FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT

Wednesday, 11 May 2011

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The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.
Mr Speaker (Hon. John Mickel, Logan) read prayers and took the chair.

PRIVILEGE

Alleged Deliberate Misleading of the House by a Minister

Mr McLINDON (Beaudesert—TQP) (9.31 am): I wish to advise the House that I will be writing in detail to you to refer the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services to the Integrity, Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee on four counts of intentionally misleading the House for the following reasons: when it comes to assaults we have a statement on Channel 7 Townsville from the State President of the Custodial Officers Common Interest Group—

Ms SPENCE: Mr Speaker, could I ask for your ruling on this? Is it necessary for members to stand up and announce to the chamber when they are going to write to you or can they simply write to you about these matters? This is the second day this member has taken up the time of the House to do this.

Mr SPEAKER: It is true that they can do either. What I usually do with members is allow them to give a short explanation. The member will give a short explanation and then he will write to me. I will give him the courtesy of a short explanation, as I would give each and every one of you.

Mr McLINDON: I table an article where a prison guard goes public saying that porn is available in prisons. I table a list of 177 items in the prisons which includes pornography. Finally, when it comes to statistics, the minister misled the House. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the prior imprisonment rate in Queensland is 61.3 per cent, not 33.5 per cent as stated. Furthermore, that is not even Townsville specific. They are the reasons.

Tabled paper: Copy of prisoner canteen price list/order form [4413].
Tabled paper: Copy of an article from the Brisbane Times, dated 11 May 2011, titled ‘Soft porn allowed in prisons: guard’ [4414].
Tabled paper: Document titled, undated, ‘Assaults in prison’ [4415].
Tabled paper: Document titled, undated, ‘Pornography in Prisons’ [4416].

PETITIONS

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

Ellengrove, Proposed Train Station
Ms Palaszczuk, from 60 petitioners, requesting the House to recommit to the construction of a train station at Ellengrove as previously announced [4417].

Bribie Island Bridge
Mrs Sullivan, from 65 petitioners, requesting the House to urgently investigate, consult with the community, and consider fast tracking the design and planning of a duplicate Bribie Island Bridge, including an appropriate pedestrian/cycle way [4418].

Tallebudgera Valley, Boral Gold Coast Hard Rock Quarry
Mrs Stuckey, from 6,909 petitioners, requesting the House to stop construction of the proposed Boral Gold Coast Hard Rock Quarry at Tallebudgera Valley by refusing the application under the State Development and Public Works Act 1971; and to preserve this area for future generations [4419].

Petitions received.

TABLED PAPERS

MINISTERIAL PAPERS TABLED BY THE CLERK
The following ministerial papers were tabled by the Clerk—

Acting Premier (Mr Lucas)—
Letter, dated 26 April 2011, from the Acting Premier (Mr Lucas) to the Clerk of the Parliament enclosing a copy of correspondence from the Commonwealth Parliament’s Joint Standing Committee on Treaties regarding proposed international treaty actions tabled in both houses of the Federal Parliament on 23 March 2011 and the Treaties and National Interest Analyses for the proposed treaty actions listed in the letter
Hon. PT Lucas (Lytton—ALP) (Acting Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State) (9.33 am): The federal budget released last night is a good Labor budget for Queensland. This federal budget delivers what a recovering state needs most; some $4.6 billion in total federal NDRRA funding for the reconstruction effort; more than $213 million to help local councils repair infrastructure; and exceptional circumstances assistance of up to $176.5 million for council’s water and sewerage, the Brisbane ferry terminals, Riverwalk and vital marine infrastructure for the Cassowary Coast. The budget also delivers what a growing state needs for the future—a long-term commitment to skills and infrastructure.

Queensland will share in up to 70,000 new training places and 22,500 new apprentices nationwide as part of a new $661 million Skills for Sustainable Growth strategy. This includes funding to address skills hotspots and a Critical Skills Investment Fund which will work with industry to deliver training places where they are needed most. Alongside our government’s skills commission, this is another key step in linking training places with the skills demand Queensland’s growth industries like LNG require.

The $100 million Suburban Jobs Initiative announced by the federal Treasurer last night will support our decentralisation agenda, allocating funds to assist state governments in planning employment precincts and manufacturing hubs close to new growth areas, reducing travel times and congestion.

The federal Labor government, unlike the Howard government, recognises that infrastructure is a shared commitment and this budget provides $1.2 billion in 2011-12 alone toward a long list of important infrastructure projects across Queensland, including the Moreton Bay Rail Link, the Townsville Ring Road, the Mackay Ring Road, the Peak Downs Highway, the Blacksoil interchange, the Gladstone Port Access Road and the Bruce and Capricorn Highway intersection.

This is a budget that recognises Queensland’s immediate priority is the reconstruction of our state after the worst natural disasters in our history. But it is also a budget for our future that recognises Queensland needs federal government investment in skills and infrastructure to enable us to keep generating jobs and delivering economic growth.

Hon. PT Lucas (Lytton—ALP) (Acting Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State) (9.36 am): Under Operation Queenslander we are spending money right across the state to get our roads fixed and our communities and businesses back on their feet. I can report today that repairs to our roads are now moving into top gear as we get a respite from endless rainfall and flooding that has so far prevented major repair work. I think we had a metre of rain in the Cassowary Coast in March, off the top of my head.

Mr Gibson interjected.

Mr Lucas: I am happy to take that interjection from the honourable member. I am also very pleased to inform the House that state and federal NDRRA funding is now beginning to deliver very large sums of money for reconstruction. NDRRA funding is central to Operation Queenslander and will drive infrastructure recovery in our state.

Federal Treasurer Wayne Swan last night detailed a total federal allocation to Queensland of more than $4.7 billion in flood reconstruction funds and over $950 million in cyclone reconstruction funds, including over $2 billion in advance payments for 2010-11. We have about $8 billion or so worth of damage in Queensland. The Commonwealth government is picking up 75 per cent of that. The damage bill for our colleagues in New Zealand is $16 billion. They have no federal government to pick up 75 per cent of it. Their economy is the same size as ours. Spare a thought for them. That is why our federation is so important to us.

Mr Rickuss: Are you going to include New Zealand in our federation now, are you?
Mr LUCAS: No. Today I can announce the tip of the iceberg—some $104 million in new NDRRA road repair projects have just been approved. More than $82 million of repair work is about to start on the Warrego Highway. The reconstruction work, part of Operation Queenslander, will involve repairs to 26 various sections, totalling 90 kilometres of work, between Jackson and Roma. Works will involve asphalt overlay and road rehabilitation. Not only does this road service local industries such as livestock, farming and gas; but the works themselves will generate 861 jobs. In North-West Queensland, nearly $22 million of reconstruction work is set to get underway on the Burke Developmental Road and the Kennedy Developmental Road, to provide safer, smoother travelling conditions for regional motorists. These vital pavement rehabilitation works are expected to be complete by the end of the year in readiness for the next wet season and will sustain 231 direct and indirect jobs.

This is just the start of hundreds of road reconstruction projects that will be delivered across the state over the next two years. The Queensland Reconstruction Authority has been working closely with Main Roads Minister Craig Wallace and federal Infrastructure Minister Anthony Albanese on the rollout of road reconstruction projects. The federal Treasurer Wayne Swan and Senator Joseph Ludwig, the minister assisting the Attorney-General on Queensland’s flood recovery, have also been instrumental in allocating the funds needed to get Queensland back on its feet.

The commitment of our government to the reconstruction effort is reflected in the federal budget delivered last night and will be evident in the state budget to be delivered on 14 June. Yesterday, in relation to NDRRA payments, I indicated that since February when I became minister we have approved a total of $440 million in funding under the REPA program. I indicated that $9 million is currently under assessment, but I think it is actually $10.5 million. I correct that.

Operation Queenslander

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Acting Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State) (9.39 am): Operation Queenslander, one of the largest disaster recovery programs ever undertaken in our nation’s history, is making real headway. Its second monthly report shows the arteries of industry—our ports, roads and rail—are fast getting back to full operational. More than 67 per cent of all damaged state and federal roads have been recovered, which is an increase of 26 per cent on the last report, and nearly 90 per cent of our damaged railway network has been repaired. Only one of the 411 damaged schools, Milperra, remains closed and is due to reopen in the next few weeks.

In addition, the report shows that we paid out more than $34 million in grants under the Department of Community Safety’s Personal Hardship Assistance Scheme, and this includes household contents grants of up to $5,120 and structural assistance grants of up to $14,200. We have paid 3,700 grants totalling $23.4 million to small businesses and 3,953 grants totalling $22.1 million to primary producers to assist those key industries to get back on their feet. Operation Clean Up is well underway across the Far North. There are 180 properties with jobs either completed, in progress or their applications being assessed, with $650,000 provided to job agencies to pay for this work. Primary producers and small business owners are also being assisted. For example, on one cattle property, timber has been cleared from 36 kilometres of fence line.

We have repeatedly stated that we do not want to just rebuild; we want to rebuild better. That is why today I am pleased to invite the community of Grantham to have their say on the Rebuilding Grantham Together proposed development scheme. The Queensland Reconstruction Authority produced a red-tape busting Queensland first in releasing a draft development scheme literally days after the release of council’s master plan for the new community. It marks the next major stage of the Lockyer Valley community’s voluntary relocation program.

The proposed development scheme sets out the type of development that will occur on the new Grantham reconstruction area site in the future. It outlines the urban areas of the new site and the infrastructure that will be required to support the development. This is not just about relocating people; it is about further development for Grantham to provide it with a more sustainable population base into the future, which is a very good thing for the community as the town had declined a little following the opening of the Warrego Highway bypass. I invite the community to find out more about the proposed development scheme and have its say on the proposals for the new Grantham community.

Importantly, the authority’s development plan includes an implementation strategy setting out how the development will be delivered. Our goals have not changed. We want to see building on the new site commence by midyear and see some people in their new homes by Christmas. Importantly, this new development and the voluntary relocation program will be open to other residents in the Lockyer Valley whose homes were destroyed by January’s flash floods. Residents from other valley towns such as Helidon, Withcott, Murphys Creek and Postmans Ridge will be invited to participate in the council’s voluntary land swap and voluntary relocation plan, where they meet the appropriate council criteria.

In addition, the report confirms we have paid $310,000 in grants to support the Taralga Lockyer Valley community’s voluntary relocation program. The department has also approved a voluntary land swap with the Lockyer Valley community and will be reimbursing them for the cost of moving. This includes an increase of 26 per cent on the last report, and nearly 90 per cent of our damaged railway network has been repaired. Only one of the 411 damaged schools, Milperra, remains closed and is due to reopen in the next few weeks.

The report also confirms we have paid out more than $34 million in grants under the Department of Community Safety’s Personal Hardship Assistance Scheme, and this includes household contents grants of up to $5,120 and structural assistance grants of up to $14,200. We have paid 3,700 grants totalling $23.4 million to small businesses and 3,953 grants totalling $22.1 million to primary producers to assist those key industries to get back on their feet. Operation Clean Up is well underway across the Far North. There are 180 properties with jobs either completed, in progress or their applications being assessed, with $650,000 provided to job agencies to pay for this work. Primary producers and small business owners are also being assisted. For example, on one cattle property, timber has been cleared from 36 kilometres of fence line.

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Public consultation is open from 11 May 2011 to 23 June 2011. Community members can view the proposed development scheme on the authority’s website, in person at the authority’s office or in person at the Lockyer Valley Regional Council. The authority will also be hosting community information sessions where land use planning experts will brief the community on the proposed development scheme and how it will be implemented. Those sessions will be held at the Grantham State School on Wednesday, 11 May from 6 pm and on Saturday, 14 May from 10 am. Operation Queenslander is in full swing, and together we are rebuilding a stronger and more resilient Queensland.

Ecosciences Precinct

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Acting Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State) (9.43 am): I am pleased to inform the House that Hassell Architects has been awarded this year’s top Brisbane Regional Architecture Award for its design work on the state government’s Ecosciences Precinct at Dutton Park. On Friday Hassell was awarded the prestigious John Dalton Award for Building of the Year. I congratulate the team at Hassell for its outstanding work on this project. The award is not only a testament to Hassell’s design expertise but is also proof of the state government’s ability to deliver world-class research facilities.

The Ecosciences Precinct, on the site of the infamous Boggo Road gaol, is Australia’s first centre dedicated to tackling the country’s biggest environmental issues. Last month the Premier officially opened the precinct, which brings together 1,000 scientists from four state science agencies and six divisions of the CSIRO. Those professionals are working together in a single collaborative research environment to tackle environmental challenges including climate change, biosecurity, air and water quality, and sustainable industries. The Ecosciences Precinct was delivered within budget and ahead of time, incorporating a range of innovative sustainability initiatives to minimise its environmental footprint.

Mr Schwarten: By a Queensland company.

Mr LUCAS: Absolutely, and it is located in the electorate of the Premier. She was too modest to make this statement today, so I am making it on her behalf. A four-star green star equivalency was achieved, with initiatives focusing on northern orientation—

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr LUCAS: Do you have a northern orientation, Vaughan—extensive sun-shading, energy efficiency and water recycling?

Mr Johnson: You’re the Acting Premier today. You’re doing a good job.

Mr LUCAS: You did a good job and look what they did to you, Vaughan! The development encourages the use of public transport through the transport network facilitated by the Boggo Road Urban Village. It also encourages the use of bicycles through extensive secure bike parking and change facilities.

The Bligh government is getting on with the job of creating world-class research facilities. These facilities will generate jobs, economic growth and prosperity for future generations of Queenslanders while helping to preserve our precious natural environment. The Ecosciences Precinct is part of a $3.6 billion investment to make Queensland the great Smart State of Australia. The McKinsey report on the greenhouse cost abatement curve in Australia makes it very clear that money spent on greenhouse abatement in environmental design in buildings is a net economic positive. This is a great result for the people of Queensland and, once again, I congratulate Hassell and everyone else who has contributed to the success of the Ecosciences Precinct. Here endeth the epistle.

Federal Budget

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade) (9.46 am): Last night the federal government delivered a budget focused on short-term recovery and long-term prosperity. Over this year and next it will deliver to Queensland pre-payments of $2.5 billion to ensure the recovery from natural disasters can proceed at pace. This is a Labor budget that gives a helping hand to those who need it most and protects and promotes the importance of having skills, securing a job and contributing to the national economy.

As I have previously informed the House, the natural disasters have flattened out economic growth in Queensland this year. Our midyear forecast was for growth at or below one per cent after Yasi compounded the losses from the floods. This is mirrored in the national forecasts. Federal Treasury expects the national economic growth forecast for this year to decrease by one percentage point down to 2¼ per cent for the nation as a whole. Of course, the natural disasters were centred here in Queensland, which shows the impact of the natural disasters and the importance of Queensland to national growth.

Nationally, in 2011-12 a recovery to four per cent is forecast, just as we also expect a recovery in 2011-12. The recovery will in part be driven by the reconstruction effort, and in that regard I can inform the House that the federal government has honoured its funding commitments to Queensland as part of
the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements. The Gillard government will provide an additional $1 billion this financial year on top of the $1 billion it has already provided to keep the recovery moving in full swing. This honours the $2 billion pledge for this financial year. Furthermore, in last night’s budget the federal government committed a further $500 million payment in 2011-12 as part of its overall funding commitment.

However, this budget is not just about natural disaster recovery. The budget also takes aim at the looming skills challenges that will surely be presented by mining boom mark II. We know that increased investment in the resources sector, the take-off of the LNG industry and the current reconstruction effort will stretch capacity to its limits if we do not take action. That is why last year this government established the skills commission, Skills Queensland, which is a body designed to provide for more trades and skilled workers. Last night we saw a massive injection of funds from the federal government, including $558 million for 130,000 new training places and another $1.75 billion for vocational education reforms across the nation. This is the right investment at the right time.

We also welcome the federal government’s continued investment in infrastructure projects, which is a far cry from the barren days under John Howard, who cared more about electioneering handouts than investing in nation-building infrastructure for the future. The 2011-12 budget includes $434 million in the Regional Development Australia Fund for six critical road projects as mentioned earlier by the Deputy Premier. These projects are the Townsville Ring Road; works on the Peak Downs Highway; the Blacksoil interchange, which was advocated in this place and in the state by the member for Ipswich West; an upgrade of the Bruce and Capricorn Highway intersection; the Gladstone Port Access Road; and the Mackay Ring Road study.

The regional Australia fund is directly opposed by Tony Abbott and the LNP. The state government lobbied hard to ensure that this money was poured into regional Queensland, and that is exactly what has occurred. Without a Labor government these projects would not be getting off the ground.

We also saw a bring forward of funds for the Moreton Bay rail link, a project that has long been on the political never-never and has been furiously advocated for by members in this House, including the member for Murrumba and the member for Redcliffe. Now, due to the joint funding arrangements between the state and federal Labor governments as well as the Moreton Bay Regional Council, the project is locked in with the funds flowing.

With federal Treasury’s forecast for economic activity to return in the coming years, so too will GST receipts to Queensland. A write-down this year is largely offset by recovery next year in a budget on budget comparison. However, it is important to note that Queensland will not be back to receiving 2007-08 levels of GST funding until 2012-13, underlining the massive impact that the global financial crisis and natural disasters have had on the broader economy.

As we assess the ramifications of the federal budget, the focus now turns towards the state budget to be handed down next month. This government has made strong decisions to strengthen the budget over recent years—decisions that have allowed us to invest more in the schools and the teachers that we need to provide for a better education, to invest more in hospitals and the doctors and nurses we need to treat the sick and infirm, to invest more in the roads and public transport infrastructure that we need to keep Queensland moving and to invest more in the police and ambulance officers that we need to keep people safe. We have made the difficult decisions and we have seen them through. We have focused on what is right, not what is easy. As we now move to put together the state budget for 2011-12, the hallmarks of this government—one focused firmly on the future—will again guide our decisions.

Last night’s federal Labor budget looked to the horizon in dealing with the economic challenges of the resources boom mark II. We, too, will look—as we always have—not just to tomorrow but beyond as we face up to today’s challenges and the future opportunities.

Electricity Prices

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Energy and Water Utilities) (9.51 am): The Bligh government shares the concerns of ordinary Queenslanders about the cost of electricity, which continues to rise not just here but across the country. Population growth, skyrocketing peak demand and the rising cost of supplying electricity all put upward pressure on prices. The stark reality is this: it will not be possible to maintain a reliable and secure electricity network unless retail electricity prices are based on genuine increases in supply costs.

The government does not set electricity prices. This is done by the independent Queensland Competition Authority. While electricity prices in Queensland are not as high as in other states, the Bligh government believes in an electricity pricing system that is more flexible and fairer to all Queenslanders. That is why today I am announcing major electricity pricing reform for Queensland.
Today I have written to the Queensland Competition Authority directing it to replace the existing methodology it uses to calculate annual electricity prices. The QCA has also been instructed to develop a new electricity tariff schedule based on cost reflective tariff structures. The proposed introduction of an inclining block tariff for residential customers on tariff 11 will be a fundamental part of this new approach. It will encourage customers to use electricity more efficiently. Basically, the more you use, the more you pay. In this way, high consumption customers would be encouraged to reduce their overall energy use while the impact on low consumption customers of moving to a new tariff structure would be minimised. The QCA will also develop a voluntary time of use tariff, making it easier for Queenslanders to save money by using energy during cheaper off-peak periods of the day, giving customers the power to choose. These changes will commence on 1 July 2012.

The Bligh government is delivering a new pricing system that is more flexible and fairer to all Queenslanders. Whilst we do not foresee electricity prices going down any time soon, based on current prices we estimate that more than 75 per cent of customers will be better off under this new system than the current system. For example, compared to the current system, our research estimates that a family of four in South-East Queensland could save up to $220 per year under the new methodology. However, the true impact on customers will not be known till the QCA assesses the cost of supply for 2012-13 and develops the new tariff structures. The QCA will consult extensively with the community and stakeholders prior to their implementation. I look forward to seeing what new pricing methodology and tariff structures the QCA develops to achieve this goal.

Federal Budget

Hon. RG Nolan (Ipswich—ALP) (Minister for Finance and the Arts) (9.54 am): The federal budget delivers on the values which are inherent to a Labor government: restoring the dignity of work to people who have been excluded from opportunities in the two-speed economy. While economic conditions are tight, GDP growth for the current year is expected to be 2¼ per cent. Federal Labor has cemented its commitment to people who, like the majority of Queenslanders, live in growing urban environments. The federal government has confirmed its commitments to the transport infrastructure needed to manage the pressures of ongoing population growth.

The federal budget delivers on infrastructure commitments, providing $291 million to reinstate Bruce Highway upgrades which were deferred in the wake of the natural disasters. The budget confirms $365 million in federal funding for the groundbreaking Gold Coast Rapid Transit project which, following the Premier’s and the transport minister’s announcement of the winning operating franchisee just last Friday, is set to revolutionise transport on the growing Gold Coast.

The budget brings forward the federal commitment to the Moreton Bay rail link, a project promised for a hundred years and which is now to be delivered by Labor. The federal budget provides $30 million this year, $20 million in 2012-13 and $83 million in 2013-14.

Politics is about choices and, for governments with a responsibility to plan for the future, the choice is perhaps most symbolically between a public and a private transport future. The federal budget finally tightens the fringe benefits tax exemption for cars, a change which I advocated for as transport minister and which is effected by creating a single statutory tax rate that applies regardless of the distance travelled. The effect of the change is to remove the incentive for people with company cars to get their miles up just for the sake of a tax break. It also creates a $970 million ongoing saving to the taxpayer across the forward estimates. This change as much as any marks the federal government’s place in the sustainable public transport camp.

At the last federal election, Tony Abbott overtly rejected the idea that the federal government would have any role to play in building public transport to help Australians live sustainably and to manage the cost of living. It was a move as progressive as his perhaps more infamous remarks on climate change. In contrast, the federal Labor government is laying down the markers and building infrastructure, particularly in the field of public transport, that urban and regional Queenslanders need.

Koala Protection

Hon. KJ Jones (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Resource Management) (9.57 am): Today I am pleased to announce the opening of round 2 of our government’s Koala Nature Refuges Program. Through this round, $4 million will be available to work with local landholders to rehabilitate and expand koala habitat here in South-East Queensland. Funding will go towards rehabilitation activities such as planting new koala food trees, removing weeds and installing koala friendly fencing, as well as associated management costs. Already through this program we have saved 100 hectares of land, which is now protected in South-East Queensland under the Koala Nature Refuges Program. The opening of round 2 today is a chance for more Queenslanders to play their part in conserving key koala habitat.
We established this program because we know that the community can play an important role in preserving the koala population, alongside the substantial efforts of this government and, indeed, many local councils. These agreements are a partnership between our government and the community to help boost koala habitat here in South-East Queensland. Landholders in koala mapped areas are now invited to apply for funding to rehabilitate land for koala habitat under this second round of the program. The priority areas we are looking at are within Pine Rivers and the Koala Coast, which is primarily in the Redlands, as well as properties within the Sunshine Coast, Moreton Bay, Brisbane, Logan, Ipswich and the Gold Coast regions.

The declaration of more refuges will build on the strong action that our government is taking to boost koala habitat in South-East Queensland. We are investing $55 million on a whole-of-government Koala Response Strategy to secure more habitat and also protect koalas in existing areas. These were the key recommendations of the independent koala task force, which advised that our priorities should be habitat protection and expansion.

We have set some ambitious targets for koala protection, but we are serious about ensuring the survival of the koala here in South-East Queensland.

**Operation Queenslander**

**Hon. CA WALLACE** (Thuringowa—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Fisheries and Marine Infrastructure) (9.59 am): The Bligh government is calling for local companies and road workers—big and small—to be part of major restoration works being done by Operation Queenslander. We have just battled through some of the worst natural disasters in our state’s history, but we are getting on with the job of rebuilding and reconnecting Queensland.

We are repairing and restoring the state’s road network to make it safer, stronger and more resilient than before and investing in thousands of local jobs. There is more than enough work to go around—and we are calling on local Queensland companies to get the job done. We need everyone from backhoe operators to big consortia to roll their sleeves up and get working.

Companies need to be prequalified—or team-up with a company that is—before they can answer expressions of interest and take part in the repair effort. To assist interested companies, we have been holding information sessions in recent months to let local and regional companies know what they need to do to get prequalified and to be part of Operation Queenslander—the largest reconstruction effort in our history.

About 850 industry representatives—850—attended March and April’s information sessions. We had 50 local companies attend the Brisbane session, followed by a further 250 local companies at the LGAQ and Civil Contractors Federation State Conference; 220 local companies attended the Cairns session; in Mackay, 80 local companies came to the information sessions; 200 local companies rolled up in Rockhampton; 73 industry representatives attended the information session in Toowoomba; and 12 industry representatives were in attendance at the information session held in Roma.

Another session will be held today in Bundaberg and further information sessions are planned for the Gold and Sunshine Coast. We have had really positive feedback from these sessions so far, with all attendees having the opportunity to be added to the department’s voluntary contractor register, which is being used to source subcontractors to help deliver these vital restoration works.

Our message is clear: we are serious about reconnecting communities and getting business moving again through Operation Queenslander.

**Hendra Virus**

**Hon. TS MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies) (10.01 am): Biosecurity Queensland works closely with veterinarians, horse industries and horse owners all year round to raise awareness and preparedness around Hendra virus. In the coming months we will see increased birthing activity amongst flying foxes which in the past has coincided with known Hendra infection incidents. It is a timely reminder that horse owners should be vigilant in reducing contact between their horses and flying foxes, regardless of what time of year it is.

The Queensland government has made significant efforts to raise awareness of Hendra virus in the community, identify ways to reduce the risk of horses and humans becoming infected with the disease and improving preparedness for handling Hendra virus incidents. This includes an intensive engagement process with the Queensland veterinary profession, the general horse community and across government agencies.

Last year Biosecurity Queensland veterinarians visited over 100 private veterinary practices in Queensland to deliver practical resources on Hendra virus and discuss ways to reduce the risk of this deadly virus. I am also pleased to report that vaccine trials being conducted at the Australian Animal Health Laboratory are progressing well.
The Queensland government contributed $300,000 towards this valuable research. In addition, some of our scientists have joined forces with the United Nations to help fight the spread of infectious diseases linked to bats. Biosecurity Queensland scientists Dr Hume Field and Carol de Jong from the Queensland Centre for Emerging Infectious Diseases are part of a team of international experts tasked by the United Nations to develop a manual for the investigation of emerging infectious diseases associated with bats.

Queensland is the frontline state for researching and responding to such diseases and our scientists are leading the way internationally—and have been called upon to share their knowledge and expertise. The manual focuses on henipavirus—which includes Hendra and Nipah viruses—lyssavirus, coronavirus and filovirus and will help animal workers recognise signs of the diseases, limit transmission and manage them safely. This is just some of the great work Queensland scientists are undertaking leading their fields internationally in response to these emerging diseases.

Kindergartens

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Minister for Education and Industrial Relations) (10.03 am):
Kindergarten provides a strong educational foundation to ensure children get the best possible start to learning and life. The Bligh government is committed to providing universal access to quality kindergarten programs for all Queensland children in the year before prep.

