thought that, with a new opposition leader, we might have had some new ideas and some new tactics, but we see the same old LNP. The LNP members have not learned anything by being in opposition. This is their policy, from their budget, from their midyear economic forecast. They come into this place and pretend that it was not their policy when it was. In this fiscal environment, this is the responsible measure in terms of making sure that our road commitments, which I have outlined extensively in this place, are delivered in the next financial year.

I urge the House to vote down this disallowance motion. It is a cheap opposition stunt. It is a pathetic attempt by them to distance themselves from their last budget decision and their last midyear economic review, which happened less than two months before the last election. We are talking about before the 31 January election. The members opposite are trying to divorce themselves from it. They are seeking to be seen to be holier-than-thou when, in fact, this was their policy.

I would have expected better from the member for Clayfield. I have known him since I shared a chamber with him in the Brisbane City Council. I would have thought that he would have been a bit more original and had something with a little more pizzazz than this. We have the opposition members dusting off the old speeches and rereading them. That is the new opposition under the member for Clayfield. It is a pretty woeful effort. If they think they are going to get back into government with that low level of creativity, they have another think coming.

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

**AYES, 41:**

**LNP, 39**—Barton, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Costigan, Cramp, Crandon, Cripps, Davis, Dickson, Elmes, Emerson, Frecklington, Hart, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Mander, McArdle, McEachan, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Perrett, Powell, Rickuss, Robinson, Rowan, Seeney, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Walker, Watts, Weir.

**KAP, 2**—Katter, Knuth.

**NOES, 42:**

**ALP, 40**—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Byrne, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Donaldson, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Lauga, Linard, Lynham, Madden, Miles, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Pitt, Power, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Stewart, Trad, Whiting, Williams.

**INDEPENDENT, 2**—Gordon, Pyne.

Pairs: Furner, Nicholls; Miller, Stuckey.

Resolved in the negative.

## ELECTRICITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

### Second Reading

Resumed from p. 2326, on motion of Mr Bailey—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (9.09 pm), continuing: I support the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I will now discuss the positive contribution that Energy Queensland will make by being based in Townsville. This business will offer solar technology solutions, battery storage, energy management systems, smart meters and demand management services to respond to customer needs. The creation of this energy services subsidiary is a key element of the Queensland government's plan to merge Energex and Ergon Energy to improve network efficiency and reduce pressure on electricity network prices for customers over the longer term.

This initiative is just another one of the great things that the Palaszczuk government is doing in the regions to create a bright future. It includes the electric superhighway. In July this year, Ergon Energy announced that its retail business was working with the government and industry to help create an electric vehicle—or EV—highway, with Australia's first solar powered fast-charging station for EVs to be established in Townsville. Ergon is also finalising a lease offer to employees that could see up to a further 100 electric vehicles in private use later in the year. This forward-thinking initiative is part of the Palaszczuk government's commitment to support emerging and innovative industries. Solar and renewables are creating jobs. A former goldmine site may soon be a world-first generator of clean, green energy and jobs for North Queensland.

I am referring to Genex Power's \$580 million energy project near the township of Kidston, 280 kilometres north-west of Townsville. In relation to battery trials, early results from Ergon Energy's 12-month trial involving battery storage, home energy management systems and alternative electricity tariffs in Townsville are shedding light on how technology and tariffs will shape the future energy network.

We expect to see growth in regional Queensland as a result of the merger between Ergon and Energex. Ergon is an energy retailer and distributor within regional Queensland communities with 733,000 customers. Ergon has 4,500 people, 67 depots and covers 97 per cent of Queensland. Ergon has 33 communities on isolated grids and a government election commitment to invest further in this future. The government has some fairly big commitments around renewable energy. Ergon has over 120 embedded generators over 30 kilowatts looking to connect to our network, with 50 of those over one megawatt and a retailer in the market for 150 megawatts of renewables. That will be a significant contributor to the economy in the future.

A key part of the merger will be the creation of an innovative new energy services business based in Townsville. This business will be positioned to respond to the changing electricity supply market and to deliver new products and services to households, businesses and communities. This business will be based in Townsville and we know will create up to 500 jobs across the state over the next decade. The new energy services business will offer a range of new innovative products and services and investigate ways to utilise renewable technologies in regional Queensland. In particular, it will focus on improving reliability and sustainability of electricity supply in remote areas and reducing the cost to supply electricity to rural and remote customers. The parent company structure selected by government is intended to bring Energex and Ergon Energy together whilst ensuring that their employees continue to live in the communities that they serve, whether this is in regional Queensland or in the south-east of the state. Importantly, front-line staff will continue to deliver network services in their respective regions, while the new energy services subsidiary will be formed and incorporate Ergon Retail which, as stated, is anticipated to create hundreds of positions in regional areas over the next decade.

The government is focused on reducing the cost of living for Queenslanders and is taking action to minimise the impact of electricity network costs on consumers. Electricity network prices have risen over the past decade, particularly over the last couple of years under the LNP, which has been a significant contributor to rising household electricity prices. We have heard plenty about that. The merger will create savings by removing duplication and ensuring the network businesses are run as efficiently as possible. These savings will help achieve sustainable price outcomes for customers over the longer term.

The government has previously outlined that the merger, along with a number of other efficiency measures across Queensland's electricity network and generation businesses, will save around \$680 million over a five-year period to 2019-20. Of this amount, \$562 million relates to the merged Ergon and Energex businesses.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr HARPER:** Those opposite do not like hearing about it, but we are getting on with this parent company being based in Townsville. It is a great contributor to North Queensland and I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr PERRETT** (Gympie—LNP) (9.15 pm): I rise to speak on the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. This bill is about making up for the financial and policy incompetence of this government by destroying mum-and-dad business owners. This bill is about repaying the powerful ETU at the expense of everyday sparkies. It is about giving preference to a large militant union by creating a monolithic mega electricity company at the expense of small family owned electrical businesses of trades men and women, of electricians, of people who employ apprentices. Of course, we know that the union becomes more powerful when it works hand in glove with the electricity entity, when it has a stranglehold on the supply of electrical products and services throughout diverse state and has more power in holding this state to ransom.

This bill is about the government saving face from the order by the energy regulator to cut costs. Instead of doing this by showing leadership and spending taxpayers' dollars prudently, it will create a new business which takes away work from existing businesses because this government is unable to cut costs. Time and time again I listen to ministers make speeches about the diversity of regional Queensland, of creating ways to harness its skills, of supporting employment and creating jobs, of giving regional Queensland the tools to drive growth. Their words are meaningless because when it comes to government policy this government is more interested in stealing work from Australian battlers. This bill will have dire consequences for tradies in regional Queensland who work hard to support their families. The sad thing demonstrated here is that the Labor Party used to claim it stood up for workers and the Australian battler. Today the only workers it stands up for are the jobs of union organisers and delegates for the ALP conferences and executive.

The government's plans to create a contracting company from the merger of Energex and Ergon is a threat to communities in regional, remote and rural Queensland. This will put the government in direct competition with more than 10,000 licensed electricians and about 1,200 registered solar installers. The Treasurer uses the excuse that his shiny new business will offer services not available in rural and remote Queensland. He says it is about offering metering, solar and other household electrical services to the private market. However, mapping by the Clean Energy Council shows there are already 1,200 electricians across the state who have spent their money and time becoming accredited solar installers. The Chief Executive Officer of Master Electricians Australia, Malcolm Richards, said—

There is absolutely no suggestion of market failure or other conditions that would justify the State Government deciding to compete with small, local businesses and employers.

The Queensland Chamber of Commerce has described this policy as the state stealing the bread and butter businesses of electrical contractors. The only possible result from head-to-head competition will be small businesses being sent to the wall. Just why has the government chosen to merge Ergon and Energex? What is the point? What is their goal? According to the Treasurer it is supposed to be about efficiency. He said—

Rather than sell these assets to the private sector ... the Palaszczuk government is ... make these businesses work better for Queenslanders.

Let us look at the evidence rather than the words. If it is more efficient then why expand operations into a field that the government says is not commercially viable? Queensland Treasury has indicated that the majority of the \$680 million in efficiencies identified during the 2015-16 MYFER has nothing to do with the merger of these two businesses. Instead, it is related to the determination of the Australian Energy Regulator which directed Ergon and Energex to lower their capital and operating expenditure over the 2015-20 regulatory period.

This directive will result in job losses and that is why the government is doing it. It is doing it because there is no forced redundancy policy at government owned corporations. In the words of the *Courier-Mail*, it is a 'ham-fisted make-work scheme dreamt up in cahoots with the Electrical Trades Union in an effort to minimise the number of redundancies from the ... merger'. I remind the government that it should be in the business of providing basic services such as education, health, policing and public safety—that is, basic social services. The government's first priority should be to make the electricity companies get the basics right, rather than branching out into the marketplace, which is already well serviced.

Small business people and tradies are legitimately asking whether this is just the start. Will we soon see the government competing against plumbers, carpenters, builders, butchers, bakers and newsagents?

**An opposition member:** Candlestick makers.

**Mr PERRETT:** Candlestick makers, too; I take that interjection. Will it be using taxpayer dollars to compete with and undermine small business? I have been contacted by concerned electricians who are fearful of their ability to find work and compete with government backed contractors. They are very aware that the new business will have access to and be supported by a ready-made database of consumers, that it will have the ability to provide financial payment options for consumers and that it will be able to borrow money or sustain losses in order to squeeze out competitors. They are fearful that the government could direct all government departments to use this government owned taxpayer funded mega-company, putting hundreds of small businesses and families at financial risk. Finally, the very same body that competes against them, Ergon, is the authority that approves connections of solar panels and better systems. That means that private contractors will be regulated by their competitor.

A Gympie electrician who is an accredited solar installer and fearful of the devastating impacts of the bill wrote to me, stating—

I am concerned that the new entity, with its focus on unregulated work, will use its position to dominate the solar PV market, at the expense of local electrical contracting businesses.

The new entity will have a strong advantage over small electrical contractors, being in a position to draw on the established brand awareness in the community of Energex and Ergon in order to drive leads for solar PV, batteries and energy efficiency solutions ... the resources of Energex and Ergon will be accessible to the new entity to build the company.

It may even be the case that the entity will receive subsidisation from Energex and Ergon in order to meet market pricing points ...

Of further concern is the conflict of interest for such an entity being involved in the sale of solar PV and energy efficiency solutions given that Ergon and Energex have the sole power to approve solar applications and set meter charges.

We have already seen the consequences of such a conflict in regional Queensland. Peak industry body Master Electricians Australia has reported incidences of Ergon representatives approaching local North Queensland customers in order to sell homeowners Solar PV Power Purchase Agreements.

This is placing Ergon in direct competition with all solar installers in Queensland.

The rapid increase in solar PV demand has provided electrical contractors with a much needed revenue to keep their business afloat.

An entity comprised of a merger between two large distribution businesses entering this market is an undeniable threat to the survival of the smaller electrical contracting business who specialise in this area of expertise.

This bill is an abuse of market power. It is bad economics. It sends the wrong message to Queensland's largest employer, the small business community, threatening their viability and security. It is about an incompetent government repaying the ETU by creating a state-owned monopoly at the expense of sparkies. I urge this chamber to reject this bill.

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (9.23 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This bill seeks to facilitate the implementation of the merger of the electricity distribution businesses, Energex Ltd and Ergon Energy Corporation Ltd, under a parent company with a separate energy services business being established. The bill also seeks to amend the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities (Justice, Land and Other Matters) Act 1984 to modernise the provisions currently applying to the Island Industries Board, how it operates throughout the Torres Strait and the Northern Peninsula Area, providing essential retail services. I wish to focus on the facilitation of the GOC merger and some of the issues that will arise in regional areas as a result of this legislation.

There is no doubt that affordable electricity is very important to businesses and households right across the state and that governments need to be vigilant and ensure that electricity is affordable, regardless of where people live or work in this great state. I found it very interesting that the committee received very few submissions in relation to the bill, given the importance of electricity to all regional communities. That seems to be highly unusual. It is further concerning given that this is possibly one of the largest mergers in the history of Queensland, with an estimated total value of \$25 billion. That there were so few submissions is very strange. It is unusual. Given the government's intention to establish a new energy services division in Townsville, one would have thought that the government would have been keen to have the committee travel to North Queensland to talk with the community about this matter. That was not the case. As the government members on the committee wanted to hide, they voted against travelling and hearing from North Queenslanders, or any regional Queenslanders for that matter. That is a very disappointing circumstance.

It is also disappointing that the committee did not travel to hear first-hand from those communities in the Torres Strait and the Northern Peninsula Area which rely on essential retail services through a network of supermarkets, service stations and retail convenience stores. The bill deals with the food security of residents in remote communities. If it was good enough to change the legislation, it should be good enough to go and talk directly to the communities and the residents affected by the changes. There seems to be a consistent pattern emerging with this government in relation to regional Queenslanders, and not just those in North Queensland: change the legislation but do not bother to talk to those affected by the changes or allow the parliamentary committee to hear their concerns. I detect a distinct repetitive arrogance towards regional Queenslanders from this government.

I note from the committee chair's forward that, during the committee's inquiry on the bill, issues were raised about the Queensland government's decision to merge Energex and Ergon under a new GOC and establish the energy services business as part of the new structure. The forward states that the committee report does not address the issues, as they are outside the scope of the bill. However, the government mentioned the energy services business in both the explanatory notes and the Treasurer's first reading speech. The government tried to shield the proposal from scrutiny in the committee process and that should not happen in the committee, in the parliament or in this debate.

The submission of the Electrical Trades Union seemed to be well briefed on the establishment of the energy services division. The ETU seemed to be so well informed in their submission that they expect the new division will be well positioned to respond to a changing electricity supply market and deliver new products and services to households—yes, households. Therefore, they would be in direct competition with small local businesses across the state. In future, this would allow the new company to unfairly bid against local, rural and regional small businesses. Local electricians in places such as Morven, Charleville, Roma, St George, Cunnamulla, Miles and Chinchilla, to name a few, will have to compete against a state-owned monopoly for their bread-and-butter electrical work. A level playing field or fair? Certainly not!

In future, we may see government agencies and departments, schools, hospitals and the like being directed by government to use the merged electricity company rather than their local electrician, taking work away, again, from local small businesses. You would ask the question: what is the government really trying to hide? What don't they want Queenslanders to know about their proposal to set up a monopoly business in competition with mum-and-dad small businesses?

I will now turn to the staffing estimates for the electricity workers. There are some concerning comments from Queensland Treasury in the committee report in relation to related employee savings and the expected reduction of 366 positions by 2020. Treasury further advises that opportunities to redeploy some existing staff to the proposed energy services business are currently being examined—not possible; examined—and this may reduce the merger implementation costs. Keep in mind the innovative energy services business is reported to be based in Townsville. I have to tell members that that is a long way from the depots and workshops in south-west Queensland of Ergon Energy—a long way to move the family if redeployment becomes an option.

It sounds to me like no electricity worker's job is safe in this whole process and regional Queenslanders jobs are again being hung out to dry by the ETU and the state government. This is cold comfort for Ergon Energy workers at the depots and workshops across my electorate in the communities of Roma, Charleville, Cunnamulla, Tara, Miles, Chinchilla and St George.

I have some questions in relation to this legislation and I would appreciate it if the minister could address some of these as they are of interest to my constituents. Will all of the current employees of Ergon and Energex have to reapply for their positions in the energy company? In the explanatory notes it states that there is a requirement for the state electricity entity to comply with a direction given to it by the responsible minister. This section will not apply to the parent company in Energy Queensland. I hope the minister can help me here—why is this the case? It is for the many reasons that I have outlined that the opposition will not be supporting this legislation.

 **Ms FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (9.31 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. Going into the last state election the Palaszczuk Labor government promised Queenslanders a comprehensive, far-reaching vision for Queensland that sets us on a clear fiscal path for the future. Over the last 15 months, and with the delivery of the second Palaszczuk government budget yesterday, it is clear to everyone that that is exactly what we are delivering—a measured, modest and responsible plan and one which does not involve selling the assets that are so important to Queenslanders.

That plan allows us to pay down debt without further damaging our economy and gives Queenslanders a clear picture of where their money is being spent, how it is being spent and how we are paving the way for a fiscally responsible, prosperous and fair Queensland. This bill plays its part in delivering on that. It goes to the explicit promise we made to the people of Queensland at the election that we would keep electricity assets in public hands, with additional efficiencies introduced to lower costs.

The objective of the bill is to facilitate the implementation of the merger of the electricity distribution businesses of Energex and Ergon under a parent company called Parent Co. A separate energy services business will be established under Parent Co. In December 2015 the Palaszczuk government, delivering on our election promise, announced our intention to merge Energex and Ergon into a single business, with the merger to be implemented on 1 July with the objective of improving network businesses.

The 2015-16 Mid Year Fiscal and Economic Review outlined that the merger, along with a number of other efficiency measures across Queensland's electricity network and generation businesses, will save around \$680 million over the five-year period to 2019-20. Of this amount, \$562 million relates to the merged Ergon Energy and Energex businesses.

The efficiencies gained include the removal of duplication across areas in these businesses such as administration, human resources corporate governance and management. They will mean that Ergon and Energex share the cost of upgrading their network technology to handle increasing levels of solar generation in their networks as well as accommodating new product. The new structure will also ensure industry best practice is adopted across the network in areas like asset management and operating procedures, leading to further efficiency savings in these areas.

So far I think we are all clear. It is when we look at the contributions of the members from the other side of the House that things start unravelling. Quite frankly, they are all over the shop with their comments. They contradict each other. They even contradict themselves. I for one cannot wait for the opposition leader to address the House about the budget tomorrow because I find their position pretty confusing.

On the one hand they tell us that we are inefficient for this, that and the other reason. It is usually a very long story. It is usually only part of a story because they never like to let the facts get in the way of a good story. It is a bit like the question about the State Actuary's advice. They quoted some early advice about \$2 million. They forgot to say the next bit which was the most recent advice. That is pretty classic in terms of how they run things.

On the one hand they say we are inefficient, but on the other hand they do not want to support this bill which creates efficiencies. On the one hand they sell themselves as being the doyens of good economic management, but on the other hand they do not support the responsible debt management which this bill underpins.

They have a litany of things that they want. I will go through what some of those opposite who have spoken on this bill have said. The member for Indooroopilly did not mind getting Graceville train station and a cycle bridge across Moggill Road. It was all his doing. I read it on his website. The member

for Southport loves light rail. He loved getting money for light rail. The member for Whitsunday lobbies for the Walkerston bypass even though it is actually in the Mirani electorate. I am not sure how that works. The member for Burleigh—'Hart working hard for Burleigh'—personally got \$490,000 for additional classrooms at Caningeraba State School.

They do not mind getting all of that money. They just do not want to have anything to do with proper fiscal management to make sure we can fund those things. They do not support measures to create a positive fiscal environment which would allow these things to be funded.

I find it very interesting. I am working with my 15-year-old daughter to teach her how to manage a budget. She has just got her first job. For the first time she is actually getting an income. Sometimes she says to me, 'Mum, can I buy that dress' or 'Can I go out to this, that or the other thing?' I say to her—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Elmes): Order! I am finding it very difficult to hear the member for Bulimba.

**Ms FARMER:** I say to her, 'Well, Millie, if you have not got the money then you actually cannot buy that thing. You cannot afford to buy that thing.' Members of the opposition need to understand that they cannot keep asking for things and then object to good fiscal management. I think it is a pretty basic principle which my 15-year-old is finding easy to understand. They sell themselves as—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I will repeat that I am having difficulty hearing the member for Bulimba. I would appreciate if members are going to interject that they do it a little more quietly than has been the case.

**Ms FARMER:** They sell themselves as the absolute champions of the regions and yet they do not support the subsidisation of regional electricity prices, which will be the result of this merger into a well-run and efficient power company, nor do they support the expanded market for energy services overall that the merger will create, especially in regional Queensland. I would like to know how they are explaining to people, whom they say are their core constituents, that they are not supporting regional Queensland. That is a bit like—

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Indooroopilly, the member Hinchinbrook and, I presume, the minister, could we stop the chatter across the chamber and listen to the member for Bulimba.

**Ms FARMER:** On the one hand they talk about jobs—I am not sure how they can when they were responsible for sacking 14,000 people when they first came to government. On the other hand they are failing to support a bill which will create about 500 jobs over the next decade. Another stunning example of something they continue to do in their ploy to never let the facts get in the way of a good story is discussions about mums and dads, as if they care about mums and dads.

This merged entity does not intend to compete with the work of mums and dads at the householder level. Their relationship with Ergon and Energex will stay exactly the same. Of course, this does not stop members opposite from scaring the mums and dads, just as it does not stop those opposite from scaring public servants when referring to raiding their superannuation funds. They do not mind who they walk over the top of to try to make a point. I cannot think of a more disgraceful example of scaring people than that posed by nearly every single member opposite.

What is least clear is the position of opposition members on asset sales. That is the big one, because I suspect that in fact they would like this to fail so that they can make a point that asset sales really need to happen. Despite the fact that Queenslanders told the Bligh Labor government that they did not want asset sales, that the electricity industry was right at the heart of that and that Queenslanders threw those opposite out on the basis of asset sales, secretly they really want it. The opposition leader was not proceeding with asset sales, but now he must make it clear. The opposition leader needs to tell us tomorrow what he is doing about asset sales. How will the opposition leader fulfil all of these plans and all they on that side want with a good fiscal management strategy? I commend this bill to the House. We are about strong fiscal management and about maintaining public assets in the hands of the people who entrusted them to us.

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Albert—LNP) (9.42 pm): I rise to make a short and sharp contribution to the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. As outlined in the Transport Utilities Report No. 16, opposition committee members highlighted their concerns and acknowledged that the merger between Energex and Ergon is an election commitment of the Labor government which is not the most prudent but which is their commitment. As I continually state in this House, the Albert electorate is the home of the tradie. The construction industry is a key cornerstone for employment in our area. These are aspirational people. They are proud of their small businesses and of being small business owners, and all they ask is a fair go, none more so than the large sector of electrical trade specialists in my electorate. These hard-working mum-and-dad businesses are the embodiment of the Australian economy. They suffer ups and downs, booms and busts, and all they ask for is a fair playing field so that they can exist. These smaller electricity businesses support local suppliers, other trade workers and service industries.

**Mr Cramp:** And apprentices.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** And apprentices. It is a domino effect that has deep ramifications on our local economy, a fact that the Labor government has failed to realise. As stated in the explanatory notes of the bill, 'A separate energy service business will be established under the Parent Co', and this will compete against local small businesses. In the Treasurer's own words, a new energy service business will be established as a subsidiary of the parent company, a parent company with limitless backing. Many local electricians see solar panel installations as bread-and-butter jobs. There is much competition between businesses for this niche market. Whilst competition is welcomed by the consumer, at what expense? We hear about multinational companies undercutting, outbidding for work, squeezing small businesses out of existence. It is a matter about which most Australians are extremely passionate. 'Supporting Aussie businesses, giving Aussie business a fair go'—we see it in the media, we hear it on the streets and we hear it at our local P&C meetings.

While setting up an energy business is a way of dealing with 366 redundancies, as highlighted in a question on notice to the Treasurer, protecting small family business interests should be paramount for any government, and a failure to do so will only add to the ever increasing unemployment lines in Queensland, not just of those businesses but their suppliers and apprentices. This is none more so than in the regional areas.

I also note the low number of submissions received by the committee. This informs Queenslanders that this frozen-at-the-wheel Labor government lacks transparency and does not wish to be taken to task for its legislation. I am very supportive of the comments of opposition members of the committee. I am gravely concerned about the effect of this bill on my local small businesses and about any benefit this merger will have for power supply in Queensland.

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (9.46 pm): I rise to contribute to the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. The purpose of this bill is to facilitate the implementation of the merger of the electricity distribution businesses Energex and Ergon under a parent company. Indeed, a separate energy services business also will be established under the parent company.

Earlier today I did not necessarily intend to contribute to the debate on this bill but, having listened to a couple of the contributions from government members, I have been provoked to get to my feet. When one has been in this House for a little while—and I acknowledge the far superior length of service of the members for Southern Downs and Callide in the parliament—one tends to be able to spot nonsense from those opposite. The contributions from the members of the government tonight, particularly in relation to accusations of LNP members about asset sales, restructuring and who is proposing to sell what, reminded me of a budget week in 2009 after the state election when the former minister for transport, the former member for Ipswich, told the parliament the day before the budget was handed down that Queensland Rail was not for sale. Before the election the former treasurer, the member for Mt Coot-tha, looked down the barrel of a camera and told everyone that they would not sell assets. They entered this parliament after the 2009 state election and in their very first budget—and there is a smattering of members opposite here in the parliament when that happened—introduced the Infrastructure Investment (Asset Restructuring and Disposal) Bill 2009.

Earlier this evening I heard the member for Murrumba say that the LNP has a choice tonight in that they can either support this bill and demonstrate that they are against asset sales or not support this bill and show that they are planning to sell assets in the future. I understand that the combined or merged value of the assets of Ergon and Energex to create this Energy Queensland entity will be about \$24 billion or \$25 billion. I do not claim to be a brilliant businessman, but if I were to prepare an asset for sale the first thing I would do is restructure it to maximise its value. The first thing I would do to

prepare an asset for disposal, particularly when the bigger part of that asset is a government owned monopoly, is to increase its footprint and market share. That is the step that I would take. In fact, predecessor governments to the Palaszczuk government, particularly and namely the Bligh government, did exactly that through this instrument, the Infrastructure Investment (Asset Restructuring and Disposal) Bill 2009.