To help achieve this, we are investing $321 million to establish up to 240 extra kindergarten services across the state by 2014. We are making strong progress and are on track, with 22 extra services already open and one more opening at St Andrew’s Catholic College at Redlynch in the great far northern electorate of Barron River later this year.

By the end of 2012, we will have opened a total of 108 extra kindergarten services on state and non-state school sites—40 more than originally planned. Co-locating kindergarten services with schools helps children transition to prep because they are already familiar with the school environment and it also makes it convenient for parents with school-age children.

The Bligh government is proud of the strong educational partnership we have developed with the Queensland Catholic Education Commission and Independent Schools Queensland. So it is in that spirit that I announce for the first time today that we are providing more than $22 million this year to help establish 24 kindergarten services at Catholic and independent schools by 2013.

These extra services will be located in areas where there is demand for places for kindergarten-aged children. Locations include Springfield, Caloundra, the Gold Coast, Warwick, Ipswich, Rockhampton, Mount Isa, Hervey Bay, Beaudesert and Townsville. In addition to our kindergarten building agenda, we are also providing funding to help long-day-care services provide kindy programs delivered by qualified and quality teachers.

More Queensland parents are recognising the value of kindergarten participation with figures showing strong growth in enrolments over the past three years. Forty per cent of kindy-age children were enrolled in a kindergarten program in 2010—ahead of our target of 36 per cent for the year. The 40 per cent participation rate last year is also an increase from 29 per cent in 2008 and 32 per cent in 2009.

The Bligh government is committed to providing Queensland children with a quality education in the early years and, through our significant investment and reforms, we are ensuring our children are on the pathway to learning and success.

Skills Development

Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Skills and Mining) (10.06 am):
We know that there is big growth ahead for our state’s economy, particularly in the minerals and resources sector. This means more job opportunities for more Queenslanders and it is essential that Queenslanders are given the best chance to take full advantage of what is on offer.

Queensland has led the way on skills development programs and established Skills Queensland last year to partner with industry and make sure employers are helping to guide skills development. The $3 billion national training package announced by the federal Treasurer last night complements our approach and will help our state meet its full economic potential and help more Queenslanders into more jobs.

There is no doubt that we need every Queenslander who is capable of working to either put their hand up for a job or undergo training to prepare for the workforce. That is why we welcome the industry-led approach announced last night including: $101 million to help apprentices complete their training through a national mentoring program for 40,000 apprentices; $100 million to help apprentices gain their qualifications sooner; a $558 million partnership with industry to develop the National Workforce Development Fund; $143 million to provide an extra 30,000 language, literacy and numeracy places to help jobseekers gain foundation skills; and an estimated 130,000 industry based training places.
This national investment complements the strong skills development program we already have in Queensland including: a $50 million Strategic Investment Fund provided to Skills Queensland to drive real change within Queensland’s skills and workforce development sectors; $5 million, matched by industry, for the CSQ/LNG industry training program to respond to industry operational workforce needs; and the work of Skills Queensland with major employers on workforce development plans for Queensland’s economic hot spots in both the Surat Basin and Gladstone regions and shortly in the Bowen and Galilee Basins. All of this comes on top of the skills training that goes on in TAFE colleges and worksites across the length and breadth of this great state every day.

Queensland is experiencing a mining and resources boom and with that comes great job opportunities for Queenslanders across our great state. This government is partnering with industry and working with the federal government to make sure that it is Queenslanders who benefit.

Cyclone Shelters

Hon. SD FINN (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Government Services, Building Industry and Information and Communication Technology) (10.09 am): As the Premier announced yesterday, the state government will create 10 new cyclone shelters throughout Queensland in partnership with Abu Dhabi. In the spirit of Operation Queenslander, we will match Abu Dhabi’s $30 million donation and works will get underway later this year to deliver the new shelters. This is great news for communities in northern parts of the state which each year face the prospect of cyclones and related storm surge activity. This means 10 new public cyclone shelters in the north including in Cairns, Townsville, the Cassowary Coast, Proserpine-Airlie Beach, Mackay-Sarina, Yeppoon-Rockhampton and Weipa. This week the Department of Public Works will be consulting with state MPs and local authorities to begin determining actual locations. My department will also manage the rollout of the new shelters, each of which will have room for up to 500 people and be built to withstand the impacts of a category 5 cyclone. The Department of Public Works has developed design guidelines for Queensland public cyclone shelters which will be used in the planning and construction of the new shelters. The guidelines contain strict criteria for the creation of cyclone shelters so that residents get the best possible protection in the event of natural disasters.

In addition to meeting the Building Code of Australia requirements, the new shelters will need to incorporate the following features: be located above the maximum predicted storm surge level and above the one-in-500-year flood event; be located away from hazardous material sites and structures such as high voltage lines, tall buildings and large trees; be built to withstand wind speeds of up to 306 kilometres per hour and associated windborne debris; include toilets, washing facilities, storage areas for supplies of non-perishable food and water, seating and bedding; internal floor areas adjacent to entry and exit doors should be non-slip surfaces; have food preparation and serving facilities for short-term occupation; have emergency power generation for the whole building; have emergency lighting battery powered for a minimum of 24 hours in the event of generator power failure; have effective public address systems within the shelter; and have adjacent areas for the safe temporary operation of helicopter services. The rollout of the National Broadband Network will see these shelters connected with high-speed broadband, delivering state-of-the-art communications to the new facilities. Nothing is more important than protecting Queenslanders when natural disasters strike. That is what these new public cyclone shelters will be designed and built to do.

Tourism Industry

Hon. JH JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (Minister for Tourism, Manufacturing and Small Business) (10.11 am): I am pleased to update the House on the success of the latest instalment of the Bligh and Gillard government’s $12 million Nothing Beats Queensland tourism recovery campaign. Some 200 Queensland tourism operators have just completed their five-day sales campaign through New South Wales and Victoria on the Queensland on Tour Roadshow—the single largest domestic tourism roadshow in decades.

The group included Gold Coast surf schools, South Burnett wineries, whale watching companies from the Fraser Coast, sailing businesses in the Whitsundays, island resorts from the Tropical North and iconic outback attractions, just to name a few. The team travelled everywhere from Ballina to Bendigo and Wagga Wagga to Wollongong to promote Queensland’s unbeatable deals to local travel agents, the media and passers-by on the street to ensure that Queensland is front of mind for a holiday this winter. This roadshow was a very practical and effective means of taking those operators hardest hit by the summer’s destructive weather and putting them in direct contact with potential customers.

This strategy did not come out of the book of regular tourism campaign strategies. Rather, it was about getting back to our grassroots and empowering tourism operators to do what they do best—sell our great state. These 200 tourism ambassadors sold our great state tirelessly, zealously and emphatically to restore Queensland’s profile and position as one of Australia’s favourite holiday destinations. Having met with the team in Sydney at the end of their journey, I do not know how anyone in New South Wales or Victoria could not have been charmed by their enthusiasm and tales of optimism in taking a Queensland holiday this winter.
This tour was a much needed confidence boost and morale boost for our operators, allowing them to come together and join the front line in the fight to put our economy back on the right foot. The feedback we have received has been sensational. Sue Griffiths from Sofitel Gold Coast said that the stopover in Tamworth was a roaring success, with local travel agents following the group out for dinner following the day’s event. Sue said, ‘The following morning we had an event with a local radio station which attracted locals in pyjamas and school groups all really interested in our Queensland holiday deals.’ Marc Sleeman from Kuranda Tourism said that the industry will be talking about the huge 2011 Queensland on Tour roadshow for years to come.

Outback Aussie Tours owner Alan Smith said feedback from travel agents in Canberra was that they were genuinely excited about visiting Queensland and promoting Outback Aussie Tours in the future. Kim Morgan from Maroochy River Resort and Bungalows on the Sunshine Coast said that the roadshow was ‘invalidable for boosting their knowledge of the diversity of what Queensland has to offer’. Natalie Trethowen said that Hayman Island found the Queensland on Tour roadshow was enormously beneficial ahead of the island’s scheduled August reopening.

Plainly this demonstration of Queensland solidarity, mateship and determination will keep Queensland front of mind coming into winter and hopefully help to continue the momentum of our incredibly successful Easter holiday period and the Labour Day long weekend. Queensland annually welcomes approximately 16 million domestic visitors who spend around $11.4 billion on their visits, so it is imperative that we continue to encourage Aussies to enjoy a holiday in Queensland, where Australia shines. I know that the roadshow participants are now reinvigorated and ready to make sure this year’s winter period is a bumper holiday season. I believe their resilient optimism will go a long way to ensuring that Nothing Beats Queensland.

Road Safety

Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Multicultural Affairs) (10.15 am): This morning at Parliament House I was pleased to join Disability Services Minister Curtis Pitt, Acting Police Commissioner Ian Stewart, Professor Barry Watson from CARRS-Q and RACQ CEO Ian Gillespie to launch Queensland’s participation in the Decade of Action for Road Safety. The Decade of Action for Road Safety is a global initiative which is being launched today in 90 countries around the world. The goal of this initiative is to reduce the forecast level of global road deaths in 2020. Road safety is a top priority for the Bligh government, and our road toll last year was the lowest since records started in 1952. This year there have already been 80 deaths on our roads, one more than for the same time last year. I think all members in this House would agree that that is still too many. By working together on a state-wide, national and international level we can ensure a collaborative approach to achieving a reduction in road injuries and fatalities world-wide.

Australia and Queensland are world leaders in road safety innovation and are a long way ahead of developing countries when it comes to road safety. Many innovations have contributed to a steady reduction in road fatalities here in Queensland, including the introduction of covert speed cameras in 2010; the overhaul of the graduated licensing system introduced in 2007 for young drivers to ensure increased experience on the road before obtaining a licence; and increased enforcement and detection methods, including immediate loss of licence for drink drivers if tested at .10, which will be introduced on 1 July this year.

We often speak about fatalities when it comes to road safety and forget about the tragedy associated with serious injuries. I can announce today that the Queensland government will increase its sponsorship of the Spinal Injuries Association’s SEAT program by $30,000 per year for the next three years. This will bring our total contribution to $240,000. The Spinal Injuries Association does some fantastic work in rehabilitation care with victims of road trauma. We have been a proud supporter of the Spinal Injuries Association’s SEAT program for a number of years. The Queensland government is increasing its sponsorship of this program to ensure the association is able to reach as many schools in the future. Kim Morgan from Maroochy River Resort and Bungalows on the Sunshine Coast said that their resilient optimism will go a long way to ensuring that Nothing Beats Queensland.

Rural Fire Service

Hon. NS ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (10.18 am): I am pleased to advise the House of another recent reallocation of $1.5 million to front-line and volunteer support within the Rural Fire Service. Honourable members would recall that earlier this year I announced a reallocation of $390,000 within the service. As with the initial reallocation, this $1.5 million was originally earmarked for firefighting operations during this financial year’s bushfire season. Thankfully, fire activity during the season was less than anticipated, resulting in a cash reserve which was able to be reallocated back into supporting volunteer rural fire brigades. This brings to $2.4 million the amount which is now being reinvested in station upgrades, GPS units, new equipment and uniforms. This reallocated funding will further enhance the preparedness of brigades for the upcoming bushfire season, which traditionally starts in August in the state’s north and rolls south during spring and into summer.
On behalf of all Queenslanders, I would again like to commend and thank the state’s 34,000 rural fire brigade volunteers for their commitment to protecting their community from bushfires and other natural disasters. Honourable members would recall the admirable efforts of rural fire volunteers during Queensland’s summer of sorrow, when floods, storms and cyclones were impacting communities across the state. The Bligh government strongly supports the Rural Fire Service and its volunteer members. Funding for the Rural Fire Service has increased by 84 per cent over the past five years, from $17.2 million in 2005-06 to $31.7 million in 2010-11. In excess of $1 million has been spent each financial year since 2003 on providing personal protective equipment to each active volunteer. This has been at no cost to brigades. The Rural Fire Service fleet has increased from 876 in June 2003 to 933 in April 2011, while the age of the fleet has significantly decreased. The number of slip-on units has also significantly increased from 1,130 in June 2003 to 2,450 in April 2011. The 2010-11 state budget also included $1.5 million funding for online training materials to enhance the skills of volunteers. Our Rural Fire Service volunteers play an important role in the response to natural disasters in Queensland and they deserve our support and thanks.

Diabetes

Hon. GJ WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Health) (10.21 am): Queensland is continuing to lead the fight against one of the fastest growing, and often hidden, chronic diseases in Australia—diabetes. The number of people with diabetes has more than doubled in 15 years, with approximately 300,000 Queenslanders now living with type 2 diabetes and 23,000 new cases diagnosed each year—that is around 60 every day. What is more, for every one person diagnosed with diabetes, it is likely that up to one other person is undiagnosed—that is a further 60 each day who remain undiagnosed. These are daunting statistics for all Queenslanders and for our health system. Based on national figures, there are around 100,000 hospitalisations for diabetes in Queensland each year, and the rate of hospitalisation has increased by around 35 per cent in five years.

Diabetes—which can lead to eye, kidney and cardiovascular problems, among others—costs the Queensland economy an estimated $7 billion each year and the state’s health system around $190 million annually. Most importantly of all, diabetes and related conditions have a major impact upon the quality of life of those affected and their families. That is why the Bligh government is making it easier for Queenslanders to be checked for this silent thief.

We are working with the Stroke Foundation, Diabetes Australia—Queensland and the Pharmacy Guild to deliver free diabetes risk checks at 119 Queensland pharmacies. This is another example of the Bligh government investing in innovative and flexible new ways of delivering services. It is part of the $7.5 million diabetes action plan we announced last year. The action plan will help to deliver benefits to Queenslanders across a range of different areas, including healthy cooking and nutrition classes in schools, a register and recall system for women with gestational diabetes, and Indigenous chronic disease care in Far North Queensland.

This $600,000 pharmacy checks program demonstrates our commitment to delivering services in a more flexible way to ensure all Queenslanders can access quality health care close to home. We want to put Queensland at the forefront of detection, prevention, early intervention and management of diabetes. With free checks now available at pharmacies, more Queenslanders can quickly and easily find out if they are at risk. In just a few minutes, people can have a finger prick test for blood glucose and answer a short questionnaire about their health in their local pharmacy. With over 80,000 Queenslanders visiting a pharmacy each day, this program presents a great opportunity to not only help identify those at risk but also provide information about what people can do to take better control of their health.

The Bligh government is pleased to be working with the National Stroke Foundation, Diabetes Australia—Queensland and the Queensland branch of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia to deliver this important program. Later today in the red chamber, I will be taking advantage of this new program to have a free diabetes risk check with a pharmacist. I would encourage all members to come along and have the check so you can be sure you know your numbers.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Strategy

Hon. CW PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services, Mental Health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (10.24 am): A draft Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice strategy is now available for public consultation. It is an important strategy that addresses the underlying causes of why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are around 12 times more likely to be in prison than non-Indigenous people and why there are more offenders and more victims of domestic and family violence. As a government, we are working hard to turn those statistics around. We have rolled out a range of reforms—cell visitor schemes, diversion centres, sobering up and counselling services, upgrades of watch-houses and community based justice initiatives, such as night patrols.
The evidence was laid out on the table 20 years ago by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. It was a significant milestone in our nation’s history and it remains as relevant today. Back then, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were not asking us to dwell on the awful consequences of those misguided and misdirected policies. Instead, they were asking us to make practical responses and to work with them to undo the damage that sits on their shoulders each and every day. The recommendations that were implemented were a necessary first step in demonstrating a maturity and a willingness to move forward in a partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There is more work to be done through this partnership.

Our draft justice strategy stands on four pillars of reform that wrap around policies that are fair, culturally aware and responsive to the justice needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today—policies that we hope will stand up to the scrutiny of future generations. These policies include: community safety plans in Cairns, Townsville, Mount Isa, Rockhampton and Brisbane; getting in early, which involves engaging with children and young people and encouraging healthy and active lifestyles and educational opportunities that will set them on the right path; turnaround teams to tackle school attendance; and creating training and employment opportunities, which means getting ‘at risk’ kids into jobs, and striking up partnerships with mining, construction and tourism companies.

It is about getting back to basics and looking at the underlying causes of crime—and they are issues that relate to poverty, alcohol and drug misuse, employment, health, housing and education. We remain determined, as a government, to continue to provide practical responses and to come up with sensible and workable solutions to meet the justice needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I encourage all Queenslanders to have their say on our draft strategy before the end of the month. It is an opportunity to help shape the four pillars and to bring about real and tangible reforms that will, in turn, help close the gap on disadvantage for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

ABSENCE OF MINISTER

Hon. JC SPENCE (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.26 am): I wish to advise the House that the Minister for Disability Services, Mental Health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships will be absent from the House during question time on Thursday. Minister Pitt is travelling to Napranum to attend the funeral of Indigenous elder Tapich Gloria Fletcher.

LAW, JUSTICE AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Reports

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (10.27 am): I lay upon the table of the House two reports of the Law, Justice and Safety Committee: report No. 79, Meeting with the Information Commissioner, February 2011; and report No. 80, Meeting with the Ombudsman, February 2011.

Tabled paper: Law, Justice and Safety Committee: Report No. 79, Meeting with the Information Commissioner, 18 February 2011 [4423].
Tabled paper: Law, Justice and Safety Committee: Report No. 80, Meeting with the Ombudsman, 18 February 2011 [4424].

These reports relate to the committee’s meetings with the Information Commissioner and the Ombudsman as part of the committee’s role to monitor and review the performance of these bodies under the Right to Information Act 2009 and the Information Privacy Act 2009, and the Ombudsman Act 2001, respectively. Since the committee’s previous meeting with the Information Commissioner, the office has benefited from the appointments of the deputy commissioners—the privacy commissioner, Ms Linda Matthews, and the right to information commissioners, Ms Jenny Mead and Clare Smith. The meeting on 18 February 2011 was the committee’s first meeting with the newly appointed Ombudsman, Mr Phil Clarke. He succeeded Mr David Bevan who left that office in 2010 after nine years in the role. The committee is pleased to report on the continued good performance of the Office of the Information Commissioner and the Office of the Ombudsman. I thank everyone involved in the production of these reports.

NOTICES OF MOTION

Rural and Regional Road Funding

Mr FOLEY (Maryborough—Ind) (10.28 am): I give notice that I will move—

That this House calls on the state government to prioritise funding for state controlled roads for rural and regional Queensland in this year’s budget.
Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—Ind) (10.28 am): I give notice that I will move—

That this House notes that official CMC correspondence (and I quote and table the letter) understands Mr. Nuttall alleged:

1. The former Premier Mr. Peter Beattie inappropriately appointed Mr. Bob Gibbs to the position of Trade Commissioner in Los Angeles.
2. ALP candidates received benefits from hotel industry figures during 2005 or 2006 in contravention of the Electoral Act 1992.
3. Premier Anna Bligh inappropriately appointed former premier Mr. Peter Beattie to a trade Commissioner’s position in London later changing this to Los Angeles following media commentary.
4. Ms Uschi Scheriber’s direct appointment to the position of Director General of QLD Health was inappropriate.
5. At least two judicial appointments occurred without appropriate Cabinet approval.
6. An agreement was made to a Commission of Inquiry that should the government be looked after then the Commissioner would be appointed as a Supreme Court judge.
7. That there was corrupt behaviour between the former Chairperson of the CMC, Mr. Robert Needham, and the former Premier, Mr. Peter Beattie with Mr. Beattie influencing CMC decisions.
8. The government offered Mr. Nuttall a deal that if he pleaded guilty, the charges of official misconduct would have been dropped, with a sentence of 5 years suspended after 18 months.

And calls on the Attorney General to recommend a future indemnity for Mr. Nuttall and for the Premier and Executive Council to recommend that the Governor establish a commission of inquiry into political corruption.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 10 May 2011, from Sharon Loder, Acting Director, Misconduct Investigations, Crime and Misconduct Commission, to Mr Rob Messenger MP in relation to concerns raised during meeting held on 22 December 2010 [4425].

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 10 May 2011, from Sharon Loder, Acting Director, Misconduct Investigations, Crime and Misconduct Commission, to Mr Rob Messenger MP in relation to various concerns raised by Mr Messenger [4426].

Mr SPEAKER: I thank the honourable member for the point of order. I advise the House that I want to go away and study the notice of motion of the member for Burnett. There are several things in it.

It is the Independents’ turn to have a notice of motion debated today. We have now four notices of motion. I ask the Leader of the House which notice of motion the House intends to debate today.

Ms SPENCE: Mr Speaker, I think the House will debate the notice of motion of the member for Maryborough.

Mr SPEAKER: That will be the motion for tonight. In answer to the honourable member for Murrumba, I will go away and study that—after question time, obviously—and I will report back to the House on the point of order raised by the member for Murrumba.

SPEAKER’S STATEMENT

School Group Tours

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, today in the parliament we will be visited by the students, teachers and parents of the Burpengary State School in the electorate of Morayfield and the Scots PGC College of Warwick in the electorate of Southern Downs. Question time will end at 11.33 am.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Electricity Prices

Mr SEENEY (Callide—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.32 am): My first question without notice is to the Minister for Energy and Water Utilities. I refer to the assurance given to the people of Queensland when Labor announced its electricity industry reforms in September 2005 that—

... it does not matter where you live, nobody—not one Queenslander—will be worse off under the government’s proposal.

Given that Queenslanders’ electricity bills have risen 66 per cent since that assurance was given, can the minister give a similar assurance that no Queenslander will be worse off following the electricity tariff reforms announced this morning and will that assurance be worth anything more than the one given in September 2005?

Mr ROBERTSON: Of course, the basis of the member’s question is false and inaccurate. He continues the mistruth in quoting the former Premier out of context, because what the then Premier was referring to was our commitment to maintain the uniform tariff across Queensland so that no matter where you live in Queensland you pay the same rate. The cross-subsidy that is available means that if you are in Mount Isa, if you are in the Torres Strait—wherever you live in Queensland—you pay according to the regulated tariff based on the Brisbane rate.
The member would also be aware that in reports handed down by the independent Queensland Competition Authority it noted that the current means of determining electricity prices, known as the BRCI, is in effect ‘broken’—it no longer reflects the true cost of supplying electricity—and that there are distortions in the various tariffs that exist across the spectrum of tariffs that are available for both domestic and commercial customers. That is why we undertook the work necessary to find whether there was a more efficient way of determining electricity prices that was more sustainable and reflected the actual cost of supplying reliable electricity, whether for domestic, industrial or commercial customers. That work has resulted in the announcement that I have made today.

The work will now go on, in consultation with major stakeholders. We believe, based on current prices, that we will be in a position to put in place a tariff structure whereby the vast majority of consumers will not be any worse off and will in many cases be better off. What it will mean is that about 75 per cent—we estimate—of consumers will be no worse off and, in fact, will be in some cases significantly better off. But they are based on estimates using current tariffs. We, of course, do not know what the QCA will determine next year and the impact that would have on moving to the new cost-reflective tariffs using an inclining block tariff system. But we believe that, based on experience interstate where such systems are in place, we will be in a position to have a far more sustainable tariff system than the one that is currently subject to so much criticism, and appropriately so.

Federal Budget, Bruce Highway

Mr SEENEY: My second question without notice is to the Acting Premier. I refer to the many infrastructure projects for which Queensland is awaiting federal funding before they can commence, including but not limited to the upgrading and the flood proofing of the Bruce Highway, and I ask: can the Acting Premier explain why no new funding was announced for Queensland’s Bruce Highway in last night’s federal budget, despite it being grossly inadequate for current traffic volumes and despite it being cut by floodwaters more than 500 times since 2009?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for the question. When one reflects upon the contribution of the federal government over the past year or so in relation to issues relating to Queensland, we see that they have committed very significant funding by way of the NDRRA requirements—75 per cent of it. Off the top of my head, that is about $6 billion of what they are committing. That is a massive injection, and much of that is in fact being spent on Queensland’s rural road network that will benefit all Queenslanders.

Queensland’s per capita road expenditure exceeds that of all other states, and this state has always taken its role very seriously. I have a bit of experience with the Bruce Highway. Unlike Campbell Newman, I have driven on it on many occasions and I take the opportunity whenever I can to drive on it from one community centre to the other. I will say this: we had 10 years of the Howard government, including federal ministers from the National Party and Liberal Party—including Ian Macfarlane in Toowoomba—when nothing was seriously done about the second range crossing. We had Warren Truss, who would have to go down as one of the most ineffectual federal transport ministers when it comes to delivering money for the Bruce Highway in Queensland.

I am delighted to see in the recent budget that money has been reinstated for the Bruce Highway. But most importantly, I would draw parliament’s attention to a number of initiatives that I think in particular are relevant: $10 million was allocated towards a study of the Mackay bypass. That is a very—

Mr Seeney: Another study. No new roads.

Mr LUCAS: I know that the honourable member might think you whack a road down and then decide whether it has gone in the right place. The most important thing that one can—

Mr Seeney: It would be handy if you built something. Sooner or later you have to build it.

Mr LUCAS: The honourable member was not in parliament when we had the debacle of variations and cost blow-outs in relation to the M1 project because they built it without deciding the alignment first.

The federal government’s commitment to a number of projects, including planning and design, including preliminary planning and potential corridor acquisition, is as significant as money allocated to a number of other projects. We need to make sure that we continue that. The federal government’s commitment to the state in relation to funding of cyclone and flood relief payments is probably unprecedented in national government history in Australia, if not in other parts of the Western world.

Urban Land Development Authority

Ms DARLING: My question is to the Acting Premier. Can the Acting Premier please inform the House about recent achievements of the Urban Land Development Authority?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for the question. The honourable member is of course a very great supporter of the Fitzgibbon Urban Land Development Authority and the wonderful design benefits and community benefits in her electorate that that has brought. One of the things that I find most empowering about being a Queenslander now is the way that, in the last 20 or 30 years, for those who have lived here for a lengthy period of time—for me it is most of my life—the urban form has
improved, not only in Brisbane and South-East Queensland but the rest of regional Queensland as well. The trees that are planted, the designs, the boulevards, the housing and the units are improving all of the time. The Urban Land Development Authority is part of continuing that improvement. If members look at the Valley they will see the changes in the housing that is there and see the places that people are working in near the places that they are living in.

The opportunity to convert the old port area from Remora Road. That EOI will deliver even more affordable and innovative housing to the market. We will have all sorts of housing. We will have very impressive flash housing at Northshore Hamilton. Some of those people who want to pay to live in those areas and those developers who want to develop there actually invest money in a revolving fund like the Urban Land Development Authority does. In fact, the member for Clayfield acknowledges it. When we announced a very significant development with Australand recently at the Urban Land Development Authority area at Northshore Hamilton he was there acknowledging it, as was his local council colleague. Good on him for doing that.

This week the ULDA has also opened expressions of interest for a one-hectare parcel of land on Remora Road. That EOI will deliver even more affordable and innovative housing to the market. We will have all sorts of housing. We will have very impressive flash housing at Northshore Hamilton. Some of them will be very valuable apartments indeed with wealthy people living in them. That is great too because that is part of making sure that the project stacks up economically. The Urban Land Development Authority is in many parts of Queensland at the invitation of people and, contrary to what others might say, is not being imposed on them.