That is precisely and exactly what they did when they wanted to prepare assets for sale. They restructured them. They fattened the pig in the lead-up to market day. The absolutely ridiculous, nonsensical contribution of the member for Murrumba—that the LNP by opposing this bill is indicating support for asset sales—flies totally in the face of all the corporate history involved in debate on this type of legislation in this parliament in the past. It flies in the face of all the evidence that this parliament has seen in the past. Before governments have gone to asset sales, they have restructured them in the parliament.

Members just have to look at the explanatory notes accompanying the asset restructuring and disposal bill of 2009 which came into the parliament in the same week that the 2009 state budget was handed down. They listed the companies they were restructuring in anticipation of sale—the sale of Forestry Plantations Queensland; the sale of Queensland Motorways Ltd; the sale of the Port of Brisbane; the sale of Queensland Rail's above and below rail coal businesses/assets, along with the Ports Corporation of Queensland's Abbot Point Coal Terminal; the sale of QR's other commercial rail services such as bulk freight, intermodal, retail and regional freight services, where feasible.

That is what they did in 2009, but then the explanatory notes went on to celebrate the history of Labor's involvement in asset restructuring and sales by noting that similar vehicles had been put through the parliament and implemented in the past, including the restructure and sale of Energex and Ergon's electricity retail businesses and Energex's gas distribution business in 2006, and Stanwell's and Tarong's wind farms and Enertrade's merchant gas and gas transportation business through the Energy Assets (Restructuring and Disposal Act) 2006—

**Mr BAILEY:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. As fascinating as the contribution is from the member for Hinchinbrook, I fail to see the connection with the bill. He has wandered off into a different decade.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Farmer): I am allowing the member for Hinchinbrook some latitude, but I think he understands what the minister is referring to.

**Mr CRIPPS:** I do understand what the minister is referring to. The minister is referring to the complete embarrassment of the Labor Party in the parliament tonight because of their long history of using this type of legislation to prepare assets for sale: they put a restructuring bill through the parliament and they prepare the asset for sale.

I return to the explanatory notes because I do not want to leave the last one out. It is the last example I will give the parliament but it is an important one. They also used a restructure and sale piece of legislation to sell the Cairns and Mackay airports and the sale of the Port of Brisbane Corporations interest in the Brisbane Airport through the Airport Assets (Restructuring and Disposal Act) 2008. I will table the bill that is the most infamous of these—the asset restructuring and disposal bill 2009.

*Tabled paper:* Infrastructure Investment (Asset Restructuring and Disposal) Bill 2009 [\[946\]](#).

I table that bill to remind all the lemmings over there that, when they get up in the parliament tonight and they drive over the cliff reading out all the briefing notes that have been prepared by the DLO in the minister's office, they have absolutely no corporate history and no understanding of the activities and the modus operandi of the executive of their party time and again in this parliament. They have got the track record. In contrast, what the LNP did was be honest with the people of Queensland. We said, 'This is the financial circumstance we face.' We were not untruthful with people before an election and then come in after an election and put it through in the first budget after the election, including that bill to restructure and dispose of the assets. We said at the election, 'This is the alternative plan.' Sure, they said, 'No.' The election result clearly indicates what their preference was, but we did not mislead them.

Members of the government coming into this parliament tonight have the gall to stand up one by one—including the hapless, bewildered member for Murrumba—and suggest that, if the LNP votes against this bill tonight, somehow that is an indication of our support for asset sales in the future. What a load of absurd nonsense. All of the evidence over several years and several parliaments shows that before the Australian Labor Party wish to sell one of the publicly owned assets in this state they present a restructuring piece of legislation in this parliament and then they flog it off.

More to the point, these issues have to be ventilated tonight because of the woefully inadequate treatment that this bill has had in the committee process for all of the reasons that have been outlined by members of the opposition who were members of that committee. They suffered from a totally inadequate amount of information presented by the government themselves. It has been pointed out on more than one occasion—including in the contribution by the member for Redlands—that it was claimed that efficiencies will be achieved by this bill being passed through the parliament, but the Treasury themselves could not identify a single dollar worth of savings from this restructuring process for the new entity Energy Queensland.

Before government members go over the cliff in the future when they have an ideological debate to bring before the parliament, for goodness sake, they should do themselves a favour. Do not just follow the lead of the people down the front. Do some research and establish some facts about what has gone on in this place in the state of Queensland in the past, who was responsible for it and who needs to take responsibility for their actions in the future.

 **Ms BOYD** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (9.56 pm): It is very amusing to hear from the member for Hinchinbrook about not going over a cliff when he has just gone over one himself. I rise tonight to speak in support of the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. This is an election commitment which allows for the network business merger between Energex and Ergon into the largest power company in the country with over \$20 billion in assets. This will be one of the largest corporate restructures in recent history.

The Australian Labor Party went to Queenslanders at the last election with a clear choice. On one hand, we had the LNP with the choice to sell off or lease Queensland's power assets; or with the ALP we had the election commitment to keep our energy assets in public hands and merge the government owned corporations of Energex and Ergon. This bill delivers on that promise.

This merger of Energex and Ergon into a single business commencing 1 July 2016 will result in a more efficient and effective operation throughout the network. These measures in the bill will result in Energex and Ergon altering statuses from GOCs to subsidiaries of a GOC, which will be a parent company. It will bring together their corporate and administrative functions and will have Energex and Ergon administering the operational functions of electricity distribution.

It is very evident through the contributions that those opposite have made tonight and through the committee process that they are eager to re prosecute their failed agenda of asset sales, or leases that were far longer than the life of the asset, for those who were unfortunate enough to fall into the propaganda well that was constructed by those opposite. Queenslanders have voted and have let their views be known on asset sales here in Queensland twice in recent history. On this side of the House, we are not willing to make the same mistakes of selling off our assets.

This is in stark contrast to the LNP who still cannot accept that the people of Queensland were not buying what they had to sell. The member for Clayfield, the Leader of the Opposition, still will not rule out this possibility. It takes leadership and fortitude to come out as a new leader and declare that you will not make the same mistakes of the government of days gone by. I had immense pride in our Premier, Anastacia Palaszczuk, when she did that after the crushing defeat in the election of 2012. That kind of leadership and fortitude is very much lacking in the new look LNP line-up. It seems the member for Clayfield cannot leave his broken dreams and rejected asset sales in the past where they belong.

It is very obvious that there will be efficiencies and more consistency through the bringing together of the GOCs as subsidiaries. This is a good thing and it is surprising that those opposite who bleat about the reduction of red tape and the need for less duplication are not getting behind this measure. These are measures that have more than the current or the next budget cycle in sight. They are long-term, considered measures that have been broadly consulted around and developed in close detail. This ties into the government's fiscal strategy and the debt reduction plan. Duplication will be avoided in administration, boards, management, corporate costs and shared services. This merger will ensure that the Queensland tax dollar is spent more efficiently and will continue to see these profitable assets give back to Queensland's economy.

We have all experienced the spiralling power bills over the last decade and the electricity network prices are a large part of that. Having the network business running more efficiently will help achieve savings and long-term sustainable price outcomes. This is a good thing for the people in my electorate.

The audacity of those opposite, particularly the member for Whitsunday and the member for Southport, who sat across the table from electricians and electrical supply worker representatives and attempted—not well, I might add—to berate them on the prospect of voluntary redundancies, was

hypocritical in the highest order and demonstrates just how truly out of touch these members are. This legislation proves that there is always a better way for government, but we can only make it work when we have a legitimate desire to look past the preconceived notions and genuinely engage with stakeholders and experts in the field.

I am proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with electrical workers and secure a better future, just as I am proud to have campaigned with them through their grassroots Not4Sale campaign through the last election and the one prior. Campaigns like Not4Sale are powerful in many different senses. To all those who campaigned, who stood up for what you believe in, I say: thank you for fighting back and ensuring that our public assets stay in public hands. This is for the green-shirted army who never gave up and never backed down. You deserve a better and brighter future than the LNP was offering. I am proud to be a part of a government that can work with you to create it and embrace it. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (10.01 pm): I rise to oppose this bill tonight. There are several reasons why I believe this bill should be opposed. One that needs to worry this parliament the most is that scrutiny of legislation coming through this place is paramount. This bill went through a process and was guided through that process by a government that promised to be open and consultative and yet this process was far less than that. This will greatly affect the regions as this is a utility that is fundamental to operating a business, living your life and so on. To have a couple of hearings in Brisbane and not go out into the regions and explain to people how their lives will be affected by this bill is very poor form from a government that claimed it would be consultative.

The bill itself supposedly relates to the 2015 election commitment by Labor to merge five government owned electricity businesses into two—CS Energy combined with Stanwell and Ergon, and Energex and Powerlink merged together. To suggest that this is an election promise is wrong. The election promise was an ill-thought-through thought bubble at a desperate time to try to rally the ETU troops out on the ground waving their placards for fear that their depots and workshops might close. That was the thought bubble. Then afterwards, the advice was clear: Labor had to scrap their plans because the ACCC said, 'You can't do it.' There is thought bubble No. 1, 'We want to create a statewide monopoly. The ACCC says, "No, you can't." Now what are we going to do?' Then there is this talk about savings. The savings all come from the Australian regulator and have nothing at all to do with the merger. I urge the minister to stand up and detail clearly exactly where these savings are coming from under this merger. It would appear that the business plan has not even been done yet.

**Mr Bailey:** It is in the parliamentary committee report. Read the report.

**Mr WATTS:** Several speakers in here have said, 'Mum-and-dad electricians don't need to worry about anything.' The minister does not know that they have nothing to worry about. Unless he has already consulted with who is going to be appointed to the board of this, he does not know what the business plan will be. What we will have created is a monolithic structure that can outcompete anybody else in the marketplace. Every single independent contractor who has a desire to provide service can be outcompeted by this organisation.

The member for Hinchinbrook made some very, very interesting points about why the government would take a controlled utility and merge it into a massive monopoly which would enhance its price to a private organisation and yet claim that there is no thought at all that this might be getting this asset ready for sale. He made a further good point that there are lots of people sitting in the cabinet room of this Labor government who have great form for selling assets.

**An opposition member:** Coal trains.

**Mr WATTS:** Certainly the coal trains would be one that would affect people in my area. I think it is also very misleading for all those ETU workers—and I had lots of them coming to chat to me during the election campaign in Toowoomba North. They were very enthusiastic to come and see me. Do honourable members know what their main concern was? Their main concern was about cuts and losing their jobs. They were very worried about what might happen if a private business came in and started being more efficient and competing with them.

**Ms Grace:** No, they were more worried about selling your assets.

**Mr WATTS:** They were very worried about their jobs.

**Ms Grace:** They were worried about selling your assets.

**Mr WATTS:** I take the interjection from the member for Brisbane Central. Clearly she was standing next to me when I was talking to the ETU members on many occasions throughout the election campaign! If she had been standing there she would have had the conversation I had, which related to

them being fearful for their jobs. What is most interesting about that is that when the Public Service was cut these people were 'sacked'. They are the words that those opposite all use. Interestingly enough, when these ETU workers lose their jobs—

**Ms Grace:** They aren't going to lose their jobs.

**Mr WATTS:** I take the interjection. I am talking about Labor Party members losing their jobs. They are going to be made redundant, which is somehow different to what we did. I understand that there are 366 potential job losses coming their way—volunteers. Let me tell members opposite that if they go out to some of these depots in some of the remote and regional parts of Queensland they will find out if these people are really enthusiastic about volunteering or if they are just worried about losing their job as this merger goes ahead and this monolith is created. If they pick up the Yellow Pages when they are there or do a quick search on their phone if they can get reception, they will be able to tune in and find someone who provides electrical services, someone who has built up a business in their regional area who has provided the service, who is a local in that community, who goes around and helps businesses and homes have the facilities they would like to have—a private contractor. These are the people who are very worried about their jobs. They are very worried about what is going to happen to their jobs as this monolith is created, this organisation that is getting ready for an asset sale if ever I saw one.

Members opposite always say that we on this side of the House love big business. However, we cannot get a bigger business than this in Queensland. This is an enormous business that the government is creating. It will be very interesting to see what particularly many members of the backbench think as time goes on and someone says, 'Oh the budget does not add up. It might be time to get that state monopoly we created and we might just have to sell a bit of it off.' If that is the minister's plan, why is he not up-front with the people of Queensland? Why does he not tell us all here tonight that that is the plan, that he wants to get it ready and see what happens?

There was also some talk about budgeting and how we cannot afford things if we do not do this and that. The member for Bulimba spoke about her daughter getting a job and wanting to teach her about budgeting. I put it to her that one thing that maybe she should do if she wants to teach her daughter about money is suggest she puts money away for her future, that she makes savings for her superannuation, and that that money is protected in some way to make sure that nobody can grab it and spend it when they cannot do their own budgeting. Whilst we appreciate the advice on how to run businesses and other things, I think that not paying superannuation, giving yourself a holiday for five years from paying any and raiding other people's contributions are probably not the way to do it. I will get back to this bill.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr WATTS:** The reason this would not be relevant to the bill is because there are no savings. You are saying that we have to do this because we need to make these savings, but there are no savings. The reason the financial advice is relevant is because this bill does not achieve any savings. I look forward to hearing the minister explain in detail where these savings come from. Please outline clearly for us where the Australian Energy Regulator's determinations are actually driving the financials here.

I think the most important thing for me is that out there in the community of Queensland there are many businesses that have been established which have worked very hard to build their business up, to get a client base, to be able to service the various customers they have and to provide a good income stream for the people who work for them. This organisation is a threat to that because of the imbalance of market power. The ACCC recognised it with the original proposal, but how can any individual contractor compete with a monolith who will be able to dictate terms about how things will be done? Eventually in small communities competition will disappear, and I think whenever competition disappears we are all the poorer for it. I think it is very important that before we go ahead and create this monolith we clearly understand the savings that are being alluded to—because there seems to be no evidence for it—and we think very clearly about the private contractors whose jobs this will cost.

 **Miss BARTON** (Broadwater—LNP) (10.12 pm): I rise this evening to make a contribution to the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. In doing so, I join my colleagues on this side of the House in opposing this government's attempt to create a large government monopoly.

The government talks about how this is a government commitment, but we know that the only commitment they have made is to pay back the unions for the support they have given them over the years. If this government were concerned about jobs, they would be concerned about the jobs of the

small business owners and they would be concerned about the employees of the small business owners. What we have clearly seen, not only in this bill that we are debating this evening but also in many other bills before this House, is that this government is merely focused on its payback to the unions.

I had not intended to make a contribution to this debate; however, I was compelled to rise to speak in defence of small businesses not only in my electorate, but across the Gold Coast and across Queensland. As we on this side of the House know, small business is the powerhouse of the economy. It is the backbone of the Queensland economy, and on the Gold Coast in particular we appreciate the importance of small business. That is why it is a shame that we have a government in this state that is wholly and solely determined to rip the guts out of mum-and-dad electricians and rip entire businesses out from underneath sparkies across Queensland. We have seen this government force everyday Queenslanders to compete with a government monolith.

The LNP stands ready alongside the CCIQ and the Master Electricians to defend the interests of not only small businesses and mum-and-dad electricians but also the consumers of the product that those electricians provide. We need to ensure that the well-established small businesses that are more than capable of continuing to serve their communities are able to do so. What we have seen is a wrecking ball of Labor come through and smash small business out of the way as they attempt to destroy electricians' businesses. As I say, we stand ready with the Master Electricians and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry who have both been incredibly vocal as peak representative bodies for electrical contractors and small businesses in this state. They have been very vocal in their opposition to the attempts of this government to destroy local electrical contractors and small businesses in this state.

We have heard the government talk about the savings that they are going to achieve, and the member for Toowoomba North has touched on this a bit, but we do not hear the government talk about how any savings they are claiming are really only achievable because of determinations that have been made by the Australian Energy Regulator and not as a result of any action by this government. One of the other things that has been touched on in a very astute way by the member for Hinchinbrook is the lack of scrutiny with respect to the consideration of these bills. The non-government members of the committee, led ably by the member for Southport as the deputy chair, were very vocal—not only during the committee process but also in their statement of reservation—about the fact that the government refused to provide any detail to them on significant aspects of this bill even though it had been mentioned in the introductory speech of the bill and the explanatory notes. We have consistently seen—not only on this bill but also on the National Injury Insurance Scheme—the government try and hide away and refuse to answer or provide detail to any questions.

The other thing that I think is worth noting, particularly given that the government talks about how they are going to establish the new entity up in Townsville, is that when non-government members of the committee attempted to ensure the committee would travel to Townsville to give the Townsville community an opportunity to have a say about what they thought was the best thing to do, whether it was to merge or not merge, it is really disappointing that this government, which says that they want to establish this in Townsville, did not give the committee an opportunity to travel to Townsville, nor did they give the people of Townsville an opportunity. When we think about this, it is absolutely galling that we have had no scrutiny given that this is a government that is not only about to create an incredibly large government monopoly which will be the largest electricity distributor in Australia but also claims it is all about openness, transparency and accountability. We have seen clearly, not only through the consideration of this bill but also the consideration of other bills—and again I highlight the National Injury Insurance Scheme—that this is a government that is scared to provide answers because they know that they do not stack up. They know that the people of Queensland will not be happy with their answers.

We often hear members on that side of the House talk about how they have a mandate to do things, but I think what many members on that side of the House forget is that more Queenslanders voted for the LNP than voted for the Labor Party. They forget that they do not have the mandate they speak of, and they forget that Queenslanders—particularly in areas like the Gold Coast, where small business is the heart of the local economy—have overwhelmingly put their trust and faith in the LNP.

A number of electricians in my electorate approached me during the committee's consideration of this bill while this bill was before the parliament. I was struck by one of the things that one of them said to me when he approached me at a mobile office in the Paradise Point park. He said, 'If I am not able, Verity, to work in their space, why should the government make it okay for them to work in mine?'

He said, 'I do not want any special treatment from the government. I just want to be able to get on with it, do my own thing and run my own business, but it is really, really hard when the government are stacking everything against me and making it difficult for me to compete. The government is going to come in, they are going to rip business away from me and they are going to undercut me.' Having spoken to a number of my colleagues from rural and regional Queensland, I know that they are particularly concerned about the government coming in and taking business away from local electrical contractors. I know they are particularly concerned about the impacts that that is going to have on their communities.

A number of members on the government benches spoke about the fact that this will get rid of duplication. I know the member for Pine Rivers did in her contribution. It is very easy to get rid of duplication when you are creating a government monopoly. There is nothing to be duplicated against because nobody else has an opportunity to be in that space, so nobody has an opportunity to compete. The member for Toowoomba North spoke about how, even if we assume for the purposes of the argument that the government has a mandate, they are not even living up to the pledge they took to the people at the last election because they have not been able to merge the generators as it would be considered anticompetitive.

I put it to the House tonight that an attempt to merge Ergon and Energex is indeed, of itself, also anticompetitive because what we are doing is creating a large government owned monopoly. Potentially, as the member for Hinchinbrook has said, the reason they are doing it is to fatten up the pig for market. The member for Hinchinbrook has had an esteemed career in this House and was here between 2009 and 2012, when the Labor Party misled the people of Queensland.

Members of the government have said that, depending on how we vote, this is a sign of what the LNP believes and will do with respect to the lease or sale of assets. I say very directly to the members of the government and I reiterate the comments of the member for Hinchinbrook: we were honest with the people of Queensland. We were not the ones who misled the people of Queensland. We were not the ones who said to the people of Queensland that Queensland Rail was not for sale the day before the then treasurer announced that it was going on the market. That members of the government come into this House and tell us that the way we vote on this bill expresses our particular opinion on a particular issue is absolutely galling. Those opposite have a track record when it comes to misleading the people of Queensland. They have a track record when it comes to ignoring the people of Queensland, to not considering the people of Queensland.

Ultimately, I stand with my LNP colleagues, the CCIQ and the Master Electricians. We need to protect small businesses because they are the powerhouse of the Queensland economy. They are the backbone of the Queensland economy. In spite of the best attempts of this Labor government to pull the rug from underneath them, to tear apart their businesses, they will fight on. We will support them and continue the fight to save our sparkies.

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algeria—ALP) (Minister for Innovation, Science and the Digital Economy and Minister for Small Business) (10.21 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. The Palaszczuk government has made no secret of our commitment to supporting small business and promoting innovation. The Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 facilitates the merger of the electricity distribution businesses of Energex Ltd and Ergon Energy Corporation Ltd. Significant savings will be realised by consolidating two government owned corporations in the energy sector and preparing the distribution business for the challenges of a rapidly changing energy industry. As part of the arrangements, a new energy service business is intended to create opportunities for collaboration with electricians and help grow the renewable energy sector.

Into the future, a key focus will be on looking at new and innovative products and services that can help small businesses and communities make better energy decisions, particularly to deliver better outcomes in regional and remote communities. I have been advised that the Department of Energy and Water Supply is finalising the details of the proposed new energy services business company. I am also advised that the company will work with electricians to develop new products and to grow the sector.

The Palaszczuk government has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to consult with and support small business. Our government has demonstrated this commitment through our \$405 million whole-of-government accelerated Advance Queensland program that is creating jobs now while preparing our state for the jobs and industries of the future. Part of this included a new commitment of \$22.7 million to deliver the Palaszczuk government's Advancing Small Business Queensland Strategy through an office of small business. This is intended to help small business create jobs, drive business

growth, harness innovation, build digital capacity and employ more Queenslanders. In a further commitment to support small businesses, the Palaszczuk government will appoint a small business champion as a voice for Queensland small business at both the state and the federal level.

Collaboration with small business is a key part of this proposed merger. As the Treasurer has previously stated, what we have seen from the LNP with regard to the impact on small business of the proposed merger has been nothing short of a scare campaign. The new energy services business will not compete with solar installers or electrical contractors in established markets. It is likely the focus of the energy services business will be on new and innovative products and services and on growing the overall market, particularly in regional Queensland. The business will look at offering services where there are limited resources or capacity available to customers, such as in remote areas of Queensland including Indigenous communities. In the spirit of innovation and collaboration, what we expect to see from this proposed merger are opportunities for electrical contractors to work together with the new entity to provide new services and products to customers. When you consider that the LNP still does not have a policy on innovation, it is unsurprising to see it not recognise the opportunities this proposed merger offers small businesses.

The Palaszczuk government is also committed to ensuring that our income-generating assets are kept in public hands. We stand firm on this commitment to the people of Queensland—unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who has flip-flopped on this issue and now refuses to state his position. The Queensland government uses the dividends we receive from our publicly owned power companies to subsidise the cost of electricity for regional Queenslanders—something that is only possible because we kept our assets in public hands. We will continue to subsidise regional Queensland electricity prices, with nearly \$600 million last year to ensure that 700,000 regional Queensland customers pay a similar amount for their electricity as do those in South-East Queensland. This is required due to the vast scale of Queensland's electricity network, serving such a decentralised population. We have also allocated \$170 million in 2015-16 to provide a range of energy concessions including emergency assistance for customers who are experiencing financial strain and cannot pay their bills. To maintain those subsidies and concessions we need to keep our power companies efficient, well run and poised for the future. That is what this merger will deliver.

The Palaszczuk government is also committed to ensuring that remote communities are properly serviced, particularly when it comes to food security. Part 2 of this bill contains amendments to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities (Justice, Land and Other Matters) Act 1984. The amendments will provide for a more secure future for the government's retail activities in Torres Strait island communities and in the Northern Peninsula region of Far North Queensland. They address membership, governance, operational and administrative provisions currently applying to the Island Industries Board. The amendments propose removing the geographic limitations currently in place, resulting in the Island Industries Board becoming Community Enterprise Queensland.

It is important that this retail service network is able to adequately respond to remote retail needs, taking advantage of opportunities on the basis of sound business planning. This will assist Community Enterprise Queensland to mitigate possible future risks and cost to government while continuing to deliver essential services to the remote communities in which it operates. By making these changes the bill ensures that crucial services and food supplies remain readily available in remote communities. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (10.27 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate of the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This time last year we saw the Palaszczuk government transfer more than \$4 billion worth of debt on to government owned entities. This included our state owned electricity companies. Now the government wishes to facilitate the merger of electricity distribution companies Ergon and Energex under a parent company.

While we could half applaud the government for possibly following through on an election commitment, we must first look at the history behind it. While in opposition the ALP announced that they would merge the five government owned electricity businesses into two. However, they abandoned the idea after the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission chair, Mr Rod Sims, said that would drive up electricity prices. You did not need to do Finance 101 next door at QUT to see that possibility. However, as part of the 2015-16 Mid Year Fiscal and Economic Review, the government instead announced their intention to merge Ergon and Energex together, with an implementation date of 1 July 2016. Here we are, looking at Labor breaking a promise of a broken promise. This is certainly starting to get pretty confusing. As a result, I wish to be very clear in what I have to say in my contribution this evening.

Should this merger go through, the government owned corporation declarations which currently apply to Energex and Ergon will be transferred from the shareholding ministers to the parent company—the new Parent Co. This will result in Energex and Ergon becoming subsidiaries in Parent Co, a new government owned corporation.