Federal Budget, Bruce Highway

Mr NICHOLLS: My question is to the Treasurer. Yesterday’s federal budget announced a net cut to funding for the Bruce Highway while New South Wales receives an extra $750 million to upgrade the Pacific Highway. Can the Treasurer explain why the former failed New South Wales Labor government was more successful in getting funding for its projects than the current failed Queensland Labor government?

Mr FRASER: I thank the shadow Treasurer for his question about Labor’s commitment to investing in infrastructure and particularly investing in roads and the Bruce Highway. Over the life of the Howard government—those 12 wasted years of Australia’s prosperity—how much did the Howard government put into the Bruce Highway? It was $1.2 billion. Since coming to office, how much has Labor committed to the Bruce Highway, including last night? $2.6 billion! So let the facts speak for themselves about what Labor federally has done to commit to the Bruce Highway. Do not let the facts get in the way of the argument when it comes to the tories. It is Labor that has always built the infrastructure of this nation and of this state. It is the shadow Treasurer who wants to get into the market and pay off a mortgage on one-bedroom apartments instead of dead money going in rent. Then they can trade up from that to somewhere else. Who says inner-city living should be the preserve of the rich? In fact, the redevelopment of this site gives everyone an opportunity to live there and moves industry to a modern port area where it should be.

In recent times we have seen the complete absence of an alternative economic strategy from those opposite. All they can ever propose is the same old ideas from the tories, and that is to cut the capital works program. The time has come. They got rid of the last leader who could not set out an economic strategy. Until the shadow Treasurer puts to the people of Queensland what it is that they will do—how they will invest in the future of Queensland—and until those opposite finally come into this place and tell the truth and tell the people of Queensland what it is that they will do and how they will do it and put it out for the people of Queensland to see, then they might come in here and ask questions about infrastructure and the Bruce Highway. But in the meantime the people of Queensland can know that it is Labor that is investing $2.6 billion in the Bruce Highway. That is far beyond what the Howard government ever deigned to put into the Bruce Highway. It did not even know where it was, just like Campbell Newman does not know where it is!
Estate Planning

Mr HOOLIHAN: My question is for the Acting Premier. Could the Acting Premier please inform the House about the importance of making a will and the upcoming Law Week?

Mr LUCAS: I think it is quite interesting that the Leader of the Opposition talks about going to other jurisdictions and comparing money. They had to go to another jurisdiction—that is, the Brisbane City Council—for a leader!

Last week the Public Trustee hosted Queensland’s first ever Will Week. As a solicitor in private practice I did more wills than you could poke a stick at. In fact, it might be interesting to note that many people on the other side of the House have written off the member for Southern Downs and are trying to get probate on his will, but I reckon he will be back bigger and better than ever before too long.

Mr Seeney interjected.

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

Mr LUCAS: Anyone over the age of 18 years should have a will. The Public Trustee offers a free service and many members of the private legal profession either do that or offer will services.

Mr Seeney: Tell us about the big issues, Paul.

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

Mr LUCAS: It is very interesting that the opposition does not think that people’s personal property, which is what you essentially dispose of in your will, is not an important matter.

Mr Seeney: The Bruce Highway is an important matter. The Warrego Highway is an important matter. The Toowoomba bypass is an important matter.

Mr LUCAS: They are important issues and that is why those issues are dealt with. When dealing with people in my electorate, people like my mother and father, the only asset that they have is their house and they want to make sure that they are delivering and disposing of that in the way that most meets their intention. There are many occasions where people have failed to make wills and courts are left to pick up the pieces at very great expense or very great disharmony within a family. It is very important that people make a will. However, Law Week is not just about wills. Next week on 21 May the Brisbane Magistrates Court will have an open day. People will be able to look at how the court system operates. The 2009-10 Department of Justice and Attorney-General annual report shows that for the last financial year the combined Supreme, District and Magistrates courts clearance rate was more than 100 per cent. In civil cases it was 109.7 per cent and in criminal cases it was 101.4 per cent.

What else is happening within the totality of the system? As my colleague has indicated, in the past 10 years crime rates have fallen more than 28 per cent. Some 10,000 police are now on the beat whereas in 1998 when we came to government there were 6,808. There are more criminals in prison than ever before. In December 2010 we had a record average daily prison population of 5,655. Therefore, let us put the lie to the argument that we are not being tough on crime. The offence rate has significantly decreased, police rates are up and more people are in jail.

(Time expired)

Carbon Tax

Mrs STUCKEY: My question without notice is to the Minister for Tourism, Manufacturing and Small Business. I note that in March, in relation to the job destroying carbon tax, the minister boasted to the Brisbane Business News that, ‘I will be advocating hard for adequate protection for Queensland small businesses’. Given that the Premier’s eight-point plan does not mention small business once, will the minister admit that she has already failed to deliver the protection she promised for small business?

Ms SPENCE: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I have been studying your advice to the House, dated 19 May 2009, on the issue of unnecessary preamble. I would like to ask you to rule on the particular question that the member has put forward this morning.

Mr SPEAKER: I am satisfied with the length of the question. I will say to the House in general that I always watch for a long preamble. I thought that one was relevant to the question.

Ms JARRATT: I thank the member for the question. At the breakfast with the Queensland Tourism Industry Council, I said a number of things about this government’s response to the issue of climate change and the response that may come from a federal government on that issue. I said that, unlike those opposite, as a government we understand that climate change is real and we are and always have been committed to tackling the issue. Putting your head in the sand on this issue will not make it go away. In fact, it will cost industries such as tourism a whole lot more to ignore the problem and hope that somehow it magically disappears. In Queensland, I do not think anything is more important to our industry than the survival of the Great Barrier Reef, the icon of tourism that people from all around the world come to see.
Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: We will stop the clock. We will wait for the House to come to order. There is far too much audible conversation.

Ms JARRATT: As I was saying, it is very difficult to imagine a future for the tourism industry in Queensland without something such as the Great Barrier Reef, which people from all around the world come to see. I said that while we do not have the full details of the federal government’s package, one thing that the industry can be—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Those on my left, the question was asked about carbon tax. It was in the question. The minister is answering the question in relation to that. I would ask the House to give her courtesy. She has the call.

Ms JARRATT: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is true that we do not have all the details of the federal government’s final position on its package, but I have said to the industry, and I repeat it in this House, that I will stand up for the tourism industry in Queensland to ensure that it gets a fair deal.

Opposition members: Small Business!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Those on my left will cease interjecting. The minister is answering the question. The question related to small business. As I understand it, the minister is referring to a sector that has small business within it. Therefore, my understanding is that the minister is being relevant.

Ms JARRATT: Obviously, the shadow minister does not realise that of the 115,000-plus tourism businesses in Queensland, more than 92 per cent are small businesses. In Queensland, no sector is more important when it comes to small business. Yesterday the Premier spoke about what we would do to protect small businesses and to stand beside them. She said, ‘... any inclusion of transport fuels in any carbon price should be accompanied by a proportionate reduction in federal fuel taxes.’ We know that, for any small business, supply chain inputs such as fuel are among the greatest costs that they have. We are going to stand by all small businesses, including those in the tourism and manufacturing industries, to protect them and protect their interests to ensure that, while we do take appropriate action on climate change—and we must take appropriate action—we will stand by our businesses in Queensland.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Cripps interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Hinchinbrook, I asked for the House to come to order. You are in an unfortunate seat and you have a loud voice for an unfortunate seat.

Federal Budget

Mrs KIERNAN: My question is to the Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade. Can the Treasurer inform the House of measures included in the federal budget that will assist Queensland’s long-term economic prosperity?

Mr FRASER: I thank the member for Mount Isa for her question and for her interest in particular in the economic development of the north-west, which is an area that she so finely represents. The north-west is at the forefront of the new resources boom, the resources boom mark II. What is most important in the development of the resources industry in this state and, indeed, in this nation is an investment in skills. Into the future the looming issue for the whole nation, our state included, is an investment in skills. Last night’s federal budget focused not only on short-term relief from natural disasters, but also on a long-term investment in skills. It provides for 130,000 training places under a $588 million package and $1.75 billion for vocational education reform across the states, which is something that we will support because an investment in skills is right for the long-term economic strategy of this nation.

Of course, when it comes to economic strategies, we still do not see an economic strategy that can last six weeks from the other side of this chamber. What have we seen from the new so-called leader of the LNP Campbell Newman? Immediately upon being appointed to that position, he went out freewheeling and told the truth. He said he was going to put privatisation back on the agenda and he named the Gladstone Port, which he will put right on the chopping block. He said he was going to remove jobs from the power industry; he would get rid of them all. He said he wanted to take a knife to the bureaucracy. When asked about this plan, he said it was based on principles, not specific plans. They do not have a plan yet; he just went from the heart. He said what he really believes. Of course, because Campbell Newman is a much better politician than he is a policy maker—he is a skilful, slippery politician—he has tried to back away from that ever since. Haven’t we learned a lot this week? On Monday he said, ‘No, I won’t touch the bureaucracy. I won’t touch the public service.’ He said, ‘Please understand me. The teachers and nurses, the people working in public services right around the state, please believe me when I say that I didn’t mean to tell you about my principles.’
What did we see earlier this week? We saw the shadow Treasurer having his own private jasmine revolution. He was oppressed under the last regime, but on Monday he finally got to say it. He said that the LNP will sell the remaining stake of QR National. He has wanted to say that each and every day of the past two years and finally he did. It is all catching up. The shadow Treasurer told the truth about what they will do. Members should make no mistake about this: the one thing I want is for all of Queensland to get to know the real Campbell Newman, because if they get to know him as well I do it bodes well for the re-election of this government.

Police Resources

Mr LANGBROEK: My question without notice is to the Minister for Police. I refer to an answer to a question asked yesterday in which, in relation to the suggested closure of the Camp Hill, Coorparoo and Annerley police stations, the minister replied—

There is no proposal to close the police stations that the member has outlined.

I now table a copy of two media stories in the South-East Advertiser, from April 2010 and 29 April 2011, both of which confirm that the Camp Hill Police Station is, in fact, closing and in which the minister himself confirms the closure, and I ask: as the minister got it wrong on the closure of Camp Hill Police Station yesterday, how can the public believe that Coorparoo and Annerley police stations will not be mothballed, either?

Tabled paper: Copy of an article from the South-East Advertiser, dated 30 April 2010, titled ‘Carina cop shop farce’ [4427].
Tabled paper: Copy of an article from the South-East Advertiser, dated 29 April 2011, titled ‘New police station increases presence’ [4428].

Mr ROBERTS: The member has let the cat out of the bag. The government has been trying to keep this a secret for some time. In the last budget the Treasurer secreted this information in Budget Paper No. 3. The information about the Camp Hill Police Station is available—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Stop the clock. Those on my left will cease interjecting. I am having difficulty hearing the minister and I want to hear the answer. The minister has the call.

Mr ROBERTS: The Treasurer took this information, put it in Budget Paper No. 3, distributed copies within the parliament secretly during the last budget and put it on the website. If honourable members go to the Treasury website they can access Budget Paper No. 3 and they will see that the decision the government took was to create a new police station just down the road at Carina to replace the Camp Hill Police Station. Just a couple of weeks ago I joined the member for Chatsworth in celebrating, in a sense, the turning of the first sod on the replacement Carina Police Station. So the officers in charge of the Camp Hill Police Station will be moving down the road to the Carina Police Station.

This is part of the Capital Works Program of this government. Decisions about relocating police stations, whether it be from one block to the neighbouring block, or refurbishing the existing block are routine decisions. It is not a closure of the police service in that particular district; it is relocating a police station. This is the government investing in capital works. The advice that I have received about the Camp Hill Police Station is that consideration is being given to continuing to use that particular building for policing purposes.

This is just another example of the member for Surfers Paradise—and his predecessor was just as bad at it—taking a little bit of information and spreading lies and misinformation about what the government is doing in investing in new police resources. We have an admirable record in investing in new police resources such as the new police station at Carina, which is a replacement station, and BP3 is an excellent example of that. We have invested in significant increases in police numbers and police resources across-the-board. As I have said on many occasions in this parliament, that is resulting in a significant reduction in crime rates. I will repeat the figures. Honourable members should know them by now. The overall crime rate is down by 26 per cent, offences against the person are down 20 per cent and offences against property are down more than 40 per cent over 10 years. This is the indication of our investment in resources such as new facilities such as the one at Carina. I know that the member for Chatsworth is looking forward to it opening in the near future.

(Time expired)

Lake Eyre Basin

Mr SHINE: My question is to the Minister for Environment and Resource Management. Can the minister update the House on the Queensland government’s plans to protect the iconic river systems of the Lake Eyre Basin?
Ms JONES: I thank the honourable member for his question and his support for our government’s agenda to protect the pristine rivers in the Lake Eyre Basin here in Queensland. Of course, these rivers are very important because of the way they have been well looked after by the traditional custodians of the land and also the landholders out there who manage it in a very—

Mrs Kiernan: Hear, hear!

Ms JONES: I take the interjection of the member for Mount Isa. I also acknowledge previous comments by the member for Gregory about the custodianship and the responsibility of those landholders out there.

As I have said, consultation is a key part of any declaration of a wild river here in Queensland. At the moment we are undertaking extensive consultation in the Lake Eyre Basin. To date, over 84 consultation programs have been conducted in the Lake Eyre Basin through the Department of Environment and Resource Management staff. I am very pleased to advise the House that 36 of these consultations have occurred since late February. In the coming fortnight we will also see consultation undertaken at Torrens Creek, Aramac and Muttaburra. This is a very important part, and I have said repeatedly on the public record how important it is that we do get feedback about how we implement these wild rivers declarations in the future.

A very significant report was tabled in the Senate last night. The Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee found that the Abbott legislation before the Senate should not be supported. I welcome the conclusions of this report because they reinforce exactly what this state government has said consistently about the failure of this draft bill before the Senate. It is based on the flawed premise that wild rivers declarations stop economic development. This is well known, given that over 140 projects have gone ahead in wild rivers areas since 2007.

The bill seeks to establish a policy framework that provides a veto right over environmental protection legislation but does not apply this to any other legislation anywhere else in Australia. It is legally flawed, with poorly defined definitions of Aboriginal landowner which would mean that corporations, Queensland government departments, individual government employees and individuals would have a veto right over the wishes of the traditional owners in that area. I note the silence from the opposition, who actually supported the original wild rivers legislation in this parliament in 2005. I would be sitting there silent, too, because this legislation is fundamentally flawed.

I would like to directly quote from the report. It states—

Indeed, insofar as the Bill calls into question the future of wild river rangers, the Bill may actually serve to undo some of the good work currently being done.

This Bill is a rehash of an earlier Bill, which suffered from major problems, and this attempt to address a small number of those problems has resulted in an even worse piece of proposed legislation, particularly when it comes to defining who the Bill seeks to provide veto powers to...

This bill should not be supported and we will continue to campaign against it.

(Time expired)

Federal Budget, Bruce Highway

Dr ROBINSON: My question is to the Minister for Main Roads. With respect to federal Labor’s recent funding cuts to the Bruce Highway of $326 million and with only $285 million reinstated to the budget, does the minister now admit that this funding shortfall of $41 million is further proof that his government is impotent and failing regional Queenslanders?

Mr WALLACE: As a great man who once sat in this place would say, fair dinkum, digger. Wake up to yourself! What has Labor delivered on the Bruce Highway? It has delivered $150 million in Cairns on that southern approach. The Cardwell Range, one of the most dangerous sections of the Bruce Highway, has $115 million in construction underway. In Townsville, the capital of North Queensland, in this budget there has been $160 million to complete our ring-road plus another $40 million from this government. That is a $200 million investment for the people of Townsville on the Bruce Highway.

Going south, again on the ring-road, there is construction now—and the member for Mundingburra is proud of that construction—of $110 million on the duplication of the Douglas Ring Road. Members opposite sat there mute for 12 years while the Howard government starved the people of regional Queensland for funding on the Bruce Highway. That government spent $1.2 billion over 12 years, compared to $2.6 billion from this current government. How dare they get up here!

Vantassel Street, the southern entrance into the Townsville area, has seen $110 million delivered by this Labor government. Then there is Sandy Corner to Collinsons Lagoon. I drove down to Home Hill to see mum for Mother’s Day on Sunday and I went through that section of road. It is very, very dangerous. That is why I am glad about that $50 million from federal Labor for that section of road.
Again, for the Burdekin, my old home town, there is $25 million in the budget for improvements. The member for Mackay will be happy about the $10 million to start work on planning for the ring-road. Labor delivers and only Labor. What about the Peak Downs Highway, that busy road through those mining communities? There is $120 million for that. I drove the Bruce Highway over Easter, down and back from Townsville. I stopped at Rocky and had a good look at Rocky. I had a look at the Yeppen area, where it flooded too much. We have done that study. But there is another $5 million for the Yeppen Bridge. The member for Gladstone will be pleased to see the money for the Calliope Crossroads.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: Yes.

Mr WALLACE: Yes, the member for Gladstone is happy. There is $40 million for the Calliope Crossroads. What about the Gladstone area, which again is another big beneficiary, with $40 million for the port access road? That is a big, big win. The member for Maryborough will be pleased with the money for Gin Gin to Cabbage Tree Creek. That is a big win there of $100 million. Mr Speaker, there is more. I do not have enough time, but there is more. We are delivering on the Bruce Highway. It is Labor that has delivered.

(Time expired)

Federal Budget, Mental Health Services

Ms JOHNSTONE: My question is to the Minister for Disability Services, Mental Health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. In light of the $2.2 billion for mental health announced in last night’s federal budget, can the minister please advise the House how these funds will help the state government deliver more support and services for people with a mental illness in Queensland?

Mr PITT: I thank the honourable member for the question. I know that the honourable member has a long history of involvement with mental health issues in the Townsville area and through her work with the Mental Illness Fellowship, so I do appreciate the question.

The federal government's $2.2 billion could not have come at a better time for Queenslanders. Many people with a mental illness are doing it very tough at the moment coming to terms with the impacts of the natural disasters that we faced, and they can certainly use the extra help right now. Operation Queensland is about much more than rebuilding roads and buildings. It is about restoring wellbeing. The Bligh government has delivered additional funding for counselling and support services to help people with a mental illness get through these tough times. We have been able to offer more counselling, more face-to-face support, specialist mental health services and respite care through our non-government partners.

It is also about giving family, friends and neighbours access to services to help them recognise the telltale early signs of distress. I take this opportunity to congratulate the AMAQ on its seven signs campaign. The more people who are talking about this the better, so I certainly welcome that announcement. We are providing on-the-ground support to around 5,500 people with a mental illness, their families and their carers. As a government, we want to make sure that anyone who is struggling during the recovery phase knows that help is available and that there is someone to turn to.

I spoke with the federal mental health minister, Mark Butler, on the eve of the budget. This is the single biggest mental health package in our history. We are at a crossroads in the delivery of mental health services. We all have an opportunity to make a significant difference to people’s lives. The mental health funding package from the federal government also recognises the importance of keeping people connected. It is a commendable contribution and it complements the work that we are doing. Very importantly, it has a very strong focus on developing the community mental health sector. That is an area we need to focus our attention on. It is about keeping people out of acute care. It is about making sure that they can get back into the community, where they should be.

It goes to show through this federal contribution what can be achieved when two levels of Labor government work together to help people with a mental illness, their families and their carers. I think it is also important to note that carers are worth their weight in gold. If you were to add up the value of the amount of work that carers do around Australia, you would be looking at a figure of about $40 billion worth of support. That is something that would break any government, so we are eternally grateful to the work that carers do. It is very, very important.

These funds, as I said, complement what we are doing with Operation Queenslander. It is important that we not only look at the bricks and mortar and those after-effects of our natural disasters but also, just like during the disasters themselves when we looked after our neighbours and looked out for them, continue to do so and check on how they are going.
**Water Infrastructure Charges**

Mr DICKSON: My question is to the Minister for Energy and Water Utilities. On 13 March 2007 the then Deputy Premier stated, ‘The state will adopt a four per cent break-even rate of return on charging for its new water grid infrastructure.’ The current minister last month, in response to a question on notice, said, ‘The return on investment for the state government’s Seqwater Co. was about 8.4 per cent,’ and yesterday the finance minister told the House that the state would receive 4.75 per cent overall, while the 2009-10 annual reports for state government bulk water companies reveal the return on investment is a lot higher. Minister, who is telling the truth?

Mr ROBERTSON: What the member has done is thrown on the table a range of figures over the last decade. I have been around for the last decade and one thing that I do recall is that certain things of note have occurred such as the global financial crisis. Anyone who has been through the global financial crisis would know that one of the major impacts of the global financial crisis was that rates of return on investment were impacted. Therefore, it is not surprising that over such a lengthy period of time when inflation has risen and fallen and we have had a global financial crisis and interest rates have risen and fallen you would see different rates of return at different points in time. There is absolutely nothing particularly remarkable about that.

What we saw yesterday was a point by point demolition of the argument pursued by the unofficial opposition in this state—the LGAQ—of the nonsense that it has been speaking about the financial transactions that make up the South-East Queensland water grid. It could not even get the fundamentals right. And today what do we see? Some pathetic response by the CEO of the LGAQ that he wants more data. He wants more information. He does not believe what Treasury has actually done in terms of its analysis of the LGAQ’s report. Why? Because they have been caught out. They have been caught out running a highly political campaign, as the campaign team for Campbell Newman, wasting ratepayers’ money on nonsense reports to muddy the water about who is actually responsible for rising water and waste water prices in this state.

Point by point that LGAQ report was demolished. It was shredded. It was held up to be the nonsense that it actually is. It is about time that the opposition in this state did some hard yakka and actually read that analysis and understands how major infrastructure is financed in this state and how rates of return are calculated and who is responsible for infrastructure and how that is paid off over what period of time. Campbell Newman has been running around saying that so long as we extend the debt by doubling it from 20 to 40 years everything will be okay. What did Treasury tell us yesterday? That the debt has actually been paid off over the life of those assets, which is at least 50 years. The central point of Campbell Newman’s four-point plan has been fundamentally and unequivocally demolished.

(Time expired)

**Federal Budget, Bruce Highway**

Ms BOYLE: My question is to the Minister for Main Roads. Will the minister please inform the House about the impact on Queensland of the Bruce Highway roadworks announced in the federal budget?

Mr Seeney: That’s easy: there were no new announcements!

Mr WALLACE: Well may they decry the Bruce Highway, because their leader, their quasi-leader, ‘Claytons’ Campbell—

Opposition members interjected.

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

Mr WALLACE: Well may they decry the Bruce Highway, because their leader, ‘Claytons’ Campbell, admits that he has not driven it for a quarter of a century. That is why this question is so important from the member for Cairns. I thank her for the question because it gives me an opportunity to finish what I got halfway through in my previous answer.

What have Labor governments done from the north to the south while the tories have sat there mute for over a decade? As I said earlier, in the electorates of the member for Cairns and the member for Mulgrave we have allocated $150 million for the very busy Cairns southern access area.

Mr Robertson: What about the duplication of the ring-road? I drove it the other day.

Mr WALLACE: You drove that duplication the other. That is very good, Minister. You would have seen solar panels, which you would be interested in, on the side of the road. Townsville residents are taking them up due to the policies of this Labor government. Some $110 million has been spent on that ring-road. What about the Townsville Port Access Road? That is nation building stuff worth $190 million.

But what did we not get to before? What did the tories put into it? Nothing, zero, zip, zilch. What about Gin Gin to Cabbage Tree Creek? The member for Maryborough would be pleased that there is $100 million. Cooroy to Curra, the most dangerous section of the Bruce Highway—

Mr Messenger: That’s mine!
Mr WALLACE: It is your’s. There has been a big win there of $130 million. There is $195 million for Caboolture to Caloundra. Yesterday it was announced by the Premier that there would be $36 million in NDAA works near Gin Gin.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr WALLACE: Listen to those opposite whinge. They hate the Bruce Highway. Further funding was announced for the Bruce Highway last night. Some $70 million for black spots and another $50 million for overtaking lanes was announced.

But what about outside the Bruce? I am sure the member for Mansfield and the minister for public works would be interested to hear that $300 million has been allocated for Mains and Kessels roads. The member for Ipswich West, there is $54 million for the very busy Warrego Highway. The Pacific Motorway from Springwood to Daisy Hill has been allocated $40 million this year.

This government works with federal Labor to deliver roads right across the state. We need to compare the records. We have to compare apples with apples. There was $1.2 billion from Howard for the Bruce over 12 years. Some $2.6 billion has come from federal Labor in its first term. We have to compare apples with apples. If this mob ever got back in, God forbid the people in regional Queensland. The Bruce would bleed again. Only Labor has delivered for the Bruce. Whilst I am delivering I will continue to fight for more dollars. I am like Oliver Twist, I want more.

(Time expired)

Kilcoy Bypass

Mrs PRATT: My question is to the Minister for Main Roads. Campbell Newman reportedly stated while visiting the Nanango electorate that the number of wooden bridges on the D’Aguilar Highway in the electorate was a disgrace. As all members would know, all but one of the wooden bridges have been replaced in the Nanango electorate and the Kilcoy bypass will address the one and only remaining one. Has the funding been allocated for the Kilcoy bypass and when will it commence?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the honourable member for Nanango for a good question. Be careful of that ‘Claytons’ Campbell, though. The only thing he built was the tunnel that has gone into receivership and those bikes that no-one uses. On this side we have not only allocated money to the Bruce Highway but also allocated money to the Kilcoy bypass—some $40 million. The design for that bypass is well underway, member for Nanango. I will get the member a brief, if she likes, about where we are. She will enjoy that.

The member talked about the wooden bridges. We have a big program right across the state to replace those old wooden bridges. That is the Regional Bridge Renewable Program. That is a massive program. She would have seen some of those changes. I know the member for Burnett would have seen some of those changes. A lot of wooden bridges in this area have also been replaced. Under the bridge replacement program we have to replace a total of 104 bridges with new structures. Some 82 of those have been replaced already and a further five bridges have been rehabilitated under that program.

I am sure the member for Nanango will be pleased to know what we are doing in her area. Roads are so important to the people of regional Queensland. Do not forget ‘Claytons’ Campbell had not driven the Bruce Highway for a quarter of a century. What are we doing on the D’Aguilar Highway? There is $1 million for Safer Roads Sooner projects. We will construct a new heavy vehicle rest stop 27 kilometres west of Kilcoy. Work started in April this year and it is expected to finish in the middle of this year. There has been some wet weather there as well. There is $850,000 to seal shoulders on the D’Aguilar Highway at Yarraman under our black spot funding. Work on that will commence this month and is due to finish in August as well. That is another bit of good news for the member’s electorate and her good people.

There is further good news for Nanango. There is $2 million under Safer Roads Sooner for shoulder sealing, guardrail installation, pavement repairs and vegetation clearing to improve visibility at the various locations along the Esk-Kilcoy Road. We spoke about that the Hampton to Geham Road. That was a tricky situation. I think we have a good solution there. It is a pity we had to take out some of the trees, but safety has to come first on our roads. I know the member for Nanango agrees with that.