Master Electricians raised a number of concerns with the creation of a new energy service business model as a subsidiary. Essentially, we will see the new services business able to compete against independent mum-and-dad electrical contractors for unregulated electrical work. This new government owned company will be able to pilfer work and ultimately jobs from many local small businesses. As a member of parliament I am greatly concerned by the lack of scrutiny and oversight of a merger which will create the largest electricity distribution business in Australia. This bill will facilitate the creation of Parent Co which will have an asset base worth more than \$20 billion.

I am further concerned with how little consultation took place to coincide with this bill and how the Transportation and Utilities Committee had just one hearing to scrutinise this legislation. Apparently, less than one hour was taken to question public officials and other interested parties about this bill—this all-important bill. Meanwhile, as part of the ALP's open and transparent style, my colleagues on the committee were blocked in their attempts to do the committee process justice with this bill. They were blocked in their attempts to extend the time frame for considering the bill. They were not allowed to hold regional hearings and thus could not consider the far-reaching impacts of these changes and what they would mean in regional Queensland. They were unable to get representatives of these companies to properly explain in detail the impacts and costs of this merger. They were unable to reopen the submission process so that stakeholders like Master Electricians could be given a proper and decent say. They were even blocked in finding out who the committee asked for submissions from.

This is poor treatment of members in what is meant to be a bipartisan committee system. So much for the Premier's much vaunted promise to run parliament in a more transparent and professional way. It is arrogant and pandering to their puppet masters. I ask: who is really running the government? To be frank, it is simply not just about our mum-and-dad electrical contractors having to compete against a government run monolith for work. This bill, if passed, will lessen job opportunities for Queenslanders as outlined in a speech on this bill earlier this evening by the member for Gregory at a time when the Treasurer is trying to spruik a budget which supports jobs, jobs, jobs. Master Electricians CEO Malcolm Richards said with regard to the impacts of the new government owned company—

Mum and dad businesses would never be able to afford to borrow money or sustain losses in the same way the State Government can.

The only possible result from head-to-head competition would be small businesses being sent to the wall.

It flies in the face of the fundamental beliefs of a free enterprise society—that people who invest in businesses will not find themselves competing with the government.

Mr Richards is not the only one with concerns, with countless numbers of contractors worried about their future livelihoods. Contractors have come to me in my own Chatsworth electorate. The CCIQ also expressed grave concerns about what impact the creation of the new business would have on independent sparkies, saying the government should be supporting small businesses and not competing against them. I am baffled why the Labor government would be so hasty in pushing through legislation—a bill—which will so greatly impact Queenslanders and their futures when it is already making life so hard for them with the increased costs of living. In concluding, who is really running this great state—the ALP or the ETU?

 **Mr McARDLE** (Caloundra—LNP) (10.33 pm): Tonight I rise to make a contribution to the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill before the House. A number of members of the government have made comments that this bill really shows a process by the government in relation to proper fiscal management or proper fiscal strategy with regard to the energy sector in amalgamating these two bodies, but I think it is most important that when we consider whether this is going to be the proper management of the energy sector we go back a little bit in time. I can certainly recall in this House Peter Beattie raiding both Ergon and Energex for dividends well and truly above the 80 per cent margin required under the normal terms of arrangement. By doing that he stripped those entities of the capacity to undertake repair and maintenance and put in place new poles and wires. That almost led to a disaster in the south-east corner with blackouts and brownouts.

A commission of inquiry was put in place and then the Beattie government put in place the gold plating or N-1 principle that overloaded poles and wires and generated billions of dollars of debt that we the LNP had to deal with in 2012. I can also recall reading quite clearly that Beattie privatised

Energex Retail and stood in this House and made the claim that that would in fact drive prices down, if I am not mistaken, by up to \$100-odd a year. Prices went up and up and up. Members of the government have also made much of their history with regard what they intend to do with regard to solar going forward. One of the legacies of the Labor government was the 44 cent solar feed-in tariff. It was fine if you could get it, but if you could not get it that money was placed on your power bill. In fact, today the 44 cent feed-in tariff is still channelled back onto our power bills. This is part of the legacy of the Labor government of years gone by, so bear in mind that, when those opposite talk about fiscal management and fiscal strategy, their history says quite the opposite.

Not only that, I recall Andrew Fraser writing and asking for something like \$60 million more by way of increased costs through to the AER that were then passed back on to the consumer. There was a letter written by him seeking an increase in what the government could charge in the end for power prices that would be channelled back through the mums and dads of this state. I can recall the Labor government support of the carbon tax in this House. I can recall in opposition and in government that we proposed the carbon tax be repealed and supported the Tony Abbott government in that manner. The Labor opposition opposed that and supported the carbon tax again increasing the costs of power. When we talk about a government such as this government looking to be financially managing the power sector, the history of Labor in this state is anything but that. Today we are still paying for the excesses, the mistakes and the disasters of a determination of Beattie and Bligh.

Much has been made of the issue of renewable energy and I understand from the Queensland expert panel's issues paper from May 2016 that the target is 50 per cent by way of renewable energy. The problem with that of course is that that percentage is not spread across a 24-hour cycle. Renewable energy is going to operate, generally speaking, when the sun is shining or the wind is blowing.

**Mr Bailey:** Haven't you heard about batteries?

**Mr McARDLE:** Battery technology is in its infancy and the minister is quite well aware of that. We have a long way to go to try and achieve renewable energy taking over from baseload power stations, because baseload power stations will need to be on stand-by for the dark hours during a whole day—the night-time hours—because solar panels will not function during that time and solar battery technology is a long way from providing the answer that the minister is trying to portray here tonight. We have many years to go until renewable energy can function effectively at night-time and we have the technology in place. Baseload power stations are going to be in play mainly because renewable energy simply does not function at night or when the wind is not blowing. That is the reality. At the end of the day this government has a history of not understanding the power sector, of treating the people of this state with disdain and, more importantly, of using these entities as cash cows for its own benefit. We cannot support this bill in its current form.

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (10.39 pm): I rise to speak to the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This bill facilitates the merger of Ergon and Energex. I truly believe that it is better to facilitate the merger of two government owned corporations than to sell them full stop. When the LNP was in power, it chose to sell off our energy assets. I would rather see the profits that our assets make go into our schools and our hospitals—go to the Queensland public—than go to multinational corporations. I believe that the intent of this bill is to return these government owned corporations to public ownership.

The Beattie government privatised the retail arm of our energy assets. In that privatisation, there was a perception that, because of competition, electricity retail prices would be reduced. Since that time, electricity prices have tripled. When the Beattie government sold off the electricity assets, it was supported by the Liberal National Party. Although the LNP supported it, the current opposition leader was upset, because the Beattie government was just selling the retail arm. The current opposition leader was hoping that the Beattie government would sell off the generators, the lines, the wires, the poles—everything. In this place there has been a lot of propaganda and a lot of finger-pointing.

In regard to the Master Electricians, I understand where they are coming from. I worked for Queensland Rail for 20 years. In that time there were bridge gangs, concrete gangs, flying gangs, welders, forklift operators and plant operators. We were concerned that contractors and hire companies from New South Wales would come in and take our jobs. As they were taking our jobs, we were seeing towns close down, communities close down. Yes, there is an element of understanding. However, it works both ways.

Tonight, we are debating the merger of assets. When Queensland Rail was divided into a freight service, a passenger service and a coal and minerals service, all of a sudden we saw the word 'corporatisation'. After 'corporatisation' there was 'privatisation'. That privatisation saw the selling by the

Bligh government of the coal component of Queensland Rail, which was earning \$1.7 billion each year. We saw the privatisation of the above rail section from Townsville to Mount Isa. As the Bligh government sold off these assets, the LNP was condemning it and campaigning against it. The ETU has been mentioned a number of times in this debate. When the Bligh government sold off these profitable assets, there was a massive campaign by the ETU against the Bligh government, led by Peter Simpson and Stewie Traill. Stewie Traill is probably one of the biggest socialists I have every met in my entire life, but I have to say that he is consistent. When Queenslanders got rid of the Bligh government, the Newman government came into power and gave the perception that it was going to be public servant friendly and that it would never sell our profitable assets. In the end, that government sacked 14,000 employees, declared war on everybody, and then said, 'We're going to sell all of our profitable assets.' The ETU then campaigned against the LNP government. This bill is not about the ETU, union mates and all of that, because I was there when the ETU campaigned against the Labor Party.

I think that the merging of these assets is about bringing them back into public ownership. I commend the Labor Party for introducing this bill. Yes, there are concerns in regard to the Master Electricians, but, as I said, when I worked for Queensland Rail there were concerns about local jobs being lost. This bill provides an opportunity. I believe that there is an opportunity for everyone in regard to the expansion of solar energy throughout rural and regional Queensland. The KAP has been pushing very hard for these opportunities to assist people in rural and regional Queensland to get access to solar power.

Privatisation is a bad thing. I do not support it. In this bill I see something that has potential and merit, and that is the merger of two government owned corporations. For a long time, people in rural and regional Queensland have been done over. The opposition leader saw the number of seats on his side reduce from 87 to 42, yet he is walking around saying that he is right. I see this bill as providing an opportunity. We have been calling for decentralisation. The LNP talks about decentralisation. This is an opportunity to bring the main headquarters to Townsville, which will benefit my region. That will not only create jobs but also create efficiencies, stop privatisation and bring these corporations back into public ownership. I support this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy, Biofuels and Water Supply) (10.47 pm), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their participation in this debate. I also wish to thank the members of the committee who spent time examining this bill. As members have heard throughout the debate today, the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is an important step to deliver on the Palaszczuk government's election commitment to merge the distribution businesses and drive efficiencies through the better integration of services and improved planning and maintenance of infrastructure.

This government has been very clear on its commitment to reduce network costs. In November last year, the Treasurer and I, as the shareholding ministers, directed Energex and Ergon to not appeal the Australian Energy Regulator's final determinations. In contrast, the ongoing appeal process in New South Wales has meant that, as a result, New South Wales electricity customers are facing higher electricity charges.

This merger is an important part of the government's debt action plan. The efficiencies achieved through this process will be used to reduce government debt. Making the businesses more efficient will release funds to invest in better services for all Queenslanders. The merger will create a more diverse business, where work practices will benefit from the combined experience and expertise of both companies. As an aside, when I visited the Energex and Ergon crews just over a year ago after Cyclone Marcia they were working together. Some of them had not seen each other since the last natural disaster. I can certainly attest to that exchange of skills and experience. This merged entity will continue to deliver high levels of safety, reliability and product excellence.

It is important to clarify that the bill does not provide for the establishment of the energy services business. The bill makes a number of consequential amendments to ensure various Queensland acts operate appropriately when Energex and Ergon become subsidiaries of the network parent company. Listening to the opposition speeches one might not gather those simple facts. The Corporations Act already provides a mechanism by which Energex, Ergon or the new parent company could incorporate a subsidiary. This bill is about ensuring that Energex and Ergon can continue to operate on a business-as-usual basis in a rapidly changing market.

Let me outline to the House how changing this market could possibly be. Bloomberg New Energy Finance research shows that the change in this area is substantial. Currently, we have less than one gigawatt of battery storage across the world. They are predicting that by 2040 there will be 759 gigawatt

hours of battery storage. That is the kind of growth that we are looking at in the near future and that we need to be considering. They are also predicting that the battery take-up within 12 years will be on the same level as solar PV is right now. When we look at the cost of lithium ion batteries, the costs in 2010 were \$1,000 a kilowatt hour; they are already down to \$300 and by 2030 they will be down to \$120. We are talking about a plunge down to one eighth of the cost in 20 years. We have to look at the context in which we are merging these businesses and why.

We are also committed to consulting with stakeholders, including the MEA, about the establishment of the new energy services business. This consultation has been ongoing and will continue as we work towards establishing a clear charter for the merged business. Charters for the merged business will incorporate the results of the stakeholder engagement and is separate to the bill's progress through the parliament. It is dangerous to prescribe what the new energy services business will do at this early stage. The energy sector, as I outlined, has experienced a transition and disruption on a grand scale. After massive growth in the deployment of solar PV across Queensland rooftops over the last six or seven years, as a result of Labor policies, we know that the next wave of disruption in energy will be battery storage at home and on the network. I did miss a couple of the opposition speakers, but out of 16 speakers I recall it was in the contribution of the member for Caloundra before we even heard the word 'battery' being mentioned by the opposition. That is quite extraordinary. Like solar PV, battery storage looms large as prices and costs continue to fall, just like solar PV did five years ago. Andy Vesey, the CEO of AGL, believes costs will fall 60 per cent in five years, and he may well be right. We are starting to see the emergence of domestic battery technology, digital meters and home energy management systems. It is great news for customers, providing greater control over their energy usage and their energy costs. I note at our energy department stall at the Ekka last year, the one issue people were overwhelmingly coming up and asking advice of our departmental people about was batteries and storage. People are engaged, they are interested and they are keen to know when the costs will be at the sweet spot.

The change also provides great opportunity to providers across the energy supply chain, including Master Electricians, but it also creates a challenge for electricity grid owners to adapt to the new energy market. In a sector where the pace of technological development is clearly rapid, the challenge for governments and industry is that technology is often ahead of regulation. We have to be prepared and not to close off options for managing that change and the substantial amount of resulting work that will flow from it.

It is clear that these amendments, in anticipating where the market will go, would have unintended consequences. Importantly, what it would mean is that we would be impeded from responding to the huge demands that are anticipated. We must deliver on our commitment to drive efficiencies through better integration of services and improved planning and maintenance of infrastructure. The effect of the opposition's position would effectively be to allow the MEA to create a monopoly in a part of the market, the very thing that they are accusing the government of. They are looking at a demarcation to reduce options for consumers and also for retail businesses. It is in the best interests of all Queensland electricity customers that there is a healthy market of competitive energy service providers who are offering a range of grid connected services to customers in all parts of Queensland.

It is important that with efficiencies we keep costs down. The Queensland public elected us on a mandate to keep our assets in public hands and to operate them commercially and profitably. Part of that mandate was to merge these businesses and, through that, generate savings—something we were open with the Queensland people about. They were an election commitment.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr BAILEY:** It might be a foreign idea to the opposition but we are wedded to our election commitments. We will deliver on them. This government has been very clear on its commitment to drive efficiencies and reduce network costs. In November last year the Treasurer and I as the shareholding ministers directed Energex and Ergon to not appeal those determinations. I have already outlined that ongoing appeal process in New South Wales. In Queensland our direction has meant that for the first time since the Queensland Competition Authority started determining electricity prices nine years ago, the fixed charge will reduce.

**Mr Hart** interjected.

**Mr BAILEY:** It did not happen under the opposition's watch, that is for sure. This was only possible because we kept our state assets in public hands. The recent Queensland Competition Authority determination is proof that the Palaszczuk government's efforts to stabilise electricity prices are

working, with the average annual increase over the first two years of the Palaszczuk government for residential customers only 1.2 per cent per annum—below the inflation rate. Compare that to the full term of the Newman government where we saw 43 per cent increases. That was one of the key reasons the previous government lost the faith of the Queensland people.

**Mr Hart** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Member for Burleigh, you are warned under standing order 253A.

**Mr BAILEY:** Let me speak briefly about the possible implications for the community service obligations where we subsidise electricity for regional Queensland so that people get a similar electricity price in Mount Isa, in Townsville and up on the cape as they do in South-East Queensland—a very important principle that has been part of our energy system and our economy in Queensland for 70 to 80 years. The government owned corporation revenue and dividends to government are on a downward trend. Consistent with our direction to our government owned corporation to accept the Australian Energy Regulator's revenue determination, pre-emptively restricting activities that the new energy services business can engage in could put at risk the government's ability to maintain the community service obligation the government currently pays to keep regional prices at the same level as those in South-East Queensland. This support comes at a cost of between \$500 million and \$600 million each year and is closely monitored by our government. Removing the CSO or undermining it could come at a significant cost to regional households and businesses alike, including members of the MEA. For example, I am advised that removing the community service obligation could increase residential prices by around 30 per cent in regional centres such as Townsville and many other places, with much higher increases in more remote areas where the cost to deliver it is more substantial. I would encourage all regional MPs, particularly those who have spoken against this motion, to consider what implication their position might have in terms of being able to subsidise regional electricity prices throughout Queensland if they got their way. In fact, the LNP members claim to be a defender of the regions but their ideology blinds them to the great opportunities for regional businesses—farmers, irrigators and graziers, for instance—of renewable energy to reduce on-farm costs. That is the new world that we are moving in and Labor understands that future.

I know that our parliamentary colleagues in this House in the Katter's Australian Party also understand that. We have had numerous discussions with Katter's Australian Party members about these issues. The government is committed to expanding opportunities for solar energy in rural areas. We know that the LNP members want this merger to fail. They want it to fail so that they can say that public ownership of our public assets does not work. This motion today is all about trying to nobble the efficiency of these great Queensland state assets. The LNP thinks there is no role for government organisations to operate commercially. It has it in for RoadTek, which operates commercially, efficiently and effectively at the coal face of our roadworks delivering for Queenslanders every day.

We understand that the MEA claims to represent members' interests, but I hope that they are not automatically taking whatever it is that the LNP is telling them. We will continue to work with the MEA. We believe that there will be more than enough work for all, as technological change becomes more affordable in the energy system. I encourage them to work with us constructively and without having regard to the LNP's clear fearmongering. I urge them to be open-eyed about the LNP's end goal of selling off our government owned corporations, which is something that we do not support.

We want consumers to have confidence when dealing with the new style of business that evolving technologies bring. As we speak, there is no national standard for battery installation, and that needs to be dealt with and dealt with soon. We are working with all the other states and the Commonwealth on this and we are playing a leading role. The COAG Energy Council is working with Standards Australia on an energy storage road map and Queensland is heavily engaged.

At this point, governments are not keeping track of available storage, in batteries or larger scale storage. Just recently, on 20 May, a consultation paper was released seeking industry and community feedback on how standards can best support the safe and effective rollout of energy storage. It is important that once those standards are established, work undertaken in the home is certified to comply with those safety standards for households. Both Energex and Ergon are at the leading edge of testing, trialling and integrating batteries to both households and the grid. I was very happy to visit some of those testing sites with the member for Barron River recently. In Cairns at the Ergon depot, two Tesla Powerwalls and a range of other batteries are being tested for their grid implications and their real-world relevance. That work is being done by Ergon and I know that Energex is doing similar work in Brisbane.

In Cairns, those seven different batteries certainly have network implications. We are very happy to partner with, for instance, Sunverge, a US Silicon Valley renewable energy company, and ARENA on 33 energy management systems in Toowoomba, Townsville and Cannonvale, getting real-world data. That is happening right now and we are heavily involved in that work.

This work gives the Palaszczuk government real firsthand knowledge and experience to help shape the national regulations in this time of disruption and transition in the energy sector. Likewise, last year Ergon rolled out 20 industrial sized grid utility support system units across their regional network to supplement traditional poles and wires work to reduce costs. In the current budget there is an allocation for the next financial year. It is appropriate and important for Energy Queensland to continue this work. The merger will enable Queensland to take full advantage of emerging technologies and the changing energy industry. The merger will also mean that the two networks can better leverage scale to invest in new technologies and find ways to better manage increasing levels of solar generation on the network.

A key objective of the proposed energy services business will be to facilitate opportunities for customers to access new grid connected products that allow them to control their energy usage, to lower their energy costs and to create greater value from their investments in solar, batteries and other emerging technologies. Retailers will be partnering with many providers to deliver the best outcome for customers. We anticipate that this will result in more job opportunities for electrical contractors and Master Electricians Australia members across Queensland as energy services grow in the future. Essentially, what we will probably see in the near future is something akin to what happened with solar PV, that is, once it takes off it really takes off. The transformation of the energy market is expected to create many more opportunities for the network business to engage with independent electrical contractors, to enable and support new services and products.

I will talk about what the new energy services business will likely do. The economic value and business models are only beginning to emerge now for new technologies. The potential roles for the energy services business in supporting those technologies will be determined by economic development, competitive neutrality and commercial considerations. However, the new energy services business will not install solar panels for residential customers. We are on the public record with that commitment. I reiterate that commitment here again tonight: the focus of the business will be on new markets and opportunities; it will not be about entering into markets that are already well serviced. We have said it before and we will say it again, even though the opposition does not want to listen or accept that fact. The new business is intended to focus on complex engineering solutions, utility scale offerings, highly regulated activities and platform services that allow for better integration of new technologies into the network. Beyond that, and in this time when the market and technology are evolving, we will not lock them out of other opportunities.

The new energy services business is not looking to compete with the current electrical service providers. That has never been the case. The work existing licensed electrical contractors do at the household level, such as solar installation, will continue and their relationship with a merged Ergon and Energex will also continue. The new energy services division will not only deliver up to 500 new jobs over the next decade but also expand the market for energy services overall, especially in regional Queensland. Electricians have been at the front line of rolling out hundreds of thousands of solar installations over the last several years across Queensland, as a direct result of Labor's incentive for solar uptake. In that regard, we are one of the world leaders in terms of the uptake of solar PV on domestic rooftops, which is something that this state should be proud of. Many times I have said that I want to see the sunshine state turned into the solar state. I remain committed to that goal.

As battery technology and markets emerge, we are also convinced that battery installation is another area they will move into and that the demand for that type of work will increase. All the signs are there and we believe there will be plenty of work in the market. We can guarantee that the new energy services business will compete on a level playing field with other providers, as it will be fully ring fenced from the regulated network business and functionally separate from the parent company's retail business. The LNP members are trying to frighten small business owners, because they want to bring public ownership into disrepute so that the member for Clayfield—Mr Asset Sales—can fulfil his ideological commitment of selling off our assets, despite the will of Queenslanders.

I will make one or two comments about ring fencing. Ring fencing is an absolute requirement under the national electricity rules for contestable activities. It is necessary to ensure that a monopoly business does not use its monopoly powers to cross subsidise and, therefore, distort an otherwise

competitive market. Ring-fencing requirements are currently being reviewed at the national level and we expect that they will, in fact, be further strengthened. That is an important and relevant fact in terms of the discussion of this legislation.

I turn my attention to a couple of matters that were raised in the debate by various members. The member for Toowoomba North said that there was no evidence of savings. I refer him to the Transportation and Utilities Committee report at page 12. The committee requested further details about the estimated savings. Queensland Treasury's written response advised that the total merger and efficiency savings include cost reductions in both businesses from board members, executives, employees, contractors, consultants, property costs and ICT expenditure. The estimated net savings do not include any potential revenues from the energy services business or other unregulated activities. It also covers boards, executives, finance, human resources, shared services and network overhead functions, such as asset management and procurement. If only the member had read the parliamentary committee report, he would not have wasted our time on that particular matter.

There was only one submission to the committee. When you get one submission from the public, there is not a lot of evidence that there is a significant enough issue to start travelling around the state and asking people for their views. This was an election commitment. We were up-front about it. The people of Queensland support it. In fact, it will be headquartered in Townsville. Therefore, it is a very strange proposition that we should go to Townsville and ask the people there—the very people who will benefit from having the headquarters located in their city—whether they think it is a good idea. That is a pretty obvious waste of public funds and expenses.

In response to the question from the member for Warrego, I confirm that the employees of Energex and Ergon do not have to reapply for their jobs in Energy Queensland. The member for Southport referred to concerning statements in the Energex response to the QPC issues paper from 13 September 2015 regarding potential risks in this structural reform. Both the QPC issues paper and the submission by Energex assumed a merger between Energex, Ergon and Powerlink. Given the significant differences between network distribution and transmission businesses, the merger task and risk profile would have been fundamentally different from the merger of Energex and Ergon. The government weighed the risks of the different options in reaching its final decision on the merger model.

The opposition of the LNP is ideological. Let us be very clear about that. They support privatisation. The evidence is still very clear about that. The member for Clayfield said on ABC Radio in October last year that he sees the role of government only as a regulator and not as an owner. He is keeping his options open as the new leader. What we are seeing today is a continuation of that ideological position from the LNP of proprivatisation. They are doing it here in a different way. It is not based upon evidence.

We have gone to people with this policy. We are putting it through the parliament tonight purely on that basis. Given that we are the government, one would think the opposition would allow it to pass. They still seem to be caught up in their support for privatisation and the Strong Choices agenda.

I have certainly covered a whole range of mistruths and fear campaigns in my summing-up. I say, in terms of the marketplace that this merged business is heading towards, that this government is interested and engaged in the future. We are preparing for the future. We are looking to the future. That is part of the framework in this legislation.

I thought the absence of opposition members talking about the future market for energy was really quite amazing. I was glad to see that the member for Caloundra touched on it towards the end of his contribution. To his credit, and as a former minister for energy, no doubt he probably has a better knowledge base than most other members.

I say to opposition members that this has been one of the most predictable markets for about 50 years or so. The growth of the energy sector tracked with general economic growth very consistently. What we are seeing now is that technical change is bringing with it a lot of challenges and disruption. It is a fascinating and challenging area. It is fast moving.

It is in that context that we as policymakers and legislators have to be across that kind of detail and policy. I saw from the opposition tonight an absolute lack of knowledge about what is going on in the energy sector. It was the same speech repeated over and over again. The lack of original research, the lack of original knowledge and the lack of curiosity was quite telling. We are not going to make that mistake. As a government we are going to be making the best possible decisions.

There are public energy companies all over the world that are well run and play fantastic roles in terms of good outcomes and socially just outcomes. We are in that tradition in Queensland. We will continue in that tradition. In the marketplace we are seeing the growth of electric vehicles driving down

the cost of batteries. Members should get their heads around some of those projections. As car makers like General Motors start mass producing accessible electric vehicles, the cost of batteries is plunging. That is going to have a massive impact in the energy sector.