There is a $1 million project to rehabilitate a section of the New England Highway north of Crows Nest. That work will commence this month and is due to be completed in October 2011. There is good news for the people of Nanango. We will build that Kilcoy bypass. I will get the member a brief on that because we have started the planning work on that. Watch ‘Claytons’ Campbell. The only thing he can build is a tunnel that has gone into receivership or bikes that no-one uses.
Federal Budget, Tourism Industry

Mr O'BRIEN: My question without notice is to the Minister for Tourism, Manufacturing and Small Business. As we know, the federal government last night handed down its budget for the coming financial year. Could the minister please inform the House how the federal government's budget will benefit the tourism industry, especially in Queensland's regions?

Ms JARRATT: I thank the member for the question because I know that tourism is a critical economic contributor to the member's electorate and indeed to our whole state. I am delighted to report that the federal government has delivered on its promise to stand by Queensland as we continue our post flood and cyclone recovery.

I congratulate the federal government on committing $648.3 million over the next four years to support Australia's $34 billion tourism industry. This allocation includes $539.5 million in funding specifically for Tourism Australia. This is a really critical investment which actually grows Tourism Australia's budget, boosting its allocation this financial year from $126.9 million to $132.8 million. This increase in funding will be used to open new areas of focus, including the implementation of a dedicated China plan—which is very important given the strength of this emerging market—a strengthening of a more strategic role in aviation, to better inform and facilitate tourism investment and to encourage the development of new and exciting products. These are all very critical elements for tourism going forward. Tourism Australia will of course continue to hone in on Australia's high-yield markets, namely China, North America, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea.

I also welcome the federal government's focus on skills and training which will be of enormous benefit to Queensland's regions. Some $558 million has been allocated to a national workforce development fund to deliver 130,000 new training places over four years. By continually upskilling Queenslanders we empower our workforce to create their own career paths and enhance our already internationally renowned service levels and safety standards and fill skill shortage gaps.

As members of this House know, one of the best things any government can do to support the tourism industry is to create jobs. This ultimately provides more Australian householders with the ability to take the option of a holiday. This shows the federal government is not narrowly focused on tomorrow or the weekend; it is putting in place a plan to mobilise our economy and increase the discretionary funds of Australian households. I hope this will provide more people with the opportunity to make their Queensland holiday dreams come true.

To continue to promote the prestige of unbeatable Australian holidays, the federal government has reaffirmed its commitment to the national TQUAL standards with a $9.6 million allocation over four years. This national TQUAL brand will help visitors to choose those businesses that they can rely upon to provide the very best experience and service when they have an Australian holiday.

Gladstone Hospital

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. The Premier visited Gladstone recently to announce the LNG industry investment in the Gladstone Hospital. While LNG must pay its way, when will this government recognise its obligations to the people of Gladstone and invest in additional services and staff at the Gladstone Hospital to benefit current and projected residents?

Mr WILSON: I thank the honourable member for the question and acknowledge that we have had some conversations in the recent past about the future of health services in this rapidly growing area of Gladstone. I also remind the House of the Premier's announcement in relation to the dialysis services that will be provided at the Gladstone Hospital. I congratulate the major LNG proponent that has come on board and made that significant capital contribution. LNG proponents are making contributions in the Surat Basin and elsewhere because they recognise that it is very important to have a strong social licence and to be actively engaged in building local and community infrastructure in areas where they are making long-term major investments.

The Premier has recognised publicly that work is presently being undertaken by Queensland Health to examine the health services planned for that area. This will be finalised in due course to properly take account of the future prospects in that area and in the broader area up to and including the Bowen Basin. It will recognise the longer-term impacts, benefits and opportunities that are available arising out of the LNG industry in particular and, more generally, the long-term industrial development of Gladstone.

I remind the House that we have been making substantial improvements in the Gladstone area, particularly at the Gladstone Hospital—for example, the average waiting time in the emergency department is 44 minutes; category 1 patients are seen within one minute; there has been a 20 per cent staffing increase in the last five years; bed occupancy at the Gladstone Hospital is amongst the best in Queensland, at below approximately 50 per cent; the new dialysis service will be delivered in partnership with QGC, as I have said; and a new upgrade of the HCU will be delivered in partnership...
with Santos. These are important initiatives that will be undertaken. We will also obviously take account of the health service planning that is being done for that particular area, as well as the broader health service planning that is being done for the Bowen Basin. We will then make appropriate decisions into the future based upon that, recognising that there is a strong community interest in making sure there is adequate provision for health services into the future.

(Time expired)

Mr SPEAKER: Question time has now concluded.

SPEAKER'S RULING

Notice of Motion

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I gave an undertaking that I would make an examination of a notice of motion moved by the honourable member for Burnett this morning. The notice of motion contains reference to a series of allegations made by a former member to the Crime and Misconduct Commission. I have considered whether the notice of motion is out of order.

A notice of motion is merely an incomplete motion; it is a proposal. It is for the House to determine whether it will agree to the proposition. As long as the motion if agreed to would not offend the law, the notice is internally logical and coherent and contains only facts necessary and able to be authenticated, it should not be interfered with—because the matter is left to the House. The inclusion of facts in a motion should be limited to those necessary or essential. This is because the proper place to argue the case for the motion is in the debate on the motion, not in the motion itself.

I have a number of difficulties with this notice of motion. The notice of motion essentially contains a number of allegations. These allegations have been dressed up as authenticated facts by referencing the fact—that is able to be authenticated—that a letter from the CMC references the allegations. It may be a fact that a letter from the CMC references the allegations, but the allegations detailed in the notice of motion are themselves not facts; they are simply allegations.

However, the worst aspect of the notice of motion, and what I find objectionable, is that it includes an allegation against a member who would normally be able to take a point of order if the allegation had been spoken in the House and the member was present. It also unnecessarily names individuals in the notice of motion. The substance of the motion could have been given without naming any person.

Finally, it makes an allegation against unnamed members of the judiciary, for which the honourable member for Murrumba took a point of order. Making allegations against unnamed members of the judiciary is a slight, therefore, on the entire judiciary and it does so in a way in which a substantive decision on the adverse allegation cannot be made. Given all of the above, I rule the notice of motion out of order.

I note to the House that the notice of motion is not the real mischief here. The real mischief is the practice which has developed of members using notices of motion to make short speeches. I have raised this matter more than once in the past. I appeal to all honourable members that, if they want to have a notice of motion read out that will actually accord with the standing orders, they should avail themselves of the opportunity provided by the independent Office of the Clerk. In that way, they will be doing themselves a favour and they will be doing the House a favour. The documents tabled by the honourable member for Burnett are able to be tabled.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Bruce Highway

Mr SEENEY (Callide—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.35 am): The Bruce Highway in Queensland is a national disgrace and this morning we have seen why. After 20 years of Labor governments, next to nothing has been done to address the national disgrace that is our Highway 1. The Bruce Highway should be the infrastructure backbone of Queensland. It should be a four-lane highway from Brisbane to Cairns. It should be the basis on which economic development is extended right across the state. Instead, for year after year, very little has been done to address the dangerous situation that exists on so many sections of the Bruce Highway.

Again this morning in this parliament we saw this failed Labor government make excuses for their own failures to get adequate federal funding to address that road. No new money has been allocated in yet another federal budget; there is no new money for Queensland’s primary road infrastructure. Instead, this morning we saw yet again a re-announcement after re-announcement, more spin from minister after minister trying to justify their position.
Until we get a government in Queensland that can put forward the case for proper federal funding for this road, this Bruce Highway will continue to be a national disgrace. It will continue to be cut each time we have a wet season in North Queensland. It will continue to be entirely inadequate for the traffic volumes it now carries. It is a glaring example of the failure of this state Labor government. It is an example that the people of Queensland should look to when they make their judgement about this state Labor government. It is an example of the infrastructure requirements of this state that will need to be addressed by any new government that takes office in Queensland.

Queensland Health, Awards for Excellence

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (11.37 am): If any person is minded to criticise Queensland Health or its employees, I invite them to consider the Central Queensland Health Service District Awards for Excellence 2011. On 8 April, I joined Director-General Mick Reid and Acting District CEO Maree Geraghty at the Frenchville club in Rockhampton at the presentation of the winners in the eight categories considered. The overall winner was the Capricornia Allied Health Partnership Team for the first interprofessional allied health student clinic, which places first-year students from a range of disciplines in clinical situations for six to 10 weeks to help manage chronic disease in the community.

The category winners were as follows. For ‘Corporate innovation: Supporting those who deliver care’, the winner was the emergency department redevelopment team at the Rockhampton Hospital; and ‘Skilling the future: Innovative skills and system development’ was won by Nadia Hassan, senior dietician; Rachael Villiers, senior speech pathologist; and Priya Martin, clinical education officer, occupational therapy. For ‘Improvement through leadership development: Better culture, better care’, the winner was Rebecca Bradshaw, a registered nurse at Taroom Hospital. For ‘Consumer partnership: Improving health care together’, the winner was Peter Bothams, CQ district Ed-LinQ coordinator, and Rosemary Akers, Emerald Child and Youth Mental Health Service. For ‘Improving Indigenous health outcomes: Closing the gap’, the winners were Sara Steemson, Rob Rolls and Angela Martin of the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Service.

There were three other categories: ‘Research informing healthcare improvement’, ‘Clinical practice improvement: Moving to better clinical practice’ and ‘Acute and chronic disease prevention’. The Central Highlands and Emerald Hospital team and the Rockhampton Base Hospital staff were presented with a special flood initiative award in recognition of the hard work of Queensland Health workers for their community service in continuing to provide healthcare services during the floods in December and January. Special thanks must go to the Frenchville Sports Club for sponsoring the awards and for its continuing support for Rockhampton health services over the years. I congratulate all of those ordinary Queensland Health employees who are doing extraordinary things.

Federal Budget

Mr NICHOLLS (Clayfield—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.39 am): There is no doubt that the federal budget, which was announced last night, is a great disappointment to Queensland and a great disappointment to Queenslanders. It is a federal budget that does not address the needs of this great state and it is a federal budget that has obviously been framed with a complete lack of regard for a failed Queensland Labor government—a government in Queensland that has no sway, no pull and no credibility in Canberra. Why else would this budget not address Queensland’s infrastructure needs? Why else would this budget not introduce any additional funding for the Bruce Highway? We saw in question time today the Acting Premier struggle to answer a question as to why there was no additional funding. We saw the Treasurer today unable to answer a question as to why Queensland was receiving nothing—nothing—compared to New South Wales, where an extra $750 million was being provided to upgrade the Pacific Highway. We saw a tourism minister who did not even know how much money was being made available for Queensland to address one of the crying needs of our economy, and that is the significant state of disrepair in which the tourism industry finds itself.

We saw a budget that is unable to provide any solace to small business for the impact of the carbon tax. Last night we saw a budget that does nothing to address the needs of Western Queensland. Whether it is the disgraceful state of the Warrego Highway or whether it is a second range crossing, this budget does not address the needs of Western Queensland. This budget does nothing to address the cost of living for Queenslanders. All it does, with its massive deficit of $50 billion this year and $22.5 billion next year, is put upward pressure on interest rates and inflation, making the cost of living for Queenslanders even higher. This is a can’t-do budget from a failed Labor government federally that has been backed up by a failed Labor government here in Queensland. It has failed to deliver for Queenslanders and it has failed to deliver for families.

Centenary Recovery Centre

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (11.41 am): In March this year I brought together a number of church groups, government departments and community organisations to set up the Centenary Recovery Committee to provide a community based centre that aids local individuals,
It was important to local community organisations and churches that we have a staffed local advice centre where we can bring together the many agencies that are able to provide hands-on assistance to affected families. To do this the community funded a qualified professional, Claire Benson, to provide guidance and to act as a coordinator at the community's recovery centre. We also trained volunteers who are able to staff the recovery centre and refer people to government or community organisations for assistance. The centre is located at the Mount Ommaney Shopping Centre, making use of the centre management suites on the first level. Thanks to the generosity of AMP and the Mount Ommaney Shopping Centre manager, Steven Ihm, we are able to have the space for a peppercorn rent until October this year. The operating hours of the centre are Tuesdays and Thursdays 2 pm to 7 pm and Saturdays 9 am to 1 pm. At any other time during shopping centre opening hours the centre will provide a space for training and workshops for small business, financial advice to flood affected residents and counselling for individuals in distress as required. I give my heartfelt thanks to all of those people who make up the Centenary Recovery Committee, the state government and local government departments and the non-government entities who provide much needed support at ground level for the 2,323 households and 195 businesses in my electorate who were affected by the terrible floods in January 2011.

Cleveland Electorate

Dr ROBINSON (Cleveland—LNP) (11.44 am): The transport concerns of Queenslanders have been sidelined for far too long now by this Labor government. Those concerns are present and real, yet this Labor government continues to be inactive in its duty to provide important transport services and infrastructure to Brisbane and the Cleveland community. Firstly, a major concern is the continuing failure of the Cleveland rail line. A simple thunderstorm now brings the entire Cleveland line to its knees by causing track signals to fail, and this happens very regularly. This problem shuts down the Cleveland electorate's major transport corridor and hinders my constituents from accessing necessary services when they are really needed. The failure of the Cleveland line is a constant and ever-present hindrance to those in my electorate who rely on the train line. It is the constant inaction of this Labor government that continues to astound my constituents, who want a solution to this issue. There is a visible lack of commitment on the simplest of issues affecting the network and the Cleveland line. Simple steps can be taken to change the current failure, but time and time again the government fails to deliver. There is a need for the line between the Manly Railway Station and the Cleveland Railway Station to be duplicated ultimately to grow capacity on the line to meet future demand in the rapidly growing Redlands area.

Secondly, I wish to bring to the attention of the government the need for action on the roundabout at the intersection of Shore and Wellington streets in my electorate. That roundabout continues to be a source of frustration for the commuters in my electorate. Simply signalling the intersection would address the issues of congestion and safety.

Thirdly, the Redland City Council has announced its intention to begin charging Redlanders for parking at ferry terminals in the Redlands. It seems that the council intends to roll out charging for parking throughout the Redlands, which would affect people in Cleveland, particularly those people who use Toondah Harbour, and that includes the residents of North Stradbroke Island and tourists who want to continue to have open access to free local parking. I continue to be concerned about this government's failure in terms of transport and roads.

(Time expired)

St Eugene College

Mr RYAN (Morayfield—ALP) (11.46 am): This Queensland Labor government is continuing its proud record of investment in educational infrastructure and educational opportunities for the young people of the Morayfield state electorate. Recently, along with Senator Mark Furner and Father Paul Smithers, I officially opened the new $8.8 million facilities at St Eugene College. As members of this House are aware, I am a former student of St Eugene College. When I started at St Eugene's there were fewer than 100 students in the whole school and the facilities were adequate but very basic. St Eugene's has now grown to almost 1,000 students and its facilities are world class. The school is a flagship of contemporary learning for the young people of my community. It was a great pleasure to be part of the
opening ceremony for these new magnificent facilities and to see how this great school has changed over the years. The new facilities at St Eugene’s include new classrooms, new student amenities, new walkways, a new performing arts and multipurpose hall and new manual arts, science and home economic workshops. These facilities will make a big difference to the learning journeys of students at the school now and into the future.

I am very proud to report to the House that this Queensland Labor government contributed $2.9 million and the federal government contributed $4.8 million towards the construction of these new facilities. This is just another great example of how this Queensland Labor government is working with schools and other levels of government to ensure that students have a modern learning environment. Over the past five years St Eugene College has received more than $4.5 million in recurrent funding and $9 million in capital assistance funding from this Queensland Labor government.

Carrara, Development

Dr DOUGLAS (Gaven—LNP) (11.48 am): Without any community consultation, the government has sprung a major development announcement to close Parklands showgrounds at Parkwood and redevelop part of my electorate in Carrara into an entertainment and sporting precinct for the bid for the 2018 Commonwealth Games. As a representative of the people—which is something that constituents tell me daily is a position that this government neglects—I immediately sought my constituents’ views. A number of questions must be asked before any major development such as this goes ahead. How will it affect not only the lives of Gold Coast residents but the residents of Carrara and the surrounding suburbs? How will the development affect property values and residential amenity? What about construction work and noise during major events? In real terms, how many local jobs will the development create—not one-hour-a-week election buzzword jobs but sustainable contracts for local tradespeople and workers, and in that I include the $200 million that Civil earthworks will charge just to redevelop that site?

What is the projected and committed government expenditure at all three levels of government? Because the project needs to be fast-tracked to meet deadlines for the games, how will this affect quality assurance and rush costs? Will this development force the government to finally admit that the light rail cannot work if it is not linked to the heavy rail, in particular at Nerang via Carrara? Will the government ensure at the very least that our 15-year-old bus timetables are renewed and synchronised with the rail system? Has the government ever considered the impact on the flood plain at Carrara and the closeness of the Nerang River? Will the government learn from the disasters across the state? Will they dredge the Broadwater which is silting up the Nerang River which runs next to the proposed development? I table today’s Gold Coast Bulletin article, ‘Alarm at Carrara Flooding’, by Matthew Killoran.

Tabled paper: Article from the Gold Coast Bulletin, dated 11 May 2011, titled ‘Alarm at Carrara flooding’ [4429].

We already have fully functioning showgrounds that form a perfect buffer zone on the immediate eastern border of the Gold Coast University Hospital. The cemetery is on the western border and the southern border is basically a road. This is the perfect situation. This drive to force development of Carrara showgrounds is entirely wrong. It is risky, wasteful and will not give us the result we need.

(Time expired)

Crocodiles

Mr WETTENHALL (Barron River—ALP) (11.50 am): Community debate about the best way to manage crocodiles in urban areas has re-ignited in Cairns following recent media reports of crocodile sightings in the Barron River and other locations. Attention has focused on Lake Placid, a popular swimming and recreation area in my electorate, where a crocodile warning sign was recently erected by the Cairns Regional Council following a reported, but I believe unconfirmed, sighting of a crocodile. Many locals are adamant that crocodiles have never been seen at Lake Placid, but authorities are faced with a dilemma: issue warnings and restrict popular recreational activity or ignore reported sightings and leave people at possible risk of attack.

Under the Crocodile Management Plan, crocodiles of two metres or more in length can be targeted for capture and removal by rangers in defined urban areas of Cairns. The Barron River, including Lake Placid, is not in the defined urban area and rangers must therefore wait for animals to exhibit threatening or aggressive behaviour before they can be targeted for capture and removal. Since the Crocodile Management Plan and Defined Urban Area were adopted, residential areas have crept closer to crocodile habitat and strong population growth means that more and more people are encroaching on crocodile habitat for recreational purposes such as fishing, canoeing and even swimming. I have personally observed people frolicking in known crocodile habitat, seemingly oblivious to the risk they were taking and ignoring or being in ignorance of the ‘be croc-wise’ messages that we constantly put out.
To address these complex and contentious issues, I have written to the Minister for Environment and Resource Management and asked her to review the boundaries of the Cairns urban area to give rangers greater flexibility to remove large crocodiles from areas frequented by people.

**CRIMINAL CODE (ANZAC DAY BETTING) AMENDMENT BILL**

**First Reading**

Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (11.52 am): I present a bill for an act to amend the Criminal Code to legalise two-up games at certain Anzac Day celebrations. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Tabled paper: Criminal Code (Anzac Day Betting) Amendment Bill [4430].
Tabled paper: Criminal Code (Anzac Day Betting) Amendment Bill, explanatory notes [4431].

**Second Reading**

Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (11.52 am): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

It is not known the exact origins of the game two-up, but it seems to have evolved from another game called pitch-and-toss, a game involving tossing a single coin into the air and wagering on the result. History says that two-up was played amongst poorer English and Irish citizens in the 18th century. The movement of convicts to Australia brought two-up with them and this was noted as early as 1798 by the New South Wales first Judge Advocate. Over time the two coin form was being played in the goldfields and is said to have spread across the country following subsequent gold rushes.

During the First World War the game was said to have been played extensively by Australian soldiers. It is during these war-torn years that Queenslanders and Australians have come to pay tribute to our fallen diggers and as a part of that respect we participate in a game of two-up on Anzac Day each year just as our diggers did all those years ago.

Under the current criminal law anyone participating in such a game outside of a casino with a regulated game could face criminal charges. That is why today I am moving to insert an exemption in the Criminal Code to ensure that those persons who are at Anzac Day celebrations on Anzac Day in any licensed club or pub will be able to participate in a game of two-up. Clubs and pubs will be able to hold these games without fear of threats of being shut down, as was reported to have happened in Cairns on Anzac Day this year.

This bill seeks to remove any doubt that the criminal law of unlawful games under section 232 of the Criminal Code does not apply to particular exempt two-up games. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Reeves, adjourned.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS**

**Brisbane Ferry Terminal Design Competition**

Ms GRACE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (11.54 am): I advise the House of an exciting new design competition in Brisbane. On 30 April I joined the Premier Anna Bligh and federal Treasurer Wayne Swan at the launch of the Brisbane Ferry Terminal Design Competition. We all know that great design makes great cities and this national and international design competition is open to designers and architects across the globe to become part of the rebuilding of our city. I am positive that the end design result will show everyone that Brisbane is not just back on its feet; it is standing tall again. This cutting-edge design competition is a once-in-a-generation chance to turn disaster into an opportunity. It is an opening to rebuild CityCat and ferry terminals that are truly unique and will be instantly recognisable as a distinctive part of the river city’s landscape.

As ferry terminals are not normally infrastructure that would qualify for funding under the NDRRA arrangements, I welcome this unprecedented partnership between the federal and state governments to commit $145 million to replace the Brisbane ferry terminals and the RiverWalk. Interested designers are to provide their ideas for a single design that can be adapted for eight inner-city terminals lost during the floods, four of which are located in my electorate at River Plaza, North Quay, Queensland University of Technology and Sydney Street in New Farm.
A selection panel chaired by Government Architect Professor Philip Follent will be supported by a technical advisory group and the BCC to select a short list of three. Members of the public will be able to have a say on the winner from the short list and the winning design will be awarded the contract as consulting architect. Entry designs are now open and I encourage all designers of the world to enter and be part of rebuilding our much-loved CityCat and ferry terminals. I am positive that the winning design will add a great architectural flair to our great city and I cannot wait to see the outcome. Sharpen your pencils, designers, and enter the competition. This is exciting stuff for Brisbane City and a chance to be a part of the rebuilding of our great city.

Toowoomba Bypass

Mr RICKUSS (Lockyer—LNP) (11.56 am): I acknowledge in the public gallery Mike Jarroush, the year 12 coordinator; Katie-Jayne Olm, the school captain; Chris O’Brien, the school captain; Emily Hallas, the vice captain; and Michelle Woods, the vice captain from Lockyer District High, a great high school in my area.

I am disappointed that there was no money put aside in the federal budget for the Toowoomba bypass. This is a travesty for the communities of Withcott, Toowoomba and the people in this area. This bypass must be built. It is a travesty that this federal government has let the people of the Lockyer and Toowoomba down again. I cannot believe it keeps ignoring this infrastructure that needs to be built. It does not only need to be built, it needs to be built now. We need to have a full reseal on the Warrego Highway from Blacksoil to Minden. I note that Blacksoil did get some funding for its overpass, but that was promised at the last election and I think promised at the election before that but it was not delivered.

Mrs Sullivan: That is not true.

Mr Wendt: The LNP didn’t support it.

Mr RICKUSS: It was not delivered. We need to have a full reseal done on the highway. The statistics show that deaths on the highway have increased with two deaths in 2008, four deaths in 2009 and eight deaths in 2010. The number of people who are being killed and maimed on this highway is dramatic. RoadTek has done a pretty good job patching up the road but it needs a full reseal to ensure that this highway is safe so that young people like those in the gallery, when they get a licence and start driving, do not end up as another terrible statistic that country areas like Lockyer suffer from regularly because of this highway.

Gold Coast Waterways, Dredging

Ms CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (11.58 am): This Labor government has increased to $1.4 million dredging funding for the Gold Coast. This is one-third of the state’s dredging expenditure. I know how important dredging is to Gold Coast boaties. I have met with many who have told me that they expect more funding and effective coordinated efforts by government agencies to ensure dredging is not delayed. I took those issues to the Minister for Marine Infrastructure. The Gold Coast Waterways Steering Committee was established in response to the concerns. The committee includes representatives from government departments, the Gold Coast City Council and Marine Queensland, and has been focused on delivering improved outcomes for the marine industry, including recreational boaties.

Last week, with the mayor I was pleased to announce a new $2.5 million pilot dredging program for the Gold Coast Seaway. I am pleased to advise Gold Coast boaties that today the dredge is off the seaway, pumping away. This joint state-council dredging project will see 200,000 cubic metres of sand dredged from the seaway and deposited off the Gold Coast’s northern beaches to provide a better defence against erosion from storm activity and king tides. This project will see the Gold Coast Seaway dredged for the very first time in 25 years, making it safer and more accessible for boating traffic.

Marine Queensland CEO Don Jones commented that this project is a positive outcome that will make a big difference to anyone who uses the seaway. The Gold Coast Waterways Steering Committee is charged with the expertise and the funding to ensure dredging projects occur where needed most. For over six years, the LNP has only offered to the boaties of the Gold Coast the regurgitated line that a waterways authority should be established. A waterways authority would be an additional layer of bureaucracy that would drain funding that could be spent on actually dredging the channels. Labor has got on with the job. I support the work being undertaken by the Gold Coast Waterways Steering Committee and will continue to advocate for funding to make our famous waterways accessible.

(Time expired)

Sunshine Coast, Public Transport

Mr EMERSON (Indooroopilly—LNP) (12.00 pm): Last week I took the opportunity to join commuters on their early morning daily train trip from the Sunshine Coast to Brisbane, boarding at Palmwoods and travelling to Central station. It gave me the opportunity to hear firsthand from passengers concerned about train service schedules and higher fares, particularly the scrapping of periodic tickets.
As I spoke to commuters, the same issues were raised over and over again. Many of those commuters are spending more than four hours each day travelling to and from home. The new timetable, due to come into force early next month, will make this journey even longer in duration. With an extra five stops added to the express service, commuters will be forced to spend an additional half-hour on the train every day. Several commuters told me that they had reached breaking point. The extra time was too much and they would have to move closer to Brisbane or abandon the train to use their private cars. They expressed frustration that the previous transport minister had refused to attend public forums over the changes to the timetable, effectively telling Sunshine Coast commuters that she was not interested in their plight.

The increased cost of using public transport was the other issue that was raised repeatedly. Apart from the fare rises that have already occurred last year and this year, and the annual 15 per cent rises due each year for the next three years, the scrapping of monthly, six-monthly and 12-monthly tickets has also hit commuters hard when they can least afford it. Sunshine Coast commuters to Brisbane have seen their annual transport bill jump from more than $3,200, based on a 12-month ticket, to more than $5,800 this year. By 2014 they will be paying more than $8,000 to commute from zone 16, which is nearly three times the cost of five years ago. The commuters I spoke to said that, while the government should be encouraging more people to use public transport, it seems the government is doing everything it can to force them off the trains and into their cars.

(Time expired)

Pups in Prison

Mr WENDT (Ipswich West—ALP) (12.02 pm): As everybody in this House would know, the Serco Borallon Correctional Centre is in my electorate. On a number of occasions I have talked about the various functions that I have attended there, for instance the NAIDOC celebrations that are coming up very shortly, the Shakespeare in Prison project, which is something worth seeing and, of course, a number of education certificate awards for literacy and numeracy and the like. Last week I also attended the centre for the Pups in Prison graduation. For those who do not know, this program is about assistance dogs. In March 2010, four labrador pups started the program but, unfortunately, on the day only three pups graduated from their L-plates to their P-plates.

Pups in Prison is a joint venture between the Borallon Correctional Centre and Assistance Dogs Australia, which is a not-for-profit organisation that trains dogs to help people with special needs. The Pups in Prison program supports Assistance Dogs Australia by setting the foundations for the dogs to progress to advanced training, which is done in Sydney. Within Borallon, this program is aimed at providing offenders with new levels of responsibility, self-esteem and communication while teaching compassion, patience and cooperation. This is the first time the program has been facilitated in a high-security centre and it affords offenders, under the umbrella of repatriation and restorative justice, the opportunity to make a positive contribution to the community.

I was invited to Borallon by Scott McNairn, the director of the facility. Juanita Zuna, from Serco, manages the program. I also make special mention of Richard Lord, the CEO of Assistance Dogs Australia. On the day, he explained that this is one of the first times this program has been run in a high-security prison. I am very pleased to announce that we are looking forward to the next stage, when the P-platers achieve full certification as assistance dogs, which will happen in the next little while. Stay tuned: there is plenty more coming from those wonderful dogs that do a wonderful job.

Overseas Trained Doctors

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—Ind) (12.04 pm): This morning I submitted a question on notice to the health minister regarding a doctor who was employed by Queensland Heath for almost a decade. Among other questions, I have asked the health minister if he can give a guarantee that Dr W Wijeratne, formerly employed at the Bundaberg Base Hospital, does not have any internal Queensland Health adverse findings on his medical record that were not forwarded to the Medical Board of Australia. The government is trying to cover up the medical history of Dr Wijeratne, who has been the subject of many shocking and serious allegations of substandard and negligent medical care.

A significant number of the 15 women who have recently come to me expressing their concerns about the shocking substandard treatment they have received at the Bundaberg Base Hospital maternity unit have compelling stories of negligent medical care given by Dr Wijeratne. One lady told me that she was butchered by him in Griffith, New South Wales, in the late 1990s and had a similar experience in recent years at the Bundaberg Base Hospital. The ladies and their support people, who have formed a pregnant women and babies protection group in the Burnett-Bundaberg, want an independent investigation into their concerns about this overseas trained doctor and others who have been employed and then quietly sent back overseas so that their substandard treatment cannot be investigated.
The ladies also want to double resources and staff to help the hardworking nurses and midwives at the Bundaberg Base Hospital's maternity unit. It is the only hospital, private or public, at which women can give birth in the Burnett-Bundaberg district. That is a fact that had escaped the new Labor hospital manager, Ken Whelan, a good a faithful servant to this Labor government. They did an excellent job of covering up the fact that Townsville had a dangerous dysfunctional cardiothorasic unit and heart surgeons with a mortality rate four times the national average, one of whom was found wandering naked in a Townsville suburb after a mental breakdown. There should have been a royal commission into what happened at the cardiothorasic unit in Townsville.

ELECTORAL REFORM AND ACCOUNTABILITY AMENDMENT BILL

ELECTORAL (TRUTH IN ADVERTISING) AMENDMENT BILL

ELECTORAL REFORM BILL

Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill resumed from 7 April (see p. 1120), on motion of Mr Lucas, Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill resumed from 19 May 2010 (see p. 1635), on motion of Mr Langbroek, and Electoral Reform Bill resumed from 24 November 2010 (see p. 4236), on motion of Mr McLindon—

That the bills be now read a second time.

Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (12.07 pm): Today I contribute to the cognate debate on the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill 2011 introduced by the toxic long-term Labor government, the Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill introduced by the can-do Liberal National Party opposition and the Electoral Reform Bill introduced by the member for Beaudesert. For ease of reference, I will address each bill separately, commencing with the Labor government's bill, which essentially asks the people of Queensland to bail the Labor Party out of its financial troubles.

It is abhorrent to think that, just coming out of some of the worst natural disasters in Queensland's history, with people being denied access to funds to rebuild their lives, with 70 per cent of the Premier's own flood support fund not being spent, with people right across Queensland living in tents and couch surfing after losing everything they hold dear, with thousands of Queenslanders on long medical and dental waiting lists, with pensioners finding it difficult to pay exorbitant water fees, today the Labor Party seeks to rely on those people's hard earned money to pay for its political campaigns and to use those funds to replace things such as the photocopier and the espresso coffee machine in the lavish Labor Party headquarters in Peel Street, South Brisbane. As we head into the next state election, the Labor Party seeks easy access to cash and easy access to Queensland taxpayer funds, yet every day flood affected victims are fighting with the government and insurance companies for a few thousand dollars.

The LNP will stick up for Queenslanders. We will stick up for Queensland taxpayers and residents and we will not be supporting this bill. The haste with which this has landed before us is incredible, but it is not surprising for Labor and the comrades sitting here today. This bill was introduced in the last sitting of parliament. It is being debated, conveniently, the day after the federal budget and the day before corrupt former Labor minister Gordon Nuttall will appear in this House.

As we have heard in this House today, some of the Labor Party members who are still members of this parliament were so complimentary of Gordon Nuttall's character back then. This bill is of major importance to the various political parties, candidates and Independent members of this House. It is interesting to note that, by rushing this bill through this week, importantly, it will miss out on the new committee process measures, which are also being debated this week. Honourable members must ask themselves: are they surprised? Not at all! The Labor Party will always do what is in the best interests of the Labor Party and not the average Queenslander. It verges on corruption—absolute corruption.

The Premier and the Deputy Premier are continually at pains to point out that the Labor Party has integrity and that their measures introduce accountability and transparency into the system. The rushing through of this important bill combined with two other bills before the House is a slap in the face of the moral high ground claimed by the Labor Party. At any sniff of conflict in this place the Deputy Premier holds and waves the Fitzgerald report around, and no doubt he has a copy of it with him today. Sometime during my presentation he will get up in this place and he will wave the Fitzgerald report around like he does nearly every parliamentary sitting.

Today I have the Shepherdson inquiry report and I am happy to wave it around in this place. Interestingly, the contents of the Shepherdson inquiry report contains a chapter titled ‘Setting the scene’. Listed under it are ‘ALP Queensland branch, factions and the alleged ALP "mole" within the Australian
Electoral Commission’. Chapter 3 is titled ‘The 1996 plebiscite for the state electorate of Townsville’. Chapter 4 is titled ‘The 1996 Mundingburra by-election’. Chapter 7 is titled ‘The 1986 plebiscite for the state electorate of South Brisbane’. Interestingly, it lists under that chapter ‘Evidence of boasting of branch stacking, consensual false enrolments, forgery and the enrolment of Paul Lucas’ at page 132, which talks a lot about the address 11 Seventh Avenue, Coorparoo. Chapter 8 lists ‘The conduct on behalf of the AWU faction and the response of Michael Kaiser’.

Mr Hoolihan interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: Most interestingly, for the member for Keppel—

Mr Hoolihan interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Order! The member for Keppel will cease interjecting.

Mr BLEIJIE: Most interestingly, chapter 10, title ‘Comments and general observations’, lists time limitation for offences at page 172. Time limitations for offences prevented a few heads from rolling in this Shepherdson inquiry.

The Deputy Premier conveniently overlooks the Shepherdson report. And remember, it cost the Labor Party a sitting Deputy Premier and the parliamentary career of the rising star at the time, Mike Kaiser, both of whom came from the current Deputy Premier’s own faction. The Shepherdson report revealed such toxic and corrupt internal workings of the Labor Party and electoral fraud that then Premier Beattie called an election with an incredible request of the people of Queensland. He said to Queenslanders, ‘Please vote for me. I am the only one who can clean up the Labor Party’s electoral fraud. Vote for me and I will fix it.’ So bad was the stench of electoral fraud that the Premier had to disassociate himself from his own party. How can one stand in this place as the Deputy Premier has and claim the high moral ground when there have been so many dark clouds hanging over his head? Unlike the Fitzgerald report, which demonstrated a sad and disappointing period in Queensland’s now distant past, the Shepherdson report revealed the Labor Party’s electoral fraud and immoral activities that were happening during the life of the current government—

Mr Hoolihan: What did Fitzgerald find?

Mr BLEIJIE:—practically yesterday, I say to the member for Keppel. The current Deputy Premier was sitting at the cabinet table with crooks such as Jim Elder, Gordon Nuttall and Merri Rose. It is sheer arrogance for the Deputy Premier to enter this place nearly every parliamentary sitting and wave the Fitzgerald report around.

The Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill 2011 will significantly amend the Electoral Act 1992 to enact changes proposed to some extent in the Labor government’s discussion paper titled Integrity and accountability in Queensland. The bill before the House considerably changes the manner in which election campaigns are funded in Queensland and puts an additional burden on the taxpayers of this state. At a time when budgetary pressures are at a premium, the changes proposed in this bill will add in excess of $26 million of taxpayers’ money to the funding of elections and the political process in Queensland—an additional expense that cannot be presently justified and an additional expense that will see constituents right across Queensland in every heart and soul electorate of Labor Party members saying that it is unjustifiable.

If anyone in this place went to the people of Grantham or the people who were ravaged by Cyclone Yasi in North Queensland who are living in their tents or couch surfing and said, ‘Hey, we the Labor Party are going to invest over $26 million so you can fund our political campaigns and processes, our how-to-vote cards and our espresso machine at Peel Street head office,’ what would they say? Would they look behind them to the tent in which they are living and the air mattress on the ground on which they sleep and say, ‘Yes, I agree that the Labor Party should be spending in excess of $26 million on campaign purposes when I cannot even get a roof over my head and I cannot get access to the Premier’s flood relief appeal.’ Surely, members opposite are smart enough to understand that when someone is faced, as those in Grantham, Toowoomba, Brisbane and North Queensland are, with that prospect, it would be incomprehensible to tell them that, through this government’s legislation, we are going to pass a bill that will give politicians and political parties over $26 million a year when all these people want is a roof over their head.

That says a lot about the members opposite. It also says a lot about the members opposite that I think they agree with me. We have one of the most controversial reforms in electoral political fundraising history using public money. Yet out of 52 Labor members of parliament, the speaking list is pretty dull. In fact, I think there are only six members plus a minister out of some 52 Labor Party members on the list. Labor members continually stand in this place and say, ‘We’re sticking up for the battlers of Queensland. We’re sticking up for the Labor Party heartland, the workers, the working class and the union members.’ Those members and those ministers should go into their electorates and say to these people, ‘You are just going to fund our political campaign process.’

Mr Reeves interjected.
Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Mansfield. The minister interjects and asks if I am going to talk about the bill. In the last 11 minutes I have spoken about public funding of political campaigns. That is what this bill is all about. It is about expenditure, capping political donations, capping political expenditure. Even so, the member for Mansfield will be faced with this himself in a matter of time. As soon as this bill passes and receives assent, we will be in the capped expenditure period. If the minister is not across the bill, I would suggest that he read it today and tonight pretty intently because he will need to know about it fairly quickly.

In August 2009 the Premier released a discussion paper titled *Integrity and accountability in Queensland*, proposing 35 questions around the central theme of improving Queensland’s integrity and accountability framework which underpins our system of democracy. The discussion paper raised a number of significant questions including, but not limited to, the comparison of accountability mechanisms in Queensland as opposed to other states around the nation and with the Commonwealth government. In table 1.1 of that discussion paper, Queensland ticked all relevant boxes. Figures included in that discussion paper also refer to the amount of money political parties typically spend on election campaigns. It was suggested that in the 2006 state poll $14 million was spent by all political parties. Maintaining integrity in political campaign fundraising with a particular emphasis on political donations is of paramount importance. It is also vital to consider the historical context of this bill and the events of recent years which have shaped its formation. The potential for corrupting the system has been exposed in recent years by the deeds of the former member for Sandgate, who was found guilty of corruptly receiving secret commissions whilst serving as a minister of this long-term government.

In October 2000 former Premier Beattie commissioned the Shepherdson inquiry, which I have highlighted today. It was instigated when a member of a branch of the Queensland Labor Party publicly alleged widespread electoral fraud in internal party ballots. The Shepherdson inquiry investigated the falsification of documents concerning several plebiscites for Labor Party candidates in the seats of Townsville in 1996 and South Brisbane in 1986, the council wards of East Brisbane and Morningside, both in 1993, and the by-election in Mundingburra. The inquiry caused the resignation of then member for Woodridge and former ALP secretary Mike Kaiser. The falsification of documents pertaining to the electoral roll also involved a number of other serving Labor members in the Queensland government who were required to give evidence at that inquiry.

The Queensland Labor Party has by no means a clean ski when it comes to improving the integrity and accountability of state elections in this place and yet it has the audacity to come in here on a moral crusade to fundamentally amend the Electoral Act with a focus on election spending, political donations and publicly funded political campaigns. The proposed changes, as originally outlined by the government some 18 months ago, were to be in this place by the start of 2010, and that was of course the integrity and accountability paper—a promise which did not eventuate. As the Deputy Premier stated in his second reading speech, the LNP supports a campaign expenditure cap as it levels the playing field and has the potential of improving the quality of candidates for a state election campaign.

The bill before the House imposes an expenditure cap on individual candidates of $50,000 for a registered political party and $75,000 for Independents. There is also an additional expenditure cap for political parties of $80,000 multiplied by the number of seats being contested in a state-wide campaign. The expenditure cap will commence for the initial period on the day after the date of assent to the bill and end at 6 pm on the poll date for the upcoming general election. So practically following the immediate implementation of this bill and royal assent we will be in the first capped expenditure period, limiting what candidates and political parties can spend for campaign expenditure purposes. After the next general election, the cap period will commence on whichever date is the earliest—either the day that is two years after the polling date of the last election or the day of the issue of the writ for the election—and will end at 6 pm on the polling day of any general election day after the next election. The period of a by-election will commence on the day the writs for a by-election are issued and end on the day of the poll for that specific by-election.

An agent of a registered political party or candidate must ensure that the parties do not incur electoral expenditure that is more than the amount equal to the applicable expenditure cap multiplied by the number of electoral districts for which the party has endorsed candidates for the election. Separate state campaign accounts will also need to be maintained for the purpose of expense accountability and to comply with section 177C, with separation indicated for a political party as a whole, each candidate and a registered third-party interest. Donations to political candidates and parties have also come under particular scrutiny in this bill. I understand the reasoning for the focus on these payments with the emphasis to overcoming any perception of cash for access, but I am also gravely concerned with the rights of the individuals or companies who wish to donate to individual political candidates or political parties as part of our democratic political process.

For the purposes of the members of this House, a political donation in this bill is referred to as any one of the following: a gift in kind accompanied by a statement that the gift is intended to be used for election campaigns; a disposition of property to a registered political party from another branch or division of that party intended to be used for campaign purposes; a disposition of property to a candidate in an election from a federal or interstate branch or division of a political party intended for campaign
purposes; and a gift made to an entity, the recipient, that was used or intended to be used by that recipient as a gift in kind for use in election campaigns. Donations to political parties will be limited to $5,000 and $2,000 for individual election candidates per financial year.

The cap on donations is retrospective and will apply from 1 January 2011, although I think one ought to point out that, although the cap is retrospective, the explanatory notes on page 2 state that there is no retrospective obligation placed on the parties in relation to the period prior to assent to the bill. I seek clarification from the Attorney to explain why the donation cap would apply retrospectively but then, having no obligation placed on the cause, what is the point? Third-party donations are also regulated in the bill. Electoral expenditure by third parties during a capped expenditure period will not be allowed to exceed $500,000 across the state or $75,000 for an individual electorate. There are also other measures in the bill that relate to election funding and financial disclosure.

In the Deputy Premier’s second reading speech, he stated that unions will be subject to these donation caps just like everyone else. I put it to the Deputy Premier that, considering the underlying intent of the bill before the House is to ensure that our electoral system is free from undue influence associated with large political donations, there needs to be significant change to the bill with particular reference to third-party donations and the trade union movement. For the benefit of the House, I point out that those wishing to spend more than $10,000 may wish to register as a third party for campaign purposes. As stated in the well-documented Parliamentary Library research brief published in May 2011—

The main types of donors to political parties tend to be businesses, gaming operators, service providers, developers and trade unions. It has been observed that unions will tend to provide donations to the Labor Party while individuals might donate to a particular party based on ideological reasoning, although this is more evident in countries such as the USA ...

The bill before the House will ensure that each individual union is able to contribute to the $500,000 cap a year across Queensland for election campaign purposes.

Make no mistake: the union movement is the principal financial supporter of the Queensland Labor Party and, to ensure that these new laws remain unfair for the Liberal National Party and Independent candidates, trade unions are not defined as associated entities or affiliated with a particular political party. However, for the corporate world and individual world, related companies, as defined in the Corporations Act, get caught under the provisions dealing with associated entities. Accordingly, they are pooled together as one third party and only able to contribute the capped amount of $500,000. However, each union in Queensland, whether officially or unofficially affiliated with the Labor Party, can each—each—spend the capped amount of $500,000 across Queensland.

In the six months from the period 1 July 2010 to 31 December 2010, the Queensland branch of the Labor Party received many donations from the trade unions—for instance, the Meat Industry Employees Union, $3,000 from one branch; the Manufacturing Workers Union, $22,000 from three different branches; the Australian Services Union, $36,090 from two different branches; the Australian Workers Union, $198,000 from four different branches; the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, $194,607.26 from two different branches; the Finance Sector Union, $2,500; the Maritime Union of Australia, $6,500 from four separate branches; the Queensland Council of Unions, $4,500; the Queensland Services Union, a member of the Australian Services Union, $12,000 from two different branches.

It also received $1.2 million from Labor Holdings, which it registered with the Australian Electoral Commission as an associated entity. Associated entities are referred to in the bill as being controlled by one or more registered political parties or operating wholly or to a significant extent for the benefit of one or more registered political parties. The union movement in Australia has myriad state and national divisions and several subbranches and divisions across the state. It is therefore logical and fair to bring all affiliated trade unions in line as one related entity to the Labor Party, thereby capping their spending as one entity.

**Government members** interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: There can be no doubt of affiliation based on historical campaign donations, expenditure, compulsory membership of other organisations and having a large say in the operation of the Labor Party at the state conference. As we have seen in the past, unions certainly have a role in choosing Labor Party leaders and ministers.

Last night in the House the member for Keppel made an adjournment speech on the subject of Labour Day. If any of those opposite who just interjected when I was trying to raise the issue of affiliation think I am wrong—that is, that the unions are not somehow affiliated with the Labor Party—

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I draw to their attention the fact that the Labor Party is actually the political arm of the union movement.
Based on that we have a fundamental problem in this House, because gone is the Labor Party as a registered political party. I submit to the House that—based on the member for Keppel's statement and the analogy of how the Labor Party political system works—one could raise the argument that the union movement should be the registered political party and the Labor Party should do the campaigning on behalf of the union movement. That is exactly what the member for Keppel said. He stated—

I draw to their attention the fact that the Labor Party is actually the political arm of the union movement.

In his speech last night the member for Keppel did not talk about individual personal affiliations with unions; he talked about the union movement and about the Labor Party being the political arm of that movement.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: If we are going to call a spade a spade and we are to be fair in terms of electoral law and we are going to spend the money of the constituents of the member for Brisbane Central on her campaign and other members’ campaigns then let us be fair and let us say in this House that affiliation should apply to the corporate world, the individual world, the Queensland world and also the union movement.

Accordingly, I will be seeking to balance the campaign donation ledger in Queensland. I give notice that I will be moving certain amendments in the consideration in detail stage of this bill with respect to this issue. More particularly in relation to the affiliation of unions, I am going to look at two issues in the consideration in detail stage.

The first amendment I will move will seek to have affiliated industrial organisations with one or more political parties considered an associated entity and brought under the spending caps and donations caps. Secondly, the final integrity test—the Labor Party integrity test—for this government will be an amendment I will move which seeks to close the unfair loophole which sees trade union officials working for the Labor Party during election campaigns allowed to be included as volunteer labour. My amendment will see all those bused-in union hacks from interstate included as gifts-in-kind and stop the unfair advantage employed by Labor for years.

The amendments will certainly convey what some could describe as the Labor Party integrity test. Like the government's NAPLAN tests, the Attorney-General will have a choice—the choice to show Queenslanders that when he speaks about integrity, when he stands in this place and takes the high moral ground, he means it. He should support our amendments if he means what he says in this place.

The bill also proposes public funding for candidates who participate in state campaigns. As noted in the Deputy Premier's second reading speech, this is proposed as a measure to offset restrictions imposed by the donations cap, which has the potential to infringe implied freedoms of communication as set out in the Constitution of Australia. There is a requirement that candidates must receive at least four per cent of the vote to be eligible to receive funding in this model. But, unlike the old system, the amount a candidate receives will be based on the amount they spend rather than the number of votes they receive. Political parties and Independents will also receive additional funding for administration costs. The amount that political parties will receive for these costs is set out in subdivision 2 of the bill, specifically sections 177EA and 177EB.

The initial period for funding will be retrospectively applied—1 January to 30 June 2011, known as the initial period, and as the financial year for each funding period thereafter. These are split into six-monthly intervals, known as the first funding period and the second funding period, ensuring administration payments by 31 July and 31 January each year. The initial state-wide amount is $1 million and the amount calculated for each funding period during subsequent financial years is based on a formula—AxB÷C, where A is the electoral district amount of the state-wide amount immediately before 1 July each year, B refers to the consumer price index and C is the consumer price index published for the March quarter in the previous year. The CPI amount referred to will be that published for Brisbane.

In my calculations, the Labor Party will receive $2.2 million a year to spend on administration. Perhaps if flood affected Queenslanders are having difficulty filling out claim forms, as nastily claimed by the chairman of the Premier’s appeal fund, the Labor Party may assist Queenslanders and provide some of its $2 million for administration costs and provide assistance to flood affected victims to get their administration burden reduced and get these forms in.

Independent members of parliament are also entitled to receive public funding for administrative costs which the schedule to the bill sets out. I feel the pain for the members for Beaudesert and Burnett, who will not be entitled to any initial administration funding as they jumped ship halfway through a campaign cycle. I am glad to see in that respect that that type of disloyalty will not be rewarded in this bill by granting administration costs. Following the election, administration costs will be given to those Independents. It will be given to the other Independents in the House.

The current model provides public funding to candidates and political parties as reimbursement after the election. The amount of reimbursement is calculated on the basis of the first preference votes received if the candidate gained four per cent of the formal first preference in that particularly electorate.
We do currently have public funding in Queensland. No one is denying it. However, it is certainly not to the extent that will apply after the introduction of this bill. Public funding of campaigns has been discussed about for many, many years. In a speech given by Wayne Goss to the Australian Study of Parliament Group he talked about the Fitzgerald report. He said—

Fitzgerald recommended the establishment of two new bodies—the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission and the Criminal Justice Commission.

He went on further to say—

Review of EARC was left to the committee and the implementation of these recommendations was left to the Government.

He said—

Importantly, in my view, the committee undertook widespread public consultation on what was a very controversial area involving, for example, Queensland’s electoral boundaries.

He also talked about electoral reform. He said—

The independent umpire—

being EARC—

came down with a recommendation for electoral reform which was almost but not entirely one vote, one value in the sense that for very large electorates, of which there were five, there was a weighting allowed in terms of enrolments.

So we had a situation where the Fitzgerald report recommended certain tightening up of the political process and the electoral system. We had EARC being established essentially to look at electoral boundaries, but it did delve into other areas. Then we had a former Labor Party Premier of Queensland, Wayne Goss, talking about one vote, one value, which of course we depart from in this bill.

Currently, public funding is determined by votes received multiplied by the election funding rate, which is approximately $1.59. Reimbursement will not exceed the amount that was spent on an individual campaign to ensure that candidates do not profit from their candidacy in an election campaign. In a nutshell, our current system represents the one vote, one value method. The proposed system of public funding significantly enhances the Labor Party and the Greens in Queensland—surprising!

In the 2009 state election in Queensland the Labor Party received 42.25 per cent of the primary vote, the LNP received 41.6 per cent and the Greens received 8.37 per cent. However, current polling has the Labor Party primary votes hovering at around 32 per cent—which I think is one of the lowest in a historical context—the LNP at 45 per cent and the Greens at 10 per cent. The system of public funding that is proposed in this bill is described in section 177DA. The bill states that, if a registered political party incurs electoral expenditure for the election of not more than 10 per cent of the cap, 100 per cent that is given back. If the registered political party incurs electoral expenditure of more than 10 per cent but not more than 90 per cent of the applicable expenditure cap, a sliding scale model of public funding is available for candidates.

Using data from the 2009 state election and the formula for public funding that is proposed in this bill, this would allow the Greens to run relatively inexpensive campaigns through a central campaign and receive close to a 100 per cent subsidy. I will look at comparative results of the three major parties with 2009 data. Assuming that each candidate and party spends the maximum amount made up of $50,000 that candidates can spend individually in their electorate plus the $80,000 across the state in each electorate the parties can spend, the Greens would receive a public funding subsidy of approximately $38 per vote. So we go from a situation of $1.60 a vote—one vote, one value at the moment—to the Greens potentially receiving $38 a vote if they spend their cap compared to the LNP receiving around $8 a vote and the Labor Party receiving $8.35. That to me is wrong. It is incomprehensible that we could be putting that burden of taxpayers’ money on Queenslanders—that is, for someone who receives just over four per cent of the vote. If they spend their cap, they are entitled to some $38 back when we look at the primary vote statistics. Given that breakdown, it makes it obvious to understand why the Greens have been so supportive of public funding election campaigns at a federal level for quite some time.

Again, to assist in balancing the ledger of fairness, we believe that all candidates—no matter which political party or if they stand as an Independent—should be entitled to receive the same funding on a per vote basis: one vote, one value. How on earth could members opposite support a move that would see candidates who receive just over four per cent of the vote getting up to $38 a vote? It is an insane proposition. That said, I will be moving an amendment in the consideration in detail stage that seeks to amend this unfairness by providing that, based on the calculations in the bill for public funding and the sliding scale, the party that ultimately wins the election and is entitled to public funding will be the limit for candidates—one vote, one value for everyone despite political party preferences or the Independents who run.

One of the measures that was initially introduced in the August 2009 discussion paper related to a change in the optional preferential method of voting in Queensland, a move that would significantly enhance the Labor-Green alliance ahead of the next state poll. In its wisdom, the government decided not to change the voting method to bring it into line with the national method of compulsory preferential voting. However, the political life of the Labor Party seems fixated on this preference flow and the vote of the Greens. Even though Queensland has an optional preferential system of voting, Green preferences may be crucial in deciding many of the electoral divisions around the state.
I am supportive of the provisions in the bill which allow for the provisional enrolment of 16- and 17-year-olds on the electoral roll. I believe it is fundamental that we continually embrace methods that engage our youth in our system of democracy. One method to do so is to encourage people to provisionally enrol to vote at a younger age so that it will become an automatic enrolment when they turn 18. Schools may embrace this amendment as part of the curriculum on democracy, including the process of provisional enrolment as an authentic educational tool. I know that I and many other members discuss democracy in the schools in our electorates, including how parliament works and our method for electing people to public office. I can inform the House today that, when I have been attending schools in my electorate recently, all of the children have been very excited at the future prospect of a can-do real government in Queensland. They are very excited about that prospect.