Lithium battery firms are doing very well at the moment, for instance. We are seeing exponential growth in renewable energy right across the world. We are also seeing an industry that is doing the work around how the configuration happens. This merged company will play a significant role in that regard. With this renewable energy era on our doorstep, what we had was an ignorant team effort from the opposition. We are preparing for the future. This is a sensible bill. It is fulfilling our election commitment. It deserves the support of this House.

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

**AYES, 43:**

**ALP, 40**—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Byrne, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Donaldson, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Lauga, Linard, Lynham, Madden, Miles, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Pitt, Power, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Stewart, Trad, Whiting, Williams.

**KAP, 2**—Katter, Knuth.

**INDEPENDENT, 1**—Gordon.

**NOES, 39:**

**LNP, 39**—Barton, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Costigan, Cramp, Crandon, Cripps, Davis, Dickson, Elmes, Emerson, Frecklington, Hart, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Mander, McArdle, McEachan, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Perrett, Powell, Rickuss, Robinson, Rowan, Seeney, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Walker, Watts, Weir.

Pairs: Furner, Nicholls; Miller, Stuckey.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a second time.

### Consideration in Detail

Clause 1 to 6, as read, agreed to.

Clause 7—



**Mr BAILEY** (11.22 pm): I move the following amendments—

**1 Clause 7 (Replacement of ss 60A-60D)**

Page 10, after line 22—

*insert—*

(2A) At least 1 member of the board must be a community representative.

**2 Clause 7 (Replacement of ss 60A-60D)**

Page 11, after line 1—

*insert—*

**community representative** means a person who the Minister considers represents the interests of the communities in which Community Enterprise Queensland performs its functions.

I table the explanatory notes to the amendments.

*Tabled paper:* Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, explanatory notes to Hon. Mark Bailey's amendments [\[947\]](#).

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 7, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 8 to 45, as read, agreed to.

### Third Reading



**Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy, Biofuels and Water Supply) (11.22 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. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy, Biofuels and Water Supply) (11.23 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

**Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (11.23 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

### South-East Region Learning College

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (11.24 pm): Who among us would not be proud to boast about one of our education facilities—whether it be public or private primary schools, public or private high schools, a TAFE, college or a university—which had the following statistics. I am talking about a school boasting a 900 per cent plus growth in enrolment numbers over six years, which had 601 students enrolled in 2015, with that number to grow by around a further 300—that is around 900 students graduating by the end of 2016; a 98 per cent pass rate; 81 per cent attendance figures for students who could not manage to attend even 10 per cent of the time at their previous schools; 100 per cent of university bound students accepted into their university courses at the end of 2014 and 2015; and 41 per cent of graduating students re-enrolled with the college to continue with further studies. Just one week ago, on 8 June 2016, *School Improvement Review* was quoted as stating that the school review on this school was the best improvement review it had ever done. This school is Eagleby Learning Centre, now known as the South-East Region Learning College. This is a unique school with unique qualities and unique and dedicated educators.

Their vision statement, 'Success Starts Here', is based on the premise that everyone is entitled to an education. South-east Region Learning College, or SERL C, is leading the way in alternative education by challenging traditional methods of education delivery so that disenfranchised, disengaged and even formerly ineligible students have the opportunity to access education with real success. SERL C has become the exemplar for this by delivering a range of quality state secondary education and certificate courses in a flexible manner and, most importantly, successfully to second-chance learners using what is termed a flexible learning alternative EQ model that was developed right in the heart of Eagleby in the north of the Coomera electorate.

In closing, the region is now rolling out that learning program at Varsity Lakes and Eagleby and, hopefully very soon, we will see one also in the Coomera electorate in a perfectly positioned education facility at our marine precinct where there will be a great opportunity not only for education completion but for people to gain employment in that marine precinct.

### Dayboro Day Festival

 **Ms BOYD** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (11.27 pm): Once every year on the last Sunday of May the rural gem of Pine Rivers electorate, Dayboro, comes alive with thousands of visitors and puts on a great show to demonstrate what Dayboro is all about. It is the Dayboro Day Festival and Antique Fair. It really demonstrates what it is that makes Dayboro great. This year, Dayboro Day was another ratings success thanks to the wonderful work that the progress society and organising committee puts in. Dayboro and the surrounding suburbs have a fantastic sense of community spirit and volunteerism that keeps this event thriving and going from strength to strength, year on year.

This sense of community and volunteerism is on display for all to see with many community groups such as the Dayboro First Responders Group and the Rural Fire Brigades in Dayboro, Clear Mountain, Ocean View and Samsonvale to name only a few. For the House's benefit, during Dayboro Day the main street is cordoned off and comes alive with a vibrant street parade, a mix of stalls and shops, community organisations and groups that line the streets, adjoining parks and spaces. At the showground precinct there is the antiques and collectable stores. One of the highlights was the waterless raft race where five local community groups 'printed' down the street. Entrants built their raft crafts so they could race within that craft, and the Dayboro Lions Club had an entry named 'Priscilla'. They came to compete with their members dressed up in dresses with sequins and fabulous wigs. There was even the famous thong dress from the movie 'Priscilla' to go with the oversized eyelashes and the lips on the craft decorating it.

The Dayboro Day Festival awards are coveted community awards that acknowledge the dedication and commitment from local activists who go above and beyond. It was my pleasure to award the Young Achiever Award to Brent Steffensen, who has been actively involved in the Dayboro State School, the Scouts and the Lions. The Residents of the Year Award had joint recipients this year. Mark Rushton, whose daughter Millie received the award on his behalf, received the award for his work with the Dayboro Day, the show, the rodeo, Clean Up Australia Day and the flood clean-up effort. The other recipient was Errol Brough. He received his award for being a founding member of the Dayboro Trail Riders Club, for his work with the Dayboro Show Society over more than 26 years and for his involvement with the Dayboro Players. I also want to acknowledge Debbie Law, who picked up the Business Recognition Award for her work with a little cafe named Rendezvous, which is a fantastic cafe and bookstore in William Street that is nine years old.

I want to congratulate the organising committee, particularly Mark and Maria Hansen and Lexie Bell, who are stepping down from their roles after a very long time involved in Dayboro Day organisation and coordination. I want to pay a special tribute to them for their longstanding efforts in making Dayboro Day such a success for the community.

### **Southport Electorate, Broadwater Chapel**

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (11.31 pm): I rise today to speak about an excellent community achievement in my electorate of Southport. The Rotary Broadwater Chapel was once a well-loved place of prayer and reflection at its former home in the old Gold Coast Hospital in Southport. However, through a major labour of love over the past two years, the Rotary Club of Broadwater Southport are proud to have saved it from demolition and given it a whole new lease of life.

It was built in the 1980s, after the hardworking volunteers of the Gold Coast Hospital auxiliary raised \$80,000 through the sale of tea, coffee and sandwiches to build the chapel at the former Gold Coast Hospital. However, when the hospital was set for demolition as a result of our great new Gold Coast University Hospital, Councillor Dawn Crichlow, the Rotary Club of Broadwater Southport and I worked together to ensure that this important part of Southport history was preserved. I particularly want to acknowledge the former deputy premier, the member for Callide, for his intervention in allowing us to rescue the old chapel from the hands of the demolishers at the time. He certainly helped us push through some of the red tape and get things sorted.

The chapel now lives at the northern end of the magnificent Broadwater Parklands. Councillor Crichlow and I had the pleasure of officially opening the chapel on Friday, 20 May. The chapel is now available for hire and all proceeds will be allocated to Rotary supported projects serving community first and humanity as a whole. A huge congratulations has to go to Mr and Mrs Rayner—and Susie Barta—who were the first couple to be married in the chapel on 23 April. An even bigger congratulations goes to the amazing team who shed blood, sweat and tears over the project: Mr James Kennett, former president of the Rotary Club of Broadwater Southport, who absolutely made this project his pride and joy; Mr Dennis O'Brien, the current president of Rotary Club of Broadwater Southport; Ms Jenny Crewes, the club service director who orchestrated the opening; and Mr Ian Hall, of the Gold Coast Skills Centre in Arundel, who organised some volunteer and skills based labour to help out. Ian also sourced funding, and a team of 12 young men—under the guidance of on-site supervisor and registered builder, Kim Jones, and also with contributions from Michael Byrne—worked tirelessly on the project. Councillor Crichlow and members of the Rotary Club of Broadwater Southport armed themselves with paintbrushes on weekend working bees and pitched in to ensure the chapel was completed and ready for the opening.

It has only been through the dedication of all these amazing people that we have been able to not only save the chapel and its legacy but give new life to this important piece of Southport history. I am proud to say that I played a part in making this dream a reality. I want to thank all of these people in our community for their hard work and for working together to create such a lasting legacy in honour of all the incredible women who worked at the hospital auxiliary over many, many years.

### **Port of Brisbane, Port Drive Duplication**

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (11.34 pm): Last week I was delighted to attend with the Hon. Mark Bailey, Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports, and Mr Roy Cummins, CEO of the Port of Brisbane, at the announcement of the Port of Brisbane Port Drive duplication project. This \$110 million upgrade to Port Drive is a great commitment by the Port of Brisbane and a show of confidence in the Queensland economy.

The port is a fabulous economic enabler for this state, with over \$50 billion in trade handled through the port the last financial year alone. At any time, there are over 2,000 people working at the Port of Brisbane and many of them are local families from the bayside. Each year, more than 3.1 million vehicles access the port, and that is projected to grow substantially over time.

This project, which is being delivered ahead of time, is a great example of long-term planning and safety at the Port of Brisbane. Beginning construction well before capacity ensures that the impact on current and future port operations will be minimal, meaning that the port can operate as business as usual. Importantly, the road will be widened to accommodate two lanes each way and will include a concrete separation barrier the full length of the road, providing additional safety for the road users. This duplication will improve safety for all users of the port now and into the future. The duplication will also ensure that emergency service vehicles can access the port. Currently, should an emergency occur and the road is closed, the only way in or out is via the Brisbane River as there is only one way in or out with the current road infrastructure.

There is also great news for cyclists with a segregated cycle path. This path will allow cyclists to ride to Port Gate on their own designated cycle path—not compete with the heavy vehicles and other traffic on Port Drive. This is a great safety improvement for cyclists and will enable them to ride to Port Gate on a safe, dedicated path. Cyclists can then utilise the cycle facilities at Port Gate. This fabulous initiative will improve the local and South-East Queensland cycle network.

Our local boaties and fisherpeople will also benefit from this upgrade by being provided with safer and easier access to the public boat ramp. Currently, access to the boat ramp is only available via the exit side of Port Drive, which requires people to drive onto the island and come back and then cross the railway tracks, which is a complex manoeuvre.

This project, which is estimated to take up to two years, will support close to 390 jobs during construction. The Port of Brisbane is committed to ensuring that they remain a world-class facility by duplicating Port Drive. They will continue to provide state-of-the-art access to the facility. The port's commitment to safety for all port users, including cyclists, and to improving access to public facilities is great work by this fabulous corporate citizen. I look forward to continuing to work with the Port of Brisbane.

### Noosa Electorate, Queensland Day

 **Mr ELMES** (Noosa—LNP) (11.37 pm): I want to congratulate each of the hardworking, selfless volunteers who on Queensland Day were rewarded and honoured at the inaugural Noosa electorate Queensland Day awards. The birth of Queensland on 6 June 1859 resulted from a clear vision for independence and identity, in much the same way as communities grow and define themselves over time. Communities can be small or large, they can be geographically or interest based, they can be physical or virtual. All of them have one thing in common—that is, without the work of volunteers, they would struggle to survive. In fact, I am sure all members of the House would agree that volunteering is what makes Queensland great, and that is why Queensland Day is the perfect day to say thank you. I table the program from the inaugural Noosa electorate Queensland Day awards, which lists the names of 53 individual recipients and the not-for-profit groups which nominated them as their very own Queenslander of the year.

*Tabled paper:* Document, undated, titled 'Noosa Electorate Inaugural Queensland Day Award Ceremony—Recognising volunteers in our community' [\[948\]](#).

According to the economic and social value of volunteering on the Sunshine Coast November 2015 report, there are an estimated 64,000 Sunshine Coast volunteers who contribute 8.3 million hours annually, with an economic value of \$245 million in unpaid wages. While there are a range of events and ceremonies on local and national stages which celebrate and recognise the work of the not-for-profit sector as a whole, I believe at times the individual members of the volunteering army get lost behind the big machinery of change makers. That is why my Queensland Day awards called upon the groups themselves to look closely at their membership and identify their stand-out volunteer, recognise their individual effort and elect them to be the winner of the award.