**Mr Lucas:** That is extraordinary that you would talk politically with kids at schools, because that is one thing I have never sought to do.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** As members of this parliament—

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt):** Order! Members on my right will cease interjecting.

**Ms Grace** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Brisbane Central will cease interjecting.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** What the members opposite fail to understand is that, to have a true democratic process in Queensland, our children should be taught the ins and outs of politics. If members opposite think that year 5, year 6 or year 7 students or university students should be stymied in their opinion on political debate, then that is a hypocrisy from those members. Engaging our young students and our younger citizens in the political process should be on the continual increase. In that respect, Queensland should lead the way.

When we look at young people who have been elected to parliament, at the last state election in 2009 the member for Morayfield was elected as a representative of the Labor Party and I was elected for the LNP, representing a 26-year-old and a 27-year-old being elected to parliament. Wyatt Roy was elected into the federal parliament for the LNP at the August 2010 election at the age of 20. For our Sunshine Coast Regional Council elections next year, many young people have put their names forward. They have the passion and they want to represent council, state or federal divisions, which is great.

During the New South Wales state election campaign, Premier Barry O'Farrell was asked a question at a community forum along these lines: ‘What can you do to engage younger people in the political process?’ The response he proffered was that he meets with school captains of the schools in his electorate each year for an annual dinner at Parliament House. The one thing he always tells them is, ‘I don’t care if you don’t vote for me as long as you go and vote.’ Voting is not a hard task but it is important to engage our young people in the process. It is the key to restoring faith in our system of government in Queensland. If younger Queenslanders can look at a local, state and federal government and see representatives from all sides of politics in their age group, all of a sudden public office does not appear to be for older generations—and I say that with the greatest respect to older generations, of course.

Allowing citizens who enrol or update their enrolment details after the writs for an election have been issued, and up to 5pm on the day before polling day, to make a provisional declaration vote will also open opportunities for more people to exercise their democratic right to vote in an election. I think we should engage in a way forward that certainly looks at security measures. If we are looking at these types of voting procedures, we need to up the ante on the way that people enrol to vote. We need to look at potential identification and make sure that fraud cannot be committed with any of these provisional declaration voting systems.

Yesterday the Deputy Premier issued a media statement along the lines that, by opposing this bill, the LNP somehow is going back to the dark old days of unlimited funding for campaigns. Can I just say on the record that there is one fundamental element of this bill—and I have not seen anything publicly about it but I am certainly hoping that the Attorney-General will address this issue—and that is when people donate to a political party, either for campaign purposes or the political party gets its administration fee, any Queenslander, any business, any union or any corporation can, in fact, make a donation to a candidate or a political party for an unlimited amount of money. As long as that person does not spend it for campaign purposes, it is not covered by this bill and it is not covered by the act. So when the Deputy Premier—the Acting Premier today—issued a statement yesterday talking about the bad old days of unlimited funds being given to political parties and putting this bill up to end all of that and to cap people’s donations and expenditure on political parties, there is one major element missing: a person can come to me and donate $2,000 to my campaign. I will then get that $2,000 and put it into my state campaign account. The next day that person can come back to me and write me a cheque for $1 million, $2 million or $5 million. All I have to do is make sure that I do not spend it in the limited definition of political expenditure in this bill and I have a very good slush fund. For argument’s sake, with
this bill we are saying, ‘We’ve got to do this to cap donations and it is going to stop this and it is going to stop that,’ but it will not. It will not stop it, because people can still make unlimited donations as long as it is not covered in the limited definition of electoral expenditure. That flies in the face of this government saying that this bill has to be passed to limit the expenditure of members and to really crack down on those donations that people are receiving, because candidates are still going to receive unlimited amounts of money and nothing in this bill can stop that.

I look forward to an explanation from the Attorney-General as to how he can put this bill into this House, say that it is going to stop this and stop that but, at the same time, when a person comes with a cheque for $2 million and deposits it into an account of a candidate of a political party or an Independent candidate, that person can use that money for whatever purpose. I guess, in broad spectrum, without having the money for a campaign purpose, you could make the assumption that not only will the Labor Party receive $2 million in administration funding guaranteed each year but also it can receive in excess of millions and millions on top of the public funding. So I ask the Deputy Premier: why the public funding of $26 million when people across Queensland still have the ability to help political parties administer their head office, administer their coffee machines? But no, the government is going to the people of Grantham, it is going to those other people across Queensland who are living in tents because of the floods and cyclones and it is going to say, ‘We want you to fund our political campaigns and we want you to fund our campaign offices and head offices for public purposes.’

Along with a few other members of the parliament, I received a briefing from departmental staff. I can understand the nature of this bill and its complexities, but I have to say that, when I put some fundamental, simple questions in relation to the practicalities of this bill to the many representatives of the department and staff from the Deputy Premier’s office, which went around and around the table and could not be answered, we have serious problems. We know that the government will force through this bill. We have serious problems when simple questions cannot be answered two days, 48 hours before the bill is put through the parliament. I think that highlights the point that I made earlier about the haste with which this bill has been put into this House.

In the briefing I asked a question in terms of this unlimited funding that candidates can still receive and I asked for some examples. The example that I was given was that we could host a constituent morning tea. But I think that there are serious issues with receiving administration funding and hosting a constituent morning tea. In hosting the constituent morning tea, am I advocating for votes? Does that not delve into the issues of what is our electorate expenditure in terms of our parliamentary allowances? So the bill is fraught with danger, because once it is passed with little regulation, we are going to have interpretations made by the courts about what is in and what is out. What is for a campaign purpose—

Mr Lucas: Don’t tell me legislation is interpreted by courts!

Mr BLEIJIE: I take that interjection from the Deputy Premier. Yesterday we debated a bill that amends the committee system in this place. That bill fundamentally changes the way in which legislation is drafted and debated in this House. That bill went down to the drafting practicalities and how the advice is given to Parliamentary Counsel to draft legislation. At all times we should endeavour to make sure that we are putting legislation through this House—hence the new committee system—that has been debated vigorously in an open and public forum before members vote on it in this House. Is that not the system that we are going to be introducing? Is that not the whole point? It is a shame that this bill will not go through that process, because these issues could have been, so to speak, flogged out in that committee process and potential answers given.

It concerns me that when I put questions at a departmental briefing a lot of them could not be answered in terms of the simple practicalities of how it will work afterwards. The Electoral Commission cannot issue directives, because the bill has not been passed and the bill does not necessarily say that it can regulate the issue. So I warn the Deputy Premier, just as we warned the then minister for infrastructure and planning that the sustainability declarations for people who are selling their houses would be amended—and I think we are up to the fifth or sixth version of the form already—that the same will happen to this bill.

For instance, in the briefing I asked a question in relation to electoral expenditure. We have campaign expenditure that is capped at $50,000. I asked about the corflute. Firstly, I had to describe what a campaign corflute was. Then I asked this question, ‘I would think that the corflute of a candidate would be covered under the cap. But then is the timber frame that the candidate has purchased that is attached to the corflute covered under the cap?’ Some in the room said, ‘Potentially’ and some in the room said, ‘No.’ This is important, because candidates will have $50,000 to spend in their electorates and they are going to have to know whether the thousands that they spend on the timber A-frames that the corflutes go on is going to be covered or not covered. So in terms of many of these issues I think we need to go through a rigorous process of what is in and what is out during the consideration in detail stage.

The other issue that I raised related to volunteer labour. Volunteer labour is specifically excluded in the bill, but it does refer to the provision of a service, excluding voluntary labour. I raised that issue in the briefing. Say a candidate engages the voluntary service of a typist to type some letters, but also a
lawyer comes in and provides a voluntary service in terms of giving legal advice. Are we discriminating against the lawyer or are we discriminating against the typist? The advice given in the briefing was that the typist would potentially be providing volunteer labour and the lawyer would be caught in the provision of giving a gift in kind because of the provision of a service. These issues are going to be so complicated that candidates are going to be wondering when someone rings up their campaign office and says, ‘I want to come in for an hour and do some typing,’ whether they are in or out or whether they have to disclose that as part of their cap. So this bill is going to create many issues. I also asked, ‘How much is this costing Queensland taxpayers?’

Mr BLEIJE: Before the lunchbreak I asked the Deputy Premier where the amounts came from. What brains trust in the Labor Party came up with a $50,000 expenditure cap for candidates and $80,000 per electorate in the 89 seats across Queensland for a political party? I guess the question to the Deputy Premier is: where did the amounts come from? That was a question I asked in the briefing. Departmental and policy staff were unable to advise the members of parliament who attended the briefing how on earth they came up with these amounts. When we are talking about electoral funding laws for candidates on all sides of politics, someone should tell us where the $50,000 and $80,000 amounts came from. Clearly, departmental staff did not fully comprehend the practical nature of this terrible bill that we are debating today. If they did, they would have been able to advise about those amounts and, as I have already indicated, they would have been able to give the advice that we sought in relation to some of the practical applications of this bill after it is assented to.

It is also worth noting that this legislation essentially copies the New South Wales legislation. There could be no more negligent and corrupt government than the New South Wales former Labor government. Queensland is potentially on the verge of that now. This legislation essentially copies that legislation, which did not do particularly well for the Labor Party in New South Wales because they were nearly entirely voted out of office.

The LNP has also introduced a bill, the Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill. The purpose of that bill is to address an element that is crucial to any election campaign: political advertising. The bill is particularly aimed at candidates and political parties with a do-whatever-it-takes approach to achieving public office in Queensland. I am told that two of the things politicians do that destroys the fabric of our democratic system are make promises they cannot deliver on and make promises before an election and then do the opposite straight after. These are all part of the fabric and are essential elements of the modern Queensland Labor Party. But one thing that is clear today is that this government’s bill in its current form is repugnant. That is why I am proposing a series of integrity tests for the government. If they fail to support them, we are most certainly justified in opposing the legislation.

The amendments I propose will seek to address the glaring unfairness and imbalance in relation to trade unions, despite their direct links to the Labor Party. Last night the member for Keppel declared that nearly two-thirds of the workers in trade unions were voting for the Labor Party. I asked the Deputy Premier where the amounts came from. Clearly, departmental staff did not fully comprehend the practical nature of this bill after it is assented to.

The final integrity test for this government involves closing the unfair loopholes which see trade union officials working for the Labor Party during election campaigns allowed to be included as volunteer labour. Our amendment will see all those bused-in union hacks from interstate included as gifts-in-kind and will stop the unfair advantage enjoyed by Labor for years. This is in contrast to the Election Funding and Disclosure Handbook, published by the Electoral Commission, which specifically exempts affiliated unions from disclosure provisions regarding the gift of labour. In essence, the bill allows Labor to beat both the expenditure cap and the donation cap by treating unions as affiliated for the purposes of gifts but not affiliated for the purposes of third-party campaigns.

As I said before, how can one stand in this place time and time again, as the Deputy Premier has, and claim the moral high ground when there have been so many dark clouds hanging over the Deputy Premier’s head? The New South Wales Sussex Street Labor style of politics has come to Queensland with the approach of ‘say whatever you can to retain office’. It smacks of desperation from a long-term Labor government that is out of ideas, low on talent—very low on talent—and taking Queensland back some 20 years.

When one puts all this together—and we brandish around this House the Shepherdson inquiry report—it is so reminiscent of the culture that has thrived in the Labor Party. If the Labor Party in Queensland is in financial difficulty then it should seek its own funding and not rely on taxpayers to come up with the money and fork out for its campaigns and administration costs. Let us not forget about Mike Kaiser, the convicted vote rorter who is the Premier’s former chief of staff. He is the former chief of staff of the current Premier and he was also Morris Iemma’s chief of staff in the lead-up to the second-last
election. Labor has created these ALP ‘Navy SEALs’ who deploy to do their master’s dirty work in any state or territory across Australia. When we put all this together and we talk about the electoral rorting that was revealed in the Shepherdson inquiry, we can say that, but for the grace of the statute of limitations, the make-up of this place—of members of parliament—would be considerably different had some of the offences not fallen outside the statute-of-limitations period. Then we would certainly see a change in the landscape of politics in Queensland.

When one puts this together, the disgraced Deputy Premier, saved by the statute of limitations, is now pushing ahead with fundamental electoral changes. The same man who was noted in the Shepherdson inquiry, the same man on Seventh Avenue named in the Shepherdson inquiry, is the one pushing for electoral law changes 24 hours after a federal annual budget and 24 hours before one of the most corrupt men in Queensland political history comes before the bar of the House. The Deputy Premier, who is associated to some extent with all that has gone before in this House in the Shepherdson inquiry, who served in the same cabinet as Gordon Nuttall, is pushing forward with electoral changes. He is getting the people of Grantham who are living in tents and the people in Townsville who cannot afford to rebuild their homes to pay for his election campaigns.

This beast is not the LNP’s beast; this beast is the Labor Party’s beast. We are stuck with it, because we know it is going to pass through this House. Queenslanders will know that this beast was created by the Labor Party government, not the LNP. When the Deputy Premier is fundamentally changing electoral law in Queensland, it is sadly a case of the cookie monster being placed in charge of the cookie jar.

Mr McLINDON (Beaudesert—TQP) (2.37 pm): I would like to make a contribution to the cognate debate of the Electoral Reform Bill 2010, the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill 2011 and the Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill 2010. I will primarily focus on The Queensland Party’s proposed electoral reforms in its bill and the positives this could bring to the electoral process here in Queensland.

I do note that the member for Kawana is a man of vision. He tabled in the House the Criminal Code (Anzac Day Betting) Amendment Bill to legalise two-up. It would have been good to include that in the Electoral Reform Bill, because the next state election for the LNP is a bit of a two-up game. The coins will be thrown up and we will get either the LNP candidate for Ashgrove or the member for Clayfield. It would have been good for the government to include that in the bill. Who knows? We might flip the coins and end up with the member for Indooropilly and the member for Clayfield running the show. Who knows what the state election will bring for the LNP? It will be interesting to see what happens. The member for Kawana is a man of vision. I can see that the members of the LNP had no option but to legalise two-up after the shambles they have made of the Westminster system recently, and they will continue to do so between now and the next state election.

Electoral reform runs parallel to parliamentary reform. They go hand in hand in terms of the democratic process in Queensland. When it comes to electoral and parliamentary reform the LNP, who I will not call the conservative side of politics—as I said, I did not walk away from the party; the party walked away from its values—has not only completely undermined our democratic system but also made an absolute joke of our democratic system.

It is interesting to note that under the Criminal Code no member of the public can have undue influence over an elected member of parliament. That means that the LNP has created a scenario where its so-called leader of the parliament is a member of the public and technically cannot direct the 32—in his words—‘useless’ LNP members. He cannot have undue influence over them. On the one hand we have an LNP that has no leader from among its 32 elected members of parliament and, on the other hand, a so-called leader on the outside who is, under the Criminal Code, completely powerless to have any undue influence over those 32 members. Now, there is a cross dynamic where we have a technically leaderless and dysfunctional opposition. That has absolutely destroyed—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr McLINDON: I remember discussions I have had with the member for Kawana and the member for Hinchinbrook where they have pledged their complete respect and loyalty to the Queen and the Westminster system. However, this has been an absolute slap in the face to the principles that they supposedly espouse to the general public in Queensland. Between now and the state election, I will repeat again and again that the LNP is attempting to completely destroy and sideswipe the democratic processes upheld by the Queen herself, who this state was named after.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O’Brien): Order! Member for Beaudesert, it is parliamentary practice not to refer to the sovereign as part of a debate. I ask you to refrain from doing so.

Mr McLINDON: I learn something new every day. Mr Deputy Speaker, I will take that on board. The LNP has introduced the Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill—

Mr Bleijie: It was put in before yours.
Mr McLINDON: It certainly was, but let us look at the content. The LNP has to be careful what it wishes for, because if passed this legislation would mean that it would have to tell the truth in its advertising. I was involved in numerous elections when I was a member of the Liberal Party and the former National Party. In fact, the Nationals were probably a little bit better at telling the truth than the Liberals and I spent seven years there. The LNP has to be careful what it wishes for. It will have to unequivocally state in its campaign material that on its party platform it is pro privatisation. It is pro asset sales. It is as simple as that. The Brisbane City Council’s secret civic cabinet will have to state this in its political material if the Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill passes in this form. It will also have to state its conflicts of interest and its vested interests in the CSG industry and the fact that it will not call for a moratorium. I suspect that the government is pushing through the $66 billion CSG industry to balance the books. Some would say that that is fair enough. The so-called opposition, the LNP, has now recruited Ben Myers, the former PR consultant for the Queensland Gas Corporation, who ran the ‘Can-do Campbell’ slogan—slogan with little substance, which we are beginning to see as the cracks open.

The Brisbane City Council Campbell Newman administration has been hiding behind a government that has done it pretty tough in terms of trying to balance the books and bringing into Queensland over the past 10 years some flawed legislation. Those cracks will become more and more exposed. People are still cleaning up the mess in their restaurants and homes following floods. The mayor walked away from them at a point when they were most vulnerable and needed leadership. As time goes on, that will be more and more exposed. Every time I drive around the city, I am still amazed to see the Lipton Tea bikes getting cracked in the sun. No-one carries a helmet in their back pocket and one size does not fit all. They are completely useless. A sum of $700 million of ratepayers’ money has been spent on the Clem7 tunnel. That is not a decentralisation strategy.

If the LNP wants electoral reform, it will have to have this printed. Of course, the Queensland Party will be printing it and posting it to every letterbox at every household across Queensland in the lead-up to the election. If the Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill is passed, the LNP will have to stand accountable. I will put it to the test to ensure that LNP leaflets do not deny where its members stand on so many issues, which is not always what those members espouse in the parliament. For example, with the Stradbroke Island legislation—and the Minister for Environment will agree—they came in here beating their chests on the issue, but it did not even come to a division. They did not have the guts or the tenacity to call a division in the House because of the perception outside. They do not stand by their convictions or their principles. If that is what they are willing to do in opposition, one can only imagine what they would do in government. Yes, of course that is risky. Sometimes it is better the devil you know. Queenslanders will have a very clear option. There is very little difference, if any, between the LNP and the ALP. As I have said before, in some respects it would be better if they got it over and done with and merged before the election.

A government member interjected.

Mr McLINDON: Yes, there is a whole line of Laborites in my family tree. Grandad—indeed, a couple of generations—belonged to the Labor Party when it stood for something, when it stood for the worker, built the rails and had not walked away from its core base. I chose the latter and that is the reason The Queensland Party’s colour is maroon: it is a little bit of red and a little bit of blue. It depends on the mix. There will be a new colour in town for Queenslanders to vote for. Yes, it is a David versus two Goliaths battles. I am willing to take it on because someone has to. Of the three political parties registered in this House, there are only two leaders—the Leader of The Queensland Party and the Premier.

When it comes to electoral reform and truth in advertising, I cannot wait until this truth in advertising legislation passes and the LNP has to be accountable through the letterboxes of every household in this state. We will be doing that not once or twice and not three times; we will be doing it time and time again once the election is called. That has to happen, because we know that the majority of Queenslanders do not follow the machinations within the George Street theatre, as I refer to it although I mean no disrespect. It is nothing less than a theatre, because we know we are in a situation where bureaucrats can bring legislation into this place and have it passed without any form of debate once they have express right of passage.

This is a weak attempt to stand on the high moral ground in electoral truth in advertising. I am sure that as Queenslanders find out more about what the LNP—I was going to say ‘stands for’, but it would probably be easier to discuss what it does not stand for. I am not quite sure what it stands for, because everything became null and void, which is another breach of the Criminal Code, as a result of what has happened with the LNP candidate for Ashgrove. There will be numerous breaches of the code, because technically the first phone call he makes to one of the so-called ‘useless’ members of parliament would be a breach under the Criminal Code. If a constitutional lawyer got on to that, not only could they find that it could undermine the Westminster system but also they could actually prove that any communications between the LNP candidate for Ashgrove and the 32 elected members of parliament potentially could end up in court. It is as simple as that. Unless there is no communication between the LNP candidate for Ashgrove and the 32 members of parliament, they have left themselves...
wide open to completely destroying not only the Westminster system but also—and more importantly—themselves. They have set themselves up for absolute destruction. In doing so, they will have to demerge post election or they will have to take their name off the registered list of political parties in Queensland. It is as simple as that. I would love to see a constitutional lawyer take the time to examine forensically how the LNP has undermined the Westminster system in Queensland. That would certainly be a project that many people would like to get their hands on.

The Queensland Party has put forward the Electoral Reform Bill 2010. It contains five key points. The first relates to the abolition of how-to-vote cards. We all know how voters are hounded as they make their way into the ballot booths. Dr Paul Williams has written a paper on this topic which states that there has been an increase in volatile behaviour and assaults at electoral booths. This is happening because people are sick and tired of being hounded by people trying to hand them how-to-vote cards. Of course, the other issue is the amount of paper that is wasted. The Greens have been advocating for the abolition of those cards, so this is something that The Queensland Party and the Greens agree on. It is something that we will be taking to the next state election.

I believe that it is a conflict of interest to have election material anywhere near state government property. If there is a banning on electoral material on state government property, that has implications, because in many cases the booths are located at state schools. We have different mechanisms in place to ensure that there is no political advertising on state government property, on crown land and on different billboards, yet on election day we turn our state-run primary schools into political beehives. While I think using school venues for such events is fine, I see it as a huge conflict of interest to have any political party on state government property handing out how-to-vote cards or putting up election signs. We need to make sure within the legislation that a conflict of interest does not exist into the future. Banning how-to-vote cards will save not only a lot of time and resources but also people’s stress due to the decreased animosity they encounter on the way to the polling booth. That is a very rational approach, as is the proposal to make it a legal requirement to ban all election material at election booths on state government property.

People should be required to present identification when they vote. This one is a no-brainer. I cannot believe it is 2011 and people can still give their next-door neighbour’s name or their brother’s or sister’s name. They can walk in there and take someone’s identity without there being any checks. We know that if someone wishes to buy a packet of cigarettes and they look under 18 or if they try to purchase a beer across the bar, the first thing they are told is, ‘We want to see your ID.’ I do not think it is an infringement on a person’s individual rights. I remember the Treasurer was saying this is an infringement on people’s rights. The reality is that compulsory voting is as well. How can we have a democratic system on the one hand but it is mandatory for people to vote on the other? That in itself is not democracy.

Previously, I have been an advocate for compulsory voting. However, the more I see how the political parties operate, the more I turn away. They become lazier and lazier and more and more inefficient because they know that they are targeting 95 per cent of the market. When they do that, they can drop their standards to the lowest common denominator and we then see surface politics, not politics of substance—politics of personality, not policy. We have seen this with the LNP because it has realised, ‘It is politics of personality. Let us throw the LNP candidate for Ashgrove out there. Policy does not matter. What policy? It is all null and void. We do not have to have policy as it is going to be the candidate for Ashgrove versus the Premier.’ That is clearly not good enough in a democratic system. We must not market to the lowest common denominator.

Many minority and disability groups need the attention of all political parties in order to have a voice. They need there to be good, decent policies to provide an incentive for those vested groups so they can then say, ‘We are going to go with this party because of this policy.’ We are calling on voluntary voting because not only is it truly democratic but it also puts the power into the people’s hands. They will be empowered as to whether or not they choose to exercise that privilege to vote as well as what they want to vote for, on what policies and on what basis. Yes, there is a catch. The last thing we want is to have an American type system whereby he with the most cash wins. Certainly we should have a cap on donations but not the type that the government is proposing in the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill. Clearly, that bill is a fight between the unions and the mining sector. The unions are obviously tying up the purse strings for the ALP and the mining sector likes to bankroll the LNP.

What we have now is a big business attack. When it comes to this legislation, most members in the parliament are puppets. The real intent is how the government can squeeze as much money out of the taxpayer as it can and increase it by 900 per cent. They say, ‘Let us not worry about the $1.64 per vote. Let us squeeze as much money out of the taxpayers as we can to support an entrenched and primitive two-party system.’ That is clearly not good enough. The economies of scale are not there in terms of providing a level playing field for all political parties. That is something that I will mention in my summary towards the end of this debate after most members have had a say.
I believe that voluntary voting empowers but we have to make sure that there is a cap on election donations. We do not want to see the system become corrupt, and the American system is corrupt in many facets of electoral funding. It now costs $5.6 million to run a Senate campaign in America. That is just for someone to put their hand up and run in the race. That is an enormous amount just to be a candidate of the Senate in America. We do not want to see that sort of system where it becomes a barter arrangement whereby candidates are auctioned off among big business. We have to make sure that that cap is imposed.

When people are asked for ID, it is a very measured approach to say, ‘Are you this person?’ It is not an infringement on their privacy. There are so many other things for which people need to produce their ID. Whether it is signing up for a telephone account or something similar, it is a very basic thing. It is 2011 now. Some seats in this House are as close as 30 to 40 votes from a win. The member for Chatsworth would certainly appreciate the value in the closeness of elections and the recounts that take place. We need to ensure that we tie up any loopholes and leave no room for error in the current, primitive process.

I would still like to see a manual process of voting. The LNP has been advocating for electronic voting, which is open to abuse from computer hackers. We saw the possibility of what may or may not happen in Florida between Al Gore and George Bush. We need to see a rational approach. We need a manual, compulsory system with a voluntary voting method but we also need those checkpoints, that very necessary hurdle to demonstrate a person’s identity. The only time I would advocate for any electronics to be used in voting is in the event that every single booth then shut that person out of further voting. As they used to say in the old days: vote early, vote often. That would close that loophole. The member for Lytton might even know a thing or two about voting systems and branch stacking that he might be able to divulge to the House. We need a system that prevents people from voting early and voting often under different identities around the different booths.

In order to maximise the potential for a vote we need a compulsory preferential system. The Australian Electoral Commission has said that it is doing studies into its benefits. I think it has huge benefits. If there are 10 candidates in a seat and one receives 20 per cent under a first past the post system and there is no system to maximise the potential of that vote, somebody could sit in parliament when 80 per cent of that community did not want them sitting here. Having second, third and fourth preferences maximises the potential of that vote. There is a lot of merit in ensuring that people show their ID when they voluntarily vote and when they have to fill in every square. It also brings it into line with the federal system. This would minimise the informal vote. I am quite happy for The Queensland Party and the Australian Electoral Commission to take the rap for implementing a compulsory voting system. Of course the government will be accused of trying to get Greens preferences. That may or may not happen. Who knows? There is more in common with the Greens and The Queensland Party than the Greens and the ALP at the moment. That will be another issue to be debated when it comes to issues such as the moratorium on coal seam gas, an upper house, the secret civic cabinet in the Brisbane City Council legislation and the privatisation of assets. The more we think about it, the more the two parties have become two heads of the same creature.

The Queensland Party has put forward a very rational bill. I urge MPs to support a compulsory preferential voting system to maximise the potential of those individual votes; ensure that ID is shown, which is a very basic and necessary checkpoint to prove that that person is the person they claim to be; abolish how-to-vote cards. Let us get rid of the anonyms. Let us save a few more trees. Let us do away with that waste of paper and those frustrations that are encountered by each every voter on the way to the polling booths. Let us ban election material on state government properties. State schools are for state schools. Leave it to the parents to conduct the sausage sizzle and do a bit of fundraising. Let us back away from the voters. Candidates have three to six weeks to campaign. Let us not hit them in the face on the last day when nine times out of 10 they have either made their mind up or they really do not care.

Let us get back to basics. This is a rational approach. The Queensland Party has genuine electoral reform before the House. I urge all MPs to support these measures.

Mr SEENEE (Callide—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.57 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to this cognate debate on the government’s Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill 2011, which I am sure most people would agree was the substantive bill of the three. It has been put into a cognate debate with the opposition’s Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill 2010 and the third bill, which is of little consequence.

The member for Kawana, the shadow Attorney-General, has gone through the government’s bill in forensic detail. I congratulate the member for Kawana on the contribution that he made in the House this afternoon and more particularly on the body of research, the great deal of work that was involved in analysing the government’s bill and exposing the flaws that he did in his contribution to debate in this House. I am not going to repeat that examination. I would direct anyone who is interested in the detail of the bill to the address that was made by the member for Kawana. As I said, it analyses the bill in forensic detail and goes through each of the parts of the bill. There is no way that that address could be improved by me repeating it. I do want to look at the broader political issues that I believe are involved in this bill being before the House this afternoon.
Students of political science have long recognised that there is a number of common characteristics of failing governments. There seems to be something about long-term governments in the Westminster system which causes them to fail from the inside. It is something that political strategists try to deal with over time. It is something about which students of political science have written volumes. But it is on display in respect of this Labor government here in Queensland to an extent that is completely undeniable. Here in Queensland we have a long-term Labor government that is in terminal decline. It is dying from the inside. It has totally lost its capacity here in the parliament. It has totally lost its capacity in a range of administrative functions in the community. That is a characteristic of a long-term government that is in terminal decline.

Another characteristic of long-term governments that are in terminal decline is that they lose their fundraising capacity. They lose their ability to raise funds. I would suggest that it is that feature of a declining government that is on display here this afternoon, and it is that feature of a declining government that has been the instigator of this bill before the House. The Labor government in Queensland has lost its capacity to raise funds. It has run out of money. Not only has it run out of taxpayers’ money in administering the state, not only has it blown what should have been a good financial situation for generations of Queenslanders—and we have spoken many times about the extent to which this government has sent the state broke in a boom—but the bill before the House this afternoon would illustrate, as we would expect from a long-term government that has lost its ability to raise funds, that it has sent itself broke. It has gone broke itself. The Labor Party in Queensland is broke and the dogs are barking that down in the city—that the fundraisers in the Labor Party have lost the ability to raise money. So it has come up with this piece of legislation that we see here in the parliament today to try to ensure that that capacity to raise money which they previously enjoyed while the government was in its ascendancy can now be replaced by a compulsory public funding component which will replace the funds that they have lost.

There is another interesting story that is doing the rounds in the city—and you do not have to be in the financial district for long before you hear it—and that is the story about Labor Holdings. Those who have been around for a while know that Labor Holdings has obtained something of a cult status. For a long time the Labor Party were very proud of Labor Holdings and how it generated so much cash and so much financial capacity for them to fight elections. The story that is quite often told to me when I go out into the corporate parts of the city is that Labor Holdings suffered very badly in the global financial crisis. I think that is probably the kindest way to put it. What we know about Labor Holdings is that it was an investment fund that was heavily invested supposedly in the equities part of the investment market. I suspect that it was invested in highly leveraged equity—the types of equity products that came unstuck in a big way during the global financial crisis. The Labor Party were very fond of using the benefits from their investment arm up until 2008 when that section of the investment market was in its ascendancy.

Mr Lucas interjected.
Mr SEENEY: Maybe the Deputy Premier could confirm the rumour. Just how much did Labor Holdings have left at the end of the financial crisis, because that has a big bearing—
Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms van Litsenburg): Order! Will the member speak through the chair.
Mr SEENEY: Well, maybe the Deputy Premier could confirm the story that is quite often told around the city—that there was not a heck of a lot left at all in Labor Holdings at the end of the global financial crisis because it was heavily invested in highly leveraged equity products that provided quite a substantial return to the Labor Party while the market was going up in the years prior to 2008. But after 2008, when the market crashed, that section of the market was where investment suffered the biggest falls, and Labor Holdings apparently had some very significant falls, if you listen to some of the people who know in the financial district.

There is one thing I know for sure, irrespective of the amounts that are involved: Labor Holdings is a much smaller holding now than it was in 2008. There is absolutely no doubt about that. It is an important part of the consideration of this bill, because it reinforces the view that this bill is here before the House because we have a long-term Labor government that is in terminal decline. It has lost the capacity to raise money itself and its investment strategy came unstuck in a big way because of the global financial crisis in 2008. Those two things come together to present to this incumbent government a situation that they just had to address. How did they seek to address it? They thought they would go out into the corporate parts of the city is that Labor Holdings suffered very badly in the global financial crisis, because that has a big bearing—

We have for quite some time had an element of public funding in Queensland. No-one is disputing that that is not a right and proper thing. But what this bill seeks to do is substantially increase that public funding to a much greater extent, to make public funding a much greater component of electoral spending than it previously was. You have to ask yourself why. Why now? Why has this Labor government after 12 years—probably 18 years if you take out the 2½ years of the coalition government—come in here, at the sunset of its term in this parliament, and sought to substantially change the proportion of public funding that is going to be used in Queensland election campaigns? The answer is obvious. The answer is found in those two issues that I illustrated: the government has lost its capacity to raise funds, just as it has lost its capacity to govern, and the government’s main investment arm has collapsed and been destroyed by the global financial crisis.
The bill before the House seeks to rectify that and it seeks to rectify that in a most unfair way, as the member for Kawana pointed out to some great extent. It seeks to entrench this relationship between the Labor Party and the trade union movement. Indeed, as the member for Kawana pointed out, one of the more troublesome members, if you like—one of the members most likely to trip up in this place—let the cat out of the bag last night when he said that the Labor Party was the political arm of the union movement.

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

Mr SEENEY: Thank you for identifying yourself, member for Keppel.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Will the member for Callide sit down. I will hear the point of order.

Mr HOOLIHAN: My position was specifically mentioned by the member for Kawana. The member for Callide has made a comment which I find offensive based on what the member for Kawana said, and I ask him to withdraw it.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Will the member withdraw?

Mr SEENEY: Of course I will withdraw, according to the conventions of this place. I quote Hansard from last night, when Mr Hoolihan, the member for Keppel, at 11.27 said—

I draw to their attention the fact that the Labor Party is actually the political arm of the union movement.

The Labor Party is the political arm of the union movement. That was the point that was made by the member for Kawana, it is a point that I repeated and it is a point that is very pertinent to this debate, because this legislation seeks to cement that relationship. It seeks to ensure that that relationship is able to continue to exist to provide funds to the Labor Party and at the same time curtail the fundraising capability of other political parties.

This legislation seeks to recognise that relationship because, as the member for Kawana pointed out, it exempts trade unions from that definition of an associated entity. Rather than the union movement being limited as one third party to contributing $500,000 to a campaign or $75,000 per seat, each and every union within that union movement can separately contribute that much. That is the great con here. That is the great injustice here. That is the great unfairness here. So the Labor Party is the political arm of the union movement. It would be sensible then that the union movement was seen as the third party with regard to the definitions in this legislation and that that third party was restricted, as all other third parties are, to those amounts—$500,000 or $75,000 per seat. But the union movement is split up into any number of separate parts, each of which is recognised as a third party under this legislation. It does not restrict the fundraising ability of the relationship between the union movement and its political arm that the member for Keppel admitted to last night. That alone is reason enough to reject this legislation. There are a whole lot of other arguments involved here. There are a whole lot of other issues involved in this legislation. But anyone who wants to look at this legislation cannot get past that essential unfairness, that essential injustice that is incorporated in this legislation to protect that relationship that the member for Keppel spoke about—that relationship between the union movement and its political arm, the Australian Labor Party.

As the member for Kawana indicated, we will be seeking to move some amendments to correct that unfairness, to correct that injustice. Until such time as that is done, this legislation cannot be supported by anybody who believes in any sort of fairness or any sort of justice in an electoral system. That is not possible if this legislation is passed in its current form. There cannot be fairness. There cannot be justice in the electoral system in Queensland when one side of politics that clearly identifies itself as the political arm of the union movement is not restricted in any meaningful way from using the capacity of that union movement to raise funds while the other side of politics is restricted in a very great way because every one of the contributors to the other side of the political divide is considered to be a separate third party. We will be opposing the legislation based on that element alone.

There is also the issue of the administrative funding, which the member for Kawana went through in some detail and which introduces an unfairness that I do not think can be justified. That is the second area that we will be seeking to amend. We will be seeking to amend it to ensure that each vote is worth the same value in terms of electoral funding. It is quite unacceptable that a minor party such as the Greens, which is the example that is most often used, can access such large amounts of administrative funding in comparison to the number of votes that it receives. I think that says a lot about the instigation for this bill being before the House. It is once again a bit of payback to the Greens that we see here so often. We have seen it a number of times with pieces of legislation in this parliament. I will never forget that the first piece of legislation that was introduced into this parliament after the last election was a quick payback to the Greens for Greens preferences that were part of a deal in the run-up to the election. I think the way the administrative funding has been structured in this legislation is most likely to fall into that category as well. The big beneficiaries of that administrative funding set-up are the Greens, and we have to ask ourselves why.
The legislation before the House is not about electoral fairness and justice; it is about a tired, failing, dying government fighting for its political life. It is about ensuring that the Australian Labor Party can somehow access the funds to save that tired, failing, dying government. The people of Queensland need to see this legislation for what it is. It is not about fairness and justice: it is about entrenching unfairness and injustice; it is about a government trying to cheat its way back into government. Last election this government was horrendously dishonest with the people of Queensland in relation to the promises that it made. I suspect nothing has changed. We will see the same sort of dishonesty in the run-up to this election. That is the reason for the second of the bills in this cognate debate—the Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill 2010.

Such was the community outrage immediately following the last election at the extent of mistruths that became obvious immediately after the election that we in the opposition felt that we had to somehow reflect that community outrage so we introduced this private member’s bill into the House. The government said before the election that it would not sell public assets. Immediately after the election it launched into a $15 billion asset sale. It said it would retain the fuel subsidy. The fuel subsidy was cut immediately after the election, and so it went on. There was a huge outpouring of community anger. The question that was asked of me and other members so often was: what can we do about it? It was hard for ordinary people uninvolved in politics to understand that there was nothing that could be done about it. There was nothing that could be done about it until the next election when the people of Queensland can have the opportunity to pass judgement on the government. That day will come. The Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill is about ensuring that there is at least something there for people to use and to take some action against a government that is so untruthful in the run-up to an election and that uses advertising so dishonestly and that dishonesty becomes apparent, that untruthfulness becomes apparent. I commend that bill to the House. We will certainly oppose the more substantive bill in the cognate debate—the government’s electoral reform bill.

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (3.17 pm): This cognate debate deals with the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill, the Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill and the Electoral Reform Bill. At the outset, I am amazed at the incapacity of the member for Callide and the member for Kawana and no doubt subsequent speakers to understand the commercial realities of independent organisations. I do not change from what I said last night. That was in relation to Labour Day, not in relation to electoral reform. The Labor Party was formed after the shearers’ strike of 1891. I have been a member of my union for all of my working life and I retain that membership with pride. The only fear for anybody is that the LNP would oppose integrity reforms. We heard so much from the member for Kawana about the Shepherdson inquiry, but the integrity reforms in this House, which started in 1989, came from an earlier inquiry. That was called the Fitzgerald inquiry. We could then take it forward from there being no integrity at all. The only integrity that is encompassed in legislation in this House has been brought in by the Labor Party because that makes it a level playing field.

In my speech, I will put forward the government’s position in relation to the two private members’ bills and also deal with certain aspects of the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill. On 19 May 2010, the then Leader of the Opposition introduced into parliament as a private member’s bill the Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill 2010, and I will refer to it as the bill. According to the explanatory notes for the bill, the objective is—

To prevent deliberately false and misleading electoral advertising being distributed to the Queensland community that undermines the fair and honest electoral process.

I think the LNP should be very careful in terms of what it is currently proposing about what is fair and honest, as the LNP has a leader who is not even in this parliament. Truth in political advertising legislation is an issue which requires detailed and careful consideration. Aside from South Australia, no other jurisdiction in Australia has introduced truth in political advertising legislation. This type of legislation has been specifically considered and rejected by the former Australian government, the previous New South Wales government, the Electoral Matters Committee in Victoria and the United Kingdom Electoral Commission, which I would accept and I think most people in this House would accept is the home of the Westminster system.

There are fundamental problems with the bill currently before the House. Notwithstanding that the explanatory notes for the bill state that proposed section 162A(1)(b) is intended to apply to persons who make false and misleading statements during election campaigns, the actual bill itself does not appear to reflect that intention and the proposed section could potentially apply to statements whenever and wherever made. In my view, not only would proposed section 162A(1)(b) be difficult to detect, prosecute and punish, but it would be completely unworkable in practice. Not only would this stifle political discussion; it would mean that Queenslanders would miss out on vital information because people would be reluctant to comment on issues for fear of being prosecuted. We could just see that after the vitriol spouted by the members for Kawana and Callide in this House. This government in no way condones misleading statements at any time—if we did, we would not be in this House debating integrity reforms. The creation of an offence in relation to this issue needs to be workable. This bill, unfortunately, is not.
A further issue with the bill that I am concerned about is the involvement of the Queensland Electoral Commission in investigating complaints. The Australian Electoral Commission has consistently opposed any proposal that it be responsible for receiving and investigating complaints about truth in political advertising because it would impair its neutrality and could provoke criticism of the commission. The Electoral Matters Committee in Victoria also indicated that it was reluctant for the Victorian Electoral Commissioner to have an expanded role monitoring, reviewing and investigating breaches of the Electoral Act 2002 in Victoria relating to misleading or deceptive political advertising. If we look at what the Commonwealth created in relation to deceptive and misleading advertising, we only have to look at section 52 of the Trade Practices Act, which requires a large bureaucracy to investigate what was deceptive and misleading.

The Bligh government is committed to integrity and accountability, including an open and honest election process, which I believe will come out of the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill. Given these concerns, the government will be opposing the Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill. Nonetheless, developments in this area will continue to be monitored, particularly if a workable proposal is devised by the Commonwealth government, which has indicated an intention to consider the issue.

I will now move on to the other bill. On 24 November 2010, Mr Aidan McLindon MP, the member for Beaudesert, introduced into parliament as a private member’s bill the Electoral Reform Bill 2010, which I will now refer to as the bill. That bill includes a wide range of amendments to the Electoral Act 1992, a number of which go to the core of Queensland’s electoral system. The bill includes amendments to introduce full preferential voting, introduce a voluntary voting system, prohibit the distribution or display of how-to-vote cards on polling day and prohibit the display of political material on land occupied by the state.

The bill also includes amendments to the Electoral Regulation to introduce proof of identity requirements for ballot papers on polling day. As a comment I must say that, as well as practising law before I entered this House, I worked within the justice system and I worked on election day. I think dealing with proof of identity in an election booth would produce some of the greatest riots we have ever seen.

The government is not persuaded that a case for change has been made in relation to any of the amendments contained in the bill. The government itself recently considered whether full preferential voting should be introduced in Queensland in response to evidence that different state and federal voting systems led to the voter confusion at the recent federal election. On 16 February 2011, the then Attorney-General, the Hon. Cameron Dick, advised the House of the outcome of the government’s review of Queensland’s optional preferential voting system. The government concluded that evidence on the issue of voter confusion is equivocal and insufficient to support a change to the voting system at this time. Therefore, optional preferential voting will be used at the next state election. The findings of the government’s review are detailed in a report which is on the Department of Justice and Attorney-General’s website.

With regard to the introduction of a voluntary voting system in Queensland, I note that compulsory voting has been a feature of Australian elections in Queensland since 1915. Compulsory voting helps ensure that disadvantaged groups are involved in the political process and that the government accurately represents the will of the electorate. If we have a look at voting trends, we can see that, except for the Obama election in the United States, 44 per cent of Americans in a voluntary voting system elect their president. If we take 50 per cent of those voters, 22 per cent of the American people in a voluntary voting system elect their president. So there is 78 per cent out there that we do not know what they want, and that is the real sadness of having a voluntary voting system.

The introduction of voluntary voting at a state or local government level, with the retention of compulsory voting at the federal level, could also lead to confusion between the requirements of different levels of government. The democratic election of governments is an important feature of our system of governance and one that every Queenslander should have a stake in.

I would like now to turn to the proposed new offence that would prohibit the distribution and display of how-to-vote cards on polling day. There are a number of issues with this amendment. A key concern with a ban on how-to-vote cards is that it could increase the number of informal votes cast at an election. This is because how-to-vote cards provide voters with clear guidance on how to mark their ballot paper. Given that a ban on how-to-vote cards would limit the ability of candidates and their supporters to provide material to voters, it is also possible that the proposed ban may breach the implied freedom of political communication.

As an example of that, when I have worked in polling booths and then counted the votes, it has been very obvious that many people, whether they support one particular party or another, benefit from having a how-to-vote card because when the votes are counted the ballot papers very often follow the numbers on the how-to-vote cards exactly. I believe that this would limit the ability of candidates to provide material to voters.
With regard to the member for Beaudesert’s argument that a ban on these cards would reduce the amount of paper used on polling day, I am advised that the Queensland Electoral Commission encourages candidates to recycle their how-to-vote cards during an election and the member’s proposed amendment would not prevent parties and candidates from simply distributing how-to-vote cards to every house in an electorate the day before polling day, using exactly the same amount of paper. I note the member for Beaudesert in actual fact said that that is what The Queensland Party would do, so there would be no saving in paper.

I would also like to deal briefly with the remaining two amendments in the bill. The government is of the view that a prohibition on the display of political material on land occupied by the state is not necessary. There are already adequate safeguards in place to protect the neutrality of polling booths.

Consistent with the approach taken across Australia, section 169 of the Electoral Act 1992 prohibits the display of political statements inside a room with voting compartments or within six metres of the entrance to a building with voting compartments. Every member sitting in this House would be aware that the actual booth officers in charge enforce that section so that, in most cases other than from the Electoral Commission, there is no advertising on state land in any event, because the entrance to the polling booth is out the front. This section that requires the prohibition of political statements inside a voting compartment or within six metres of the entrance of a building with voting compartments strikes the right balance between the neutrality of the polling booths and the need for parties and candidates to be able to promote themselves to electors. In addition to section 169 of the Electoral Act, there is also the Queensland Government Advertising Code of Conduct, which regulates government advertising on land occupied by the state.

Finally, the government is not persuaded of the need for voters to produce proof of identity on polling day. Possible issues with this amendment include—and I mentioned at the outset what I believe could occur if people were asked for proof of identity—that the list of identity documents is quite broad, meaning that there would still be an opportunity for unscrupulous individuals to assume another’s identity at the polling booth. It is likely that a number of voters would be unable to or would forget to bring proof of identity on polling day which could result in delays at polling stations and could increase the number of declaration votes cast in elections. No other jurisdiction in Australia requires a voter to produce proof of their identity on polling day, and there is a risk that different state and federal systems could lead to voter confusion on polling day. Critically, previous federal and state parliamentary committee reviews have found little evidence of voter fraud. Therefore, it is not clear that this amendment can be justified. For the reasons that I have outlined, the government will also be opposing the Electoral Reform Bill.

The reasons for the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill were set out in the explanatory notes and I think they speak for themselves. As I said, the only reason for any opposition by the LNP to these integrity measures is that they would impose on the LNP a difficulty with running its gold-plated dinners or with having platinum members at its state conference, as was mentioned in this House the other day. The LNP would have to play according to the rules that everybody else would be required to play by.

Mr Stevens interjected.

Mr Hoolihan: I take the interjection by the member for Mermaid Beach, but I am not sure I should repeat his words. He might want to be a ventriloquist, but I do not stand up here to be a dummy. So if the member for Mermaid Beach keeps his comments to himself members may be able to listen to what I have to say.

The explanatory notes set out the reasons for the bill. Basically, there are four reasons. The bill aims to improve the integrity and public accountability of state elections. Who could argue against that? The reforms are aimed to limit any potential for undue influence being exercised by any one donor or lobby group in relation to an election campaign or any perception of such influence. Who could argue about that? To balance the effect of capping electoral donations and expenditure, the bill provides for increased public funding to political parties and candidates for elections and administrative funding for political parties and Independent members. One of the sadnesses of the political system, and particularly the party political system, is that there are people in Queensland who feel that they have been excluded from the political system because they do not have the financial ability to be involved. This bill will allow those people who genuinely want to become involved in the political process and even to contest an election to make an application for consideration for funding to assist them to do that. I am not necessarily a fan of Independents. I think a parliament with a number of Independents in it would be unworkable. But I know the motivation of a lot of people who would run as Independents. The bill also aims to improve enrolment and voting procedures for Queensland and these reforms are aimed at encouraging participation in the electoral processes of Queensland. Surely, the member for Kawana in his vitriol was not suggesting that none of these reforms is necessary. They are necessary to make transparent funding and contributions from outside parties.
The objectives of the bill are also set out in the explanatory notes. The changes that are made to the voting procedures relate to allowing 16- or 17-year-olds to provisionally enrol to vote. I think many people are aware that our youth are feeling left out of the political process. I believe that that reform will include those people who wish to enrol provisionally and become part of the political system. It will allow people who enrol or who update their electoral enrolments after the writs have been issued to make a provisional declaration vote. If those people want to become involved in the electoral process then I think it is incumbent upon governments to provide every citizen with the chance to be involved.

Our electoral system is built on the foundation—and this was mentioned in the second reading speech of the Deputy Premier—that every person should carry equal sway: one person, one vote. If one person wants to be involved and somebody wants to give money to them to assist them then this bill sets out the amounts. I believe that the substantive bill introduces fair and reasonable electoral reform. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr O'BRIEN (Cook—ALP) (3.36 pm): I rise to speak briefly to the three bills that are currently before the House and to speak in support of the government’s bill and against the other two bills. I remember a few years ago seeing a map of the world that showed all the countries that were democratic. I remember being quite taken aback and frightened at seeing just how few countries in the world had democratic systems of government. In fact, most countries and most states are not democratic. Those places do not have in place democratic processes so that people can choose their own government. I think we are lucky that we have a democratic system in Australia and here in Queensland. Of course, each democratic system has its own nuances and its own systems and processes to make sure that it is truly democratic and that elections for people who choose their political leaders and representatives are, in fact, free and fair and transparent. The government’s bill that is before the House focuses mostly on making sure that the democratic processes in the state of Queensland are fair.

There is not a lot of doubt about the way in which we run elections in Queensland, with people showing up to a polling booth and casting their vote under the scrutiny of the independent commission. Although from time to time there are some minor disagreements and some minor problems with the way in which this process works, there is an enormous amount of integrity in the system. There is a lot of confidence in electoral officials that the process is undertaken freely and fairly and that, at the end of the day, the result is a reflection of the will of the people exercising their democratic right to vote. As political parties we cop that sweet. Win, lose or draw, we accept that the result was fair. There are processes that we can go through to challenge the result if we do not think the process was fair. I think there is a lot of confidence in the democratic system in Australia.

The government is trying to make sure that those electoral processes are also fair and that individuals, companies and people cannot for whatever reason try to buy the votes of Queenslanders and try to put undue influence on the political process. Unfortunately I did not hear all of the opposition spokesperson’s contribution, but I do not think that he seriously addressed the issue of why people would make large contributions to political parties. I think most people outside this place would question why individuals are making donations of hundreds of thousands of dollars towards political organisations and individual candidates. The answer is obvious, but it was completely ignored by the opposition leader and the representatives are, in fact, free and fair and transparent. The government’s bill that is before the House focuses mostly on making sure that the democratic processes in the state of Queensland are fair.

I come from the seat of Cook. When we inherited government in 1989 there was the classic case of Wujal Wujal. A line was drawn around the Indigenous community of Wujal Wujal. It was taken out of the electorate of Barron River and it became an island in the electorate of Cook. Under the old Joh gerrymander it became a little Cook enclave surrounded entirely by the seat of Barron River. It was obviously a dishonest ploy to rig the electoral process. We have had to come into power and clean up the mess—to clean up anomalies like that—to make sure that a vote for somebody in the city is the same as a vote for somebody in the country. We have done that in a fair way. However, there are five weighted seats—one that I represent. My constituents have a greater say in this place than the Deputy Premier’s constituents because I come from a weighted seat. There are only five of those and we do that because we understand that they are large electorates and we give them special circumstances. The weighting is very small compared to the old days when the weighting for seats was something like two to one. A city seat was often twice the size of a seat in Western Queensland.

Mr Moorhead interjected.

Mr O’BRIEN: The member for Waterford tells the story that essentially after the EARC redistribution in 1992 Logan and Waterford were basically split in two. Two seats had to be created out of the one in order to get the principle of one vote, one value represented in this place. It is a very important democratic principle. The other democratic principle—the last wave—is to make sure that there is not undue influence on members of parliament. It has to cut both ways. I will not be here tomorrow when Mr Nuttall is here. That is a shame. I have to attend a funeral in Weipa. He has done the wrong thing. He was referred to the Crime and Misconduct Commission—again a system and a process
that was put in place by this government to ensure the integrity of members of parliament and officials. It was under this government that he was referred to the Crime and Misconduct Commission and put in jail by the judicial system. That was not the case previously. He has sought to use his position in an undue way.

The question remains: why would these companies and individuals want to contribute serious money not available to most people in Queensland in order to get their preferred candidate elected? I do not know Clive Palmer. I have never met the man. I am sure he is an absolute charmer. I have no doubt he is a great man, a man of great integrity. But the question is: what if there is another gentleman or lady out there with more nefarious purposes in mind who wanted to use their money and influence to get certain members of parliament elected? The shadow minister simply failed to address that elephant in the room as part of his contribution.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr O'BRIEN: Why does Mr Palmer make these contributions? Does anyone out there, the shadow minister or any of his constituents seriously believe for one minute that there are not going to be favours asked in return for those contributions?

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr O'BRIEN: Nobody believes that. The member opposite can bleat and carry on but no person in the street seriously believes that Clive Palmer donates significant amounts of money to the LNP and asks nothing in return, that he does it as part of his civic responsibilities and duties and that it is his contribution to the democratic process in Queensland. Nobody believes that. It is a complete furphy. This bill seeks to make sure that the playing field on which political candidates of any political persuasion can act is even. These are important reforms in the progress of democracy as it evolves here in Queensland.

I want to briefly comment on the bill put forward by the member for Beaudesert. I want to congratulate him. I think that his bill is more substantive than the bill that the opposition put forward. I generally do not agree with a word of it, but I think that a single individual has put in more work than the 31 or 32 members opposite—I am not sure what Campbell Newman calls the leaderless rabble across the chamber. The member for Beaudesert was able to come up with more substantive ideas—misguided as they are—than the 31 or 32 members opposite were able to come up with. I do not support that bill. I do not support compulsory voting. I think that democracy should reflect the people and that we should make people think about politics.