At the award ceremony, more than 200 supporters cheered 53 hardworking local volunteers on to the stage where they were presented with an engraved medallion and a certificate of recognition before the group was given a standing ovation by the crowd. While shining the spotlight on the individual, the event also showcased the diversity of the not-for-profit sector, which was both an education and an uplifting experience for all involved. I believe by putting a name and a face to volunteerism we successfully profile and celebrate positive role models. In doing so, we inspire others

to follow in their footsteps to continue to nourish happy, healthy and vibrant communities. I would like to say a particular thank you to the event sponsors—the Tewanin community Bendigo Bank, Noosa News and Noosa One Stop Print and Sign Centre—for their support and for joining with me to give a little bit back to those who have given so much.

### Kevin the Peacock

 **Mr KING** (Kallangur—ALP) (11.39 pm): I never expected to be talking about this tonight. It is with great sadness that I learnt today that Kevin the peacock, who has roamed the grounds of Dakabin State High School for the past few years, has passed away. While many schools have great kids, great teachers and a strong sense of community, Dakabin State High School is the only one that I know of that had a great peacock as well. Dakabin State High School has a great agricultural program and competes successfully in many state shows but never expected to be home to a peacock.

I am told that Kevin moved into the school grounds in late 2012 when things were quieter at the school, apparently seeking refuge after nearby Alma Park Zoo where he was living caged. Staff wondered whether he would move on over the holidays, but when they returned in January he was still there. A lesser peacock may have chosen to flee the chaos of hundreds of teenagers, but not Kevin. He stayed and made himself a home at Dakabin State High School. This is, of course, a credit to the students of Dakabin State High School and maybe the agricultural program. Even with hundreds of teenagers running around, they were the kind of teenagers Kevin still felt safe around and he chose to stay and make his home there. It is also a credit to staff at the school such as Sandra Kane and Tamie Hay, who took extra-special care of Kevin, ensuring he always had something to eat and something to drink. I am told that his favourite food was sunflower seeds and he had his own pigeonhole in the staff room. His favourite pastime was looking at his reflection in the mirror, especially when he was fanning his feathers.

Contrary to popular belief, he was not named after Kevin Rudd. He was named after a colourful bird called Kevin from the Disney movie *Up* by administration officer Nicole Baker. Honourable members may wonder why I am devoting time to talking about a peacock. Kevin was more than a peacock and his presence was one of the binding factors of the Dakabin school community. He became a symbol for the school and featured on the front of Dakabin's yearbook. As one staff member said, it was difficult to see Kevin and not be brought to a smile no matter how rough the day had been.

Special mention must be made of the RSPCA, who treated Kevin over the past few weeks when he sustained an injury to a talon. I am told the RSPCA refused to accept payment from the school for the treatment, but Dakabin staff and students then held a fundraiser and donated the \$500 raised to the RSPCA. I am sure that there will be some sort of permanent memorial to Kevin built at Dakabin and I will assist in any way I can. Not too many birds can get a school to raise \$500, move staff and students to tears and get a mention in the Queensland parliament. However, from all accounts, Kevin was a very special bird. RIP Kevin the peacock.

### Gold Coast, Cruise Ship Terminal

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (11.42 pm): I rise to speak to the Gold Coast City Council's feasibility report on three potential sites for a cruise ship terminal on the Gold Coast. Firstly, I would like to congratulate Mayor Tom Tate on his resounding success at the March local government election where he secured 64 per cent of the primary vote. This is an election at which the mayor put the Gold Coast's cruise ship terminal proposal at the front and centre of his campaign. He is now working hard to deliver this key election commitment. Just last week he announced that the council will investigate three potential offshore locations, namely extending the southern seaway rock wall to accommodate a cruise terminal; extending the existing sand pumping jetty near Doug Jennings Park; or, thirdly, constructing a dedicated pier south of Sea World to combine a cruise ship terminal and dive platform. The Gold Coast City Council is considering an offshore or ocean side terminal. This design is based on a pier system that is already being used in popular cruise ship destinations like Costa Maya in Mexico.

As the member for Surfers Paradise and a proud Gold Coast resident, I have always given my in-principle support to the concept of a cruise ship terminal providing that it stacks up environmentally, economically and has community support. This is a project which has the potential to strengthen our standing as the premier tourism destination of Australia whilst maintaining our unique and picturesque city. To achieve this, it is my opinion that this feasibility study should be accompanied by a council master plan for The Spit area incorporating community and stakeholder input, a generation after Vision 2020, which was done nearly a generation ago in 2002. It could deal with issues such as building

heights and a plan to resolve traffic congestion issues caused by the bottleneck entrance at Waterways Drive and the narrow single lanes from the Sea World car park north. The master plan would give residents, particularly those in Main Beach, the proper consideration that they deserve with regard to their amenity and other residents of the Gold Coast the certainty of future planning.

Annastacia Palaszczuk, the Premier, visited the Gold Coast during the 2015 election campaign and announced her only Gold Coast policy: to shut down any plans for a cruise ship terminal. As a response, our constituents answered by electing 10 out of 10 LNP candidates. Despite having majority support, Gold Coasters' pleas for a cruise ship terminal continue to be trampled by a Brisbane-centric Labor government. Brisbane is currently considering a second cruise ship terminal whilst the minister refused to even look at plans that would potentially allow the Gold Coast a share in the cruise ship terminal industry over which Brisbane currently has a monopoly in South-East Queensland.

Unlike the current government, the former LNP government listened to residents of the Gold Coast and committed to investigating the project. It is a growing industry that has had a 30 per cent increase annually over the last 10 years. The mayor himself has publicly stated that, if the final design does not meet any environmental impact study conditions, he will be the first to rule it out.

It is really important that we have a look at these issues, whether it is about law and order at the Gold Coast or this issue about the cruise ship terminal. Otherwise, we will hang these issues like millstones around the neck of the Labor Party right up until the next election. Annastacia Palaszczuk promised a government of jobs, jobs, jobs. It is a shame that all the Gold Coast has heard from this government is 'No, no, no.'

### **Mackay, Farm to Plate Strategy**

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (11.45 pm): By 2020 the Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday regions will be a community connected by our food. We will be recognised as the fresh taste destination grown out of authentic seasonal experiences. This is the vision of the Greater Whitsunday Food Network, a not-for-profit community organisation established to oversee the implementation of the Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday regional Farm to Plate strategy. This network is driven by a diverse group of passionate individuals who are instigating change and fostering growth in our local food culture amongst the community and our region.

Queensland Week 2016 was a special time for the Greater Whitsunday Food Network with the launch of the Greater Whitsunday Farmers Market and the Farm to Plate dinner. I was thrilled to attend both of these events to represent the Queensland government that helped make these projects a reality. Mackay Regional Council was successful in obtaining a state government Queensland Week grant for the Queensland Week Farm to Plate dinner. This grant was made available to help communities celebrate what is special and unique about their part of our great state, and for our part of the great state that is our fresh produce. The Farm to Plate dinner was a perfect example of what the Queensland government aimed to achieve through the Queensland Week grants.

The Farm to Plate dinner was a true celebration of the region's most outstanding produce grown, caught or raised locally by passionate producers in the Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday regions. Dishes were prepared by Queensland favourite chef Matt Golinski along with four other local chefs who prepared meals from the farm to the plate. All food at the dinner was grown locally.

Leading up to the dinner, a number of activities took place to encourage conversations about Queensland Week and supporting local farmers, including the very first Greater Whitsunday Farmers Market held in Mackay city centre. A perfect winter afternoon in Mackay was the ideal backdrop for the farmers' market, which will now be held each Wednesday in the Mackay city heart. The Queensland Week Farm to Plate dinner and the associated lead-up activities connected the best of our people, places and producers to create an authentic quality farm-to-plate experience and ultimately encourage local residents to support our local farmers. This event will assist the Greater Whitsunday Food Network build our local food economy and provide a catalyst for future agritourism opportunities in our region.

On behalf of the state government, I congratulate the Greater Whitsunday Food Network, the Mackay Regional Council, local farmers and the suppliers and producers.

### **Queen's Birthday Honours**

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (11.48 pm): I rise to talk about some Queen's Birthday honours for hardworking community members in Toowoomba. The first person I would like to talk about is George Williamson, OAM. George has been involved in the Lions Club of Toowoomba West for

many, many years. In fact, he is the longest serving Lion in Queensland, with 57 years of service. He has been involved in the Carnival of Flowers, as have many of our service clubs in Toowoomba. If anybody visited FarmFest recently, he would have been out there serving food and involved in the food distribution. He has been involved in Camp Duckadang, which is hosted on behalf of the Toowoomba District Down Syndrome Support Group. Over his time in Lions he has received the 50-year Lions Club Monarch Award, he is a Lions International Life Member and a Melvin Jones Fellow.

The second person I would like to speak about is Doug Harland. Doug Harland OAM has been involved in Sunrise Way, which was a much needed facility in our community for many, many years. He has been involved as a volunteer for 13 or 14 years. It is a drug rehabilitation centre which was born after a public meeting in 2001 to address drug deaths and complications in our community. The facility is now up and running, but it took many years of Doug's hard work to do that.

The last person I would like to speak about is a good mate of mine, Uncle Darby McCarthy OAM. That sounds really good, Darbs. For him to have achieved such a goal is an amazing feat. Darby was one of Toowoomba and Australia's greatest jockeys. He has been recognised for his service to the horseracing industry on many occasions. He was a jockey from 1950 to 1991. He won the AJC Derby, the Epsom Handicap, three Stradbroke handicaps in 1963, 1964 and 1966, and all of those were before he even got to vote in Australia. At age 10 he rode in his first meeting, which was an unregistered meeting at Thargomindah for the Flying Doctors and the returned soldiers. He is an ambassador of Racing Victoria's Indigenous Scholarship Program; the current chair of the Toowoomba Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sporting and Community Association; he has a race in Geelong named after him; he was inducted into Racing Queensland's Hall of Fame in 2004; he is an elder of the Queensland Murri Court in Toowoomba; he is chair of the Downs Aboriginal and Islander Housing Company; and a member of the Toowoomba Regional Council's Heritage Advisory Committee. He is a good mate of mine and he works really hard in our community to make sure that young Indigenous people can grow up to be all they can be. He is a man who believed in himself and backed himself. To get an OAM is a great achievement, Darby. Well done!

### **Service Against Sexual Violence**

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (11.52 pm): Earlier this month I was privileged to launch the Service Against Sexual Violence in Ipswich. The SASV is an initiative of the Domestic Violence Action Centre in Ipswich, and I am pleased to say that DVAC is receiving \$1.177 million from the 2016-17 budget to respond to domestic and family violence in Ipswich and a share in \$1.118 million to deliver support to vulnerable Queenslanders. This includes support to those who have experienced sexual violence, and I commend Minister Fentiman for her good work in this area.

Sexual violence is one of the most violating experiences an individual can endure. Sexual assault is any sexual contact against a person's will or without consent or that takes advantage of a person who is not able to give consent. This behaviour is reprehensible, and it involves any sexual behaviour that makes a person feel uncomfortable, frightened and threatened. Sexual assault can include any coerced or forced sexual activities or sex related activities, including those that involve violence or pain, rape, childhood sexual abuse and indecent assault. As members can appreciate, the impact of these actions on the victims of sexual assault are far-ranging and devastating. The Service Against Sexual Violence is committed to providing respectful sexual violence support services to survivors aged 14 and over.

It is difficult for survivors of sexual violence to come forward and share their stories, and it is one of the aims of the SASV to provide survivors with a safe and supportive space. This service is a community based organisation with a strong understanding of gender and diversity. It recognises that LGBTQIA individuals experience significant levels of both physical and sexual violence. The service also acknowledges the diversity of experiences held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The SASV is committed to delivering sensitive services and providing a safe place for all.

The Service Against Sexual Violence provides counselling and support for women and men aged 14 years and over; support for family, friends and caregivers of survivors; information, advice and referral; group work for women, men and young people; and community education. These services are provided by a small but wonderful and dedicated team of two counsellors and a part-time team leader. I would like to make special mention of two DVAC workers: General Manager Gabrielle Borgaard and Operations Manager Bec Shearman, who have spearheaded this new service.

The service works closely with West Moreton Hospital and Health Service providers, including community and acute mental health teams, the Sexual Health Clinic and Sexual Assault Response Team and other stakeholders. The SASV is an excellent initiative and I look forward to working with them into the future.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 11.54 pm.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Bailey, Barton, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Byrne, Costigan, Cramp, Crandon, Crawford, Cripps, D'Ath, Davis, de Brenni, Dick, Dickson, Donaldson, Elmes, Emerson, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Frecklington, Gilbert, Gordon, Grace, Harper, Hart, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Katter, Kelly, King, Knuth, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Lauga, Leahy, Linard, Lynham, Madden, Mander, McArdle, McEachan, Miles, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Perrett, Pitt, Powell, Power, Pyne, Rickuss, Robinson, Rowan, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Seeney, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Trad, Walker, Watts, Weir, Wellington, Whiting, Williams