What we do here is very serious. We influence the lives of people in a very substantive way. We in this House have the power to do significant things to the public. We have the power, if we wanted to exercise it, to bring in capital punishment, which has been in place in this state in days gone by. The stakes are high in relation to what we can do here. People should consider what happens here very seriously. We should ask them to show up to a polling booth to consider politics and to consider who their representatives are going to be, because it is very important in their day-to-day lives. They do not have to vote. They have to be enrolled to vote. They have to show up at a polling booth on election day and pick up a ballot paper. They can rip it up and put it in the bin, they can put it in blank or they can vote informal. They are free to do as they please. I think the principle of compulsory voting is an important one if this parliament is truly going to be a representative body and truly represent the will of Queenslanders.

How-to-vote cards are annoying. It is not compulsory for anyone to put them out. One does not have to stand out there on polling day or annoy their friends to stand there and hand them out. But again it is a free country and we have an ability and a right, and I would argue a responsibility, to talk to people about politics and to persuade them why a vote for you or your party or you as an independent candidate is the correct vote. How-to-vote cards provide the last opportunity for candidates to be able to do that. I think outlawing them is a breach of freedom. People are free to talk politically and to put out political paraphernalia. That is why they are important. If they were not important, political parties would stop producing them tomorrow.

The thing that I most disagree with—and the member for Beaudesert referred to it as a no-brainer—was that people should have to show identification. He said that it is a no-brainer that people should have to show identification to vote. While I think for most people that probably sounds right, for the constituents whom I represent it is not the case. A lot of my constituents in Indigenous communities on Cape York and in the Torres Strait actually do not carry identification. A lot of them do not have drivers' licences. Some of them do not carry bank cards and things like that. It is just a different culture, a different thinking. These documents that rule the lives of most of us are seen differently by Indigenous people. They simply do not carry them.

There are checks and balances to identify people who vote twice. I know the member for Mermaid Beach interjected, saying vote early and vote often. There are processes in place that identify people who vote twice in an election. It does come up. They are sent a letter by the Electoral Commission if they have voted twice.
behind closed doors and never revealed in our state. That is what they want. National Party opposition wants to continue in Queensland. It is a culture of secret donations made
the names. In this debate we are seeing that culture perpetuated. That is the culture that the Liberal
history of Queensland. Of course, he did not have the courage of his convictions to stand up and reveal
names.' As I said at the time, he was perhaps the weakest and most craven opposition leader in the
political organisations. I will say more about that in the debate. They do not want us to hide behind some
shine on how the democratic system works, not to hide behind shady and unaccountable supporters of
cost impost.

They want and they expect members of this House to continually lift the bar and to continually let light
the elements of those bills. I want to talk about one of the most significant reforms to electoral
accountability and to the way our political system works in Queensland, basically, since we became an
independent state. This is a very significant reform to bring openness and accountability to how our
democracy works in Queensland.

Last year I had the privilege of touring the length and breadth of Queensland and speaking at
various forums to Queenslanders about integrity and accountability in government. To a person, every
Queenslander holds very dear the issues of openness, transparency and accountability in government.
They want and they expect members of this House to continually lift the bar and to continually let light
shine on how the democratic system works, not to hide behind shady and unaccountable supporters of
political organisations. I will say more about that in the debate. They do not want us to hide behind some
cost impost.

Mr Stevens interjected.

Mr DICK: I take the interjection from the member for Mermaid Beach. Everything that trade
unions contribute to the Australian Labor Party is declared in this state. However, to this day what has not
been declared and what is not known is this: who paid $20,000 a plate to dine with the Liberal National
Party back in the days of the leadership of the member for Surfers Paradise? We know how close the
member for Mermaid Beach is to the member for Surfers Paradise. He was one of his strongest
supporters. When the can-do caravan came into town, we know what happened to the member for
Mermaid Beach. What did he get plumped with? The shadow parliamentary secretary for racing, one of
the leadership positions in the LNP—not! We know that when he was closely supporting the member for
Surfers Paradise, he did not agitate for his leader to reveal who attended the $20,000 a plate dinner. We
have forgotten that they voted at another booth. That is the extent of it.

There is a lack of integrity and credibility in the opposition. Not one of them has the capacity or the
ability to lead their parliamentary party. Not one of them is willing to stand up for accountability,
openness and reform in Queensland. Hard reform and hard change requires courage and this Labor
government has that in spades. The courage of this government stands in stark contrast to that of
members opposite. For two years they came in here, wringing their hands and furrowing their brows,
talking about how corrupt and craven the Labor government was. However, when we have an
opportunity to take a courageous stance to reform the way political parties operate in Queensland and to reform how democracy works, they run a hundred miles, a thousand miles, a million miles from the antiseptic light of sunlight. They do not want their backroom deals exposed to sunlight. Like Dracula shirking from the light, they run from transparency in politics. That is inbred in the establishment party in Queensland. They do not want their secret donations, their grubby little deals and their donors’ names revealed to the antiseptic light.

We will continue to lead the nation. It should not be forgotten that this is nation-leading legislation. This state will have the most open, transparent and accountable system of funding for political parties and political campaigns in Australia. It is a landmark reform. However, it stands in the continuum of reform that Labor governments have stood for in relation to integrity and accountability in government over the past two decades, and particularly under the Bligh Labor government since 2009.

Let us look at the achievements of the Labor government: banning the payment of success fees to fundraisers, introducing a legislative framework to regulate the lobbying industry, forcing newly appointed public servants and ministerial staffers to disclose whether they have worked as lobbyists in the past two years, instituting a regular people’s question time allowing members of the public to directly question the Premier and ministers on any topic, reforming the Whistleblowers Protection Act to give greater protection to whistleblowers, establishing an ethical standards branch within the Public Service Commission, expanding the role of the Integrity Commissioner, announcing an overhaul of the parliamentary committee system to further improve accountability, publishing online the members’ pecuniary interests register, expanding the jurisdiction of the Crime and Misconduct Commission to cover government owned corporations. We should not forget in the two years that I have been a member of the House and Attorney-General of the state the continual denigration and undermining of the Crime and Misconduct Commission by the Liberal National Party. They take every single opportunity in this House to undermine the CMC.

Let us look at what the member for Surfers Paradise did. He concealed his own dirty little secret within the LNP. To this day neither he nor any of the 32 members of the organisational wing will reveal that secret. We now know that the organisational wing is a body outside the parliament. It is an extra-parliamentary body that is unaccountable, undemocratic and unelected. It is unaccountable to the people of Queensland, but it is pulling the strings for the 32 members opposite. Not one of them will reveal who went to the $20,000 a head exclusive dinner before the last election.

It should never be forgotten that this was the highest priced cash-for-access event ever held in Queensland political history, and to this day members opposite will not reveal the donors. Time and time again the member for Surfers Paradise promised to release the list. He has not done so. We have to ask: who gagged the member for Surfers Paradise? Who were the LNP money men interfering in the conduct of the member for Surfers Paradise by preventing him from revealing the names? Was it Bruce McIver, the President of the LNP, or was it their own sugar daddy, Clive Palmer? Who intervened and stopped him revealing that when he said publicly that he would do so? It is clear that the members of the LNP in this parliament have lost control of their own party. They do not control their own party. They are controlled by the external, faceless men of the LNP. Never in the history of the Australian Labor Party in Queensland political history, and to this day members opposite will not reveal the donors.

Mr Wallace: The ghost of Robert Sparkes is back.

Mr DICK: I take the interjection from the Minister for Main Roads that the ghost of Robert Sparkes is back, reinvigorated in another form in the LNP. They are controlled by people outside this chamber. Not one of them has the intestinal fortitude and integrity to stand up. Now we see another force—Campbell Newman—pulling the strings, telling them how to dance in this place.

The government has a commitment to open and transparent government—one position. We promised reforms and now they are here. We have held our position consistently about reforming campaign finance and reforming the democratic system in Queensland by bringing about openness and accountability. We have a clear position, but when we look at the LNP we see that things are much murkier.

What did Campbell Newman say on 4 April 2011, as quoted in the Australian? Let us see what the candidate for Ashgrove said about campaign finance reform. The article states—

Mr Newman said he wasn’t involved in the mechanics of fundraising and wouldn’t be available for “cash for access” style events. “I will not be part of behind closed door meetings to an elite group of people paying for access,” he said.

What did he say yesterday? On 10 May 2011 an article in the Brisbane Times states—

Liberal National Party leader Campbell Newman has declared he has no problem with cash-for-access political party fundraisers...

It is incredible that within the space of one month the LNP candidate for Ashgrove, Campbell Newman, could not hold a position on a very significant and substantial public policy reform.
providing Queenslanders with a fair, honest and transparent democratic system in Queensland. We in the Australian Labor Party and in the Bligh government make no apology for finance. Of course they would be required to take a principled stand if they were to support it and, again, reforming our democratic system. So is reforming the electoral system. So is reforming campaign democracy,' they say. 'That is critical to our work as MPs.' I say that so is reforming our parliament. So is that is contrary to their DNA. Instead they twist and turn, doing and saying anything they can to oppose alone but we never hear one of them saying, 'That is the cost that we will cut. That is the price we will paid for all of them?—cost $1.43 million. Not one of them wants to give that back. 'That is part of value. Every Queenslander is equal before the law; every Queenslander is equal in democracy. However, it does come at a price. The budget for running this parliament alone is $76.5 million a year. Running the parliamentary precinct, this great chamber of history in our state, costs $32.1 million a year. Members’ salaries and entitlements cost $44.4 million a year. Running the Leader of the Opposition’s office costs the budget $3.19 million. It is up almost 10 per cent—up from $2.9 million—in one year alone but we never hear one of them saying, ‘That is the cost that we will cut. That is the price we will pay for democracy.’ No, they pick this number—$30 million or $26 million—out of a state budget of $40 billion, to ensure openness and transparency in our state.

The type of democracy advocated by this side of politics, by the Labor Party, is not based on a person’s wealth, their standing, where they sit in society or their patronage. It is based on one vote, one value. Every Queenslander is equal before the law; every Queenslander is equal in democracy. However, it does come at a price. The budget for running this parliament alone is $76.5 million a year. Running the parliamentary precinct, this great chamber of history in our state, costs $32.1 million a year. Members’ salaries and entitlements cost $44.4 million a year. Running the Leader of the Opposition’s office costs the budget $3.19 million. It is up almost 10 per cent—up from $2.9 million—in one year alone but we never hear one of them saying, ‘That is the cost that we will cut. That is the price we will pay for democracy.’ No, they pick this number—$30 million or $26 million—out of a state budget of $40 billion, to ensure openness and transparency in our state.

The electorate allowances for every one of the opposition MPs—what has the electoral allowance paid for all of them?—cost $1.43 million. Not one of them wants to give that back. ‘That is part of democracy,’ they say. ‘That is critical to our work as MPs.’ I say that so is reforming our parliament. So is reforming our democratic system. So is reforming the electoral system. So is reforming campaign finance. Of course they would be required to take a principled stand if they were to support it and, again, that is contrary to their DNA. Instead they twist and turn, doing and saying anything they can to oppose the government, to oppose reform and to continue the shady, backroom deals to fund their political organisation. We in the Australian Labor Party and in the Bligh government make no apology for providing Queenslanders with a fair, honest and transparent democratic system in Queensland.

Let us look at what some of the members opposite said. Let us see what the member for Kawana said. Never in my whole life have I seen such an old fogy trying to escape from a young man’s body. This is an old man desperately trying to get out of a young man’s body. That is not surprising. I remember the interview he did with Proctor, the Queensland Law Society journal. Who were the two idols he quoted? Who were his two political idols? Sir Robert Menzies and Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. They are the political mentors of the member for Kawana, the shadow Attorney-General, the man who seeks to be the first law officer of Queensland. There are the framed photos of ‘Ming’ and old Joh on the bedside table as he nods off at night thinking of how he can bring back the good old days.

Mr Lucas: Bring back Luke Shaw to get him off.

Mr DICK: Bring back Luke Shaw to rig juries, as the Deputy Premier says. Those were the good old days, when corruption flourished under the National Party supported by the Liberal Party. The member’s contribution shows that he has a fan in his generation—trawling around state schools. This is what he said in the debate. He stated—

I can inform the House today that, when I have been attending my schools recently, all of the children have been very excited at the future prospect of a can-do real government in Queensland. They are very excited about that prospect.

Members of the parliament should not be going into schools and acting in a partisan fashion. They should never be talking in a partisan fashion to students. They should talk about our democracy.

Mr Schwarten interjected.
Mr Dick: I take the interjection from the member for Rockhampton. The member opposite wants to be the Attorney-General. He should not go into schools acting in such a partisan fashion. It is incumbent upon all of us to keep party politics out of schools but instead to go there and talk about civic values, civic virtue and our democracy and to promote active involvement in every political party in Queensland. That is our responsibility.

Of course, then we had the contribution of the member for Southern Downs. Of course, he trawled around that ridiculous paper in response to our Integrity and accountability in Queensland paper in which he questioned the very basis of the electoral system in Queensland. That is what they did last year. They issued a paper in response to the government’s green paper questioning the very basis of one vote, one value. What part of the words ‘one vote, one value’ does the Liberal National Party not understand?

We look back to the great works of the member for Mudgeeraba. We could never forget her contribution in convening ‘The Titanium Forum’. Do you remember that, Mr Deputy Speaker? To quote her website at the time, it stated, ‘Gain regular access to political and business leaders’—pay the cash and get regular access to political and business leaders—‘Become more closely involved with the political process’ and ‘Become a stakeholder in the future success of a state Liberal National government in Queensland’. Pay the price and you get in. What did she say on her website? ‘These activities enable members to contribute to policy development.’ Pay the price and you buy the policy. That is code for buying favours and patronage with the LNP. How much for a share in the spoils of an LNP government? For individual membership, $1,000; business membership, $3,000; and corporate membership, $6,000. Now the webpage does not exist. In shame it has taken it down, but it is prepared to sell its political soul to gain power in this state.

But this debate has darker implications for democracy in Queensland. Never before has there been such a spineless group of individuals in this parliament. I do not know what the collective noun is for a set of shivers trying to find a spine to run up, but I think it is the Liberal National Party. I think that is the description. For two years it has consistently called for reform in this state—for two years. Members opposite get the opportunity to vote on it today. They represent the views of Campbell Newman and Bruce McIver. They represent the views of people outside this parliament—unelected and unaccountable—dictating to them what is happening in this place. Never before in the history of Queensland have we seen that. They get the email and they get the text, and then they are doing Campbell Newman’s bidding. They wait for the phone to ring each morning and they wait for the ding on the computer when the email comes in, and then they will do whatever they can to respond and to dance to the tune played by others outside this parliament.

This is a Frankenstein of a political party that has no substance, that has no credibility, that has no principle and that has no integrity. The only thing they seek is power for power’s sake. But we will stand for reform. We will stand for the modernisation of our electoral and democratic system in this place. We will not be swept away by the overblown rhetoric of Campbell Newman, who knows this is the right thing to do and, in a desperate attempt to attack it, says it is corrupt.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Hoolihan): Order! Member for Kawana, you have already spoken, thank you.

Mr Dick: This is a sad hulk of what was once conservative politics in this state. Those opposite will rise to the occasion if they vote for the legislation, but they will not do that. They want to do a U-turn to the bad old days of our state. The Bligh government will not deviate from our commitment to make democracy more accountable, more open and more transparent in Queensland.

(Time expired)

Mr Stevens (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (4.12 pm): I rise today to speak on the cognate bills—the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill 2011, the Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill 2010 and the Electoral Reform Bill 2010. But my focus today will be on the undemocratic and unfair government bill, the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill 2011. Isn’t it ironic that the Labor government has introduced reforms to the election process before one of the most important and critical elections for the Labor government in Queensland’s history? I congratulate the shadow minister on his speech on this particular bill. He said that this was the worst bill, that it was a complete dog’s breakfast of a bill, and only just two hours ago we were given what amounts to 54 amendments to this ill-thought-out, unworkable, reactive bill from a government that is in dire straits out there in the electorate in the community’s eyes, and it will do anything to prosecute an election win for its right-to-rule ALP government.

This is just another ploy by Labor to hold on to government because it knows that the upcoming state election will be its toughest fight of all. Not only does this feeble attempt at hiding Labor’s electoral corruption indicate its concerns with the community’s angst against it; it also indicates its desperation and absolute disregard for our democratic election process. These reforms are simply designed to be advantageous for the Labor Party and disadvantageous for the Liberal National Party. It is typical of how
the Labor Party changes any legislation to suit its own political agenda. This is the epitome of the Labor Party’s mantra of ‘let’s only do things if there is a political gain in it for us, regardless of the ramifications or the fairness of the legislation’.

In the Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State’s second reading speech, he states—

Our electoral system must be free from undue influence associated with large political donations.

How about the financial influence the union movement has on the government’s political agenda?

How about the financial influence that Greens have on its political agenda? He goes on to say—

Our electoral system is built on the foundation that each person should carry equal sway—one person, one vote.

I ask: is this really the case, or is it that Labor Party voters are allowed to be ‘more equal pigs’ in George Orwell’s words because added electioneering support is allowed to be given to Labor by the union’s political wing, as we heard last night, the Australian Labor Party? Our democratic process and Westminster system of governing is the best in the world and, although it does have faults, we know that no system is perfect.

The member for Cook raised the matter of who gives large amounts of money to political parties without expecting favours in return. Rich people give large amounts of money to political campaigns that they believe in and have the capacity to fund to levels that to us, as poorly paid parliamentarians, is a lot of money but to billionaires does not really relate to a lot of money. I know of candidates in local government elections who have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on their own campaigns because they believe it is their right to do so, that it is their right to put their money behind their political beliefs, that it is their right to put a lot of money into following a direction that they believe will better the country or the state or the local government area. So, quite clearly, there does not have to be an automatic receipt of a right or a benefit for someone giving a lot of money. Does the fact that the unions give a lot of money mean that they have an unequivocal right to decisions made by the Labor Party? Hopefully not. That is why we believe that this legislation is all about favouring the Labor Party as opposed to the LNP. This bill will affect Queenslanders’ democratic right to support whichever candidate they want and how much support they can give.

The objective of the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill 2011 is to amend the Electoral Act 1992 to reform the areas of funding for state elections, election campaign expenditure and political donations. This piece of legislation directly affects the amount of funding donors can contribute to the candidate of their choice in a state campaign. So, in effect, it affects people’s democratic right to donate what they want to their chosen candidate. This bill will introduce a system of capping, which applies from 1 January 2011, on specific expenditure by political parties, candidates and third parties in relation to campaign operations—although apparently there is no retrospective obligation for parties relating to the period prior to assent to the bill. The caps on expenditure for a political party will be $80,000 for each seat contested, $50,000 for each endorsed candidate, and $75,000 for each Independent candidate. The total expenditure for a political party is $11.5 million, which includes both the political party expenditure and the individual candidate’s expenditure.

It will also cap amounts donated by donors to a state campaign. In the government’s own explanatory notes it acknowledges that capping threatens people’s democratic rights by stating—

... by capping political donations and electoral expenditure the Bill potentially imposes barriers on freedom of speech.

So why is it doing this? Simply to give it an advantage over the LNP. The applicable donation cap for donors to a registered political party for a financial year is $5,000 and donations to a candidate or third party is $2,000. This will include financial, in-kind donations and other property. Here we find the great sting in the tail of this legislation to the Queensland taxpayer. In typical Labor Party philosophy, a new burden on Queensland taxpayers that will impose up to a $30 million slug on the hip pockets of Queenslanders is being fiscally through this legislation with as little fanfare as this bankrupt, tired old Labor government can trumpet.

Where was the public consultation about this new Queensland taxpayer bankrolled Labor election campaign? Where was the open and accountable costing to Queensland taxpayers outlined in Labor government press releases? No, it was hidden in a wall of secrecy plastered over with bleatings and red herrings about electoral fairness and electoral honesty. The Bligh Labor government cannot even spell the word ‘honesty’.

The reality of the situation is that Queensland taxpayers will be slugged $30 million; all parties will continue to spend collected and donated funds on top of that figure; and the Queensland public will cop a bigger, more expensive election campaign that will go for longer, will impinge on their visual, audio and tactile senses greater, and we will still end up with the quality of representation that we have in the House today, only at far greater cost to Mr and Mrs Average out there in voter land.
The reasons for this bill given in the explanatory notes are to limit any potential for undue influence being exercised by any group or lobby group or any perception of such influence. Well, hello! Since when did a union become not a lobby group? That is precisely the reason that unions came into being. They lobbied for the protection of workers. Hello! Why are we exempting our union friends from this legislation? Would it be that that benefits the Labor Party over the LNP? Perhaps.

The exemption of unions from this legislation makes a complete mockery of the real intent of this legislation. It is all about cutting the support for the Can-do Campbell team and ensconcing the political wing of the union movement, as we heard last night, in Queensland, the Bligh Australian Labor Party, in its rightful place, in its mind, in government.

The public funding increase will be able to be accessed by candidates and political parties by applying to the Electoral Commission of Queensland for specific election funding and also administrative funding. This is addressed in clause 15 of the bill which inserts new part 9A called ‘Election funding and financial disclosure’. The public funding is currently calculated at $1.64 per vote but the candidate must reach the four per cent threshold before being entitled to it. A political party maximum spend of $7.12 million will be reimbursed to a total of $5.3 million. An endorsed candidate’s maximum spend of $50,000 will be reimbursed to a total of $21,250. For an Independent candidate the maximum spend is $75,000, with a total reimbursement of $31,875.

The bill also makes changes that require candidates, political parties or registered third parties have a dedicated state campaign account with expenditure for the campaign only paid from this account. These issues in the bill quite clearly present no problem to the LNP. There are no problems in terms of declaring amounts that are donated. That is not what this bill is about; this bill is about limiting donations. Quite clearly, it is about limiting the LNP. This is the most biased piece of legislation I have seen introduced in this House. That can only reflect a very desperate government that is using all options it can to see it returned by March of next year.

Another amendment is that third parties need to register with the Electoral Commission of Queensland if they spend more than $10,000 campaigning during an election period or $2,000 in a single campaign. We are happy to have Mr Palmer declared as a donor to our party. Mr Palmer is happy to let it be known how much he donated to the party. He believes in the LNP. He believes in principles of free enterprise. It should be his democratic right to spend what he wants on the election for the LNP. The unions have an unfettered amount under this legislation that they can donate to the ALP. Quite clearly, it is one law for one side and another law for the other side of the electoral contest.

This bill also allows for the commission to have the power to monitor the existing and new regulatory regime which, as we know, is going to add additional costs to the overall operation of the commission. The ECQ will be required to increase its function as a commission to cater for these powers which will force added costs onto these extended administrative responsibilities.

Clause 6 of the bill, which is a good part of the bill, allows for 16- and 17-year-olds to provisionally enrol to vote. This ensures that they will be able to vote when they turn 18. The timing of this piece of legislation being introduced and forced through the House is just unbelievable. The Bligh Labor government should hang its head in shame at the direct action it has taken to penalise its political opponents to deceptively attempt to hold on to power.

We should reform legislation for the good of the people of Queensland not for the blatant reason of a particular party staying in government. All I can say is that the Premier and the Labor Party must be very, very afraid. They are afraid of Campbell Newman and the can-do team. We see the fear pouring out through this desperate and deceitful legislation designed to maximise the failing chances of an ALP government being returned in Queensland.

As in other states, such as Western Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, the posse of the voters of Queensland have woken up to the broken promises, deceitful spin and disastrous financial mismanagement of the Bligh Labor government. The current system has been effective in delivering electoral outcomes that are consistent with the wishes of the electorate of Queensland—and Labor would not deny that—over the last 20 years. Burdening Queenslanders with having to pay extra of their hard earned taxpayer funds to publicly fund campaigning is grossly unfair and absolutely outrageous given they have gone through the most devastating period of natural disasters in our lifetime. As Campbell Newman said in the media, this cost to the taxpayer could be up to $30 million. The people of Grantham and the people of Townsville could have enjoyed that going to their reparation. The people of Queensland deserve better. Along with my colleagues, I oppose this bill before the House.

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—LNP) (4.28 pm): The Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill proposes to insert a new part 9A into the Electoral Act 1992 to, among other things, cap political donations and campaign expenditures and provide for an increase in public funding for state elections. It is obvious this government has shrewdly protected the revenue that the Labor Party is able to raise from its major support base—the unions. I have no problem with this issue. However, the bill effectively hampers the ability of others to raise funds.
This is a desperate attempt by the Labor Party to limit the ability of the LNP in particular to raise campaign funds while carefully protecting its greatest source of revenue and exploiting the other source of revenue—that is, the taxpayer. It is a disgrace that this government is introducing what will be a $26 million expense to Queensland at a time when we are facing a recovery bill from natural disasters of over $5 billion and a state debt of over $80 billion and when mum-and-dad taxpayers are struggling with the rising cost of living. Why isn’t this $26 million being used to improve our failing health system, to restore our appalling road network or to contribute to rebuilding our devastated state? The government will plead that democracy is expensive but so is the rebuilding of our state, the cost of living, the cost of water and the cost of electricity. This bill is not democratic; this is about saving this government’s political hide. This is about protecting those who are in power at the expense of the battlers in need.

If there was a line showing the point at which the government completely lost touch with the people it was supposed to represent, this Labor government has well and truly crossed it. There is no argument that donations to political parties must be transparent and that political parties must be accountable in regard to campaign expenditure. However, the blatant protectionism being employed by this government in classifying a parent company and its affiliates as a single entity yet refusing to acknowledge the affiliation of Labor’s source of funding is politics at its lowest.

The member for Cook asked why anyone would want to provide a large donation to a political party. It is simple. As members would probably remember, when John Howard handed down his industrial relations laws the unions mounted a massive campaign. Anyone who ran a $50 million party. It is simple. As members would probably remember, when John Howard handed down his industrial relations laws the unions mounted a massive campaign. Anyone who ran a $50 million campaign on 700 pages of legislation would scare the living crap out of anyone, and it was understandable—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Order! Member for Dalrymple, the use of that word is unparliamentary.

Mr KNUTH: I withdraw. The Labor Party must be reciprocal. If people want to support political parties—especially when we have a bad government which is causing the loss of a AAA credit rating, forced council amalgamations, a health crisis, a water crisis, an energy crisis and rising energy costs—then the government must be accountable and reciprocal. My grandfather would be turning in his grave about the way Labor Party members have turned their backs on the working-class people. What is the best that Labor members can offer? They are starving other political parties of the ability to run an effective campaign and slamming taxpayers with a $27 million bill, all in exchange for saving their political hide.

Dr DOUGLAS (Gaven—LNP) (4.32 pm): We are debating cognately the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill, the Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill and the Electoral Reform Bill. We will move amendments and I will support those.

The government’s bill—the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill—is fatally flawed because the basic premise is that there is undue influence on political outcomes because of large political donations, and that is wrong. I say this because evidence gained by research shows that most people vote according to how they always have. Some people change their vote on the basis of issues that affect them directly, but they are in the minority. In a two-party system, that accounts for most votes people vote according to how they always have. In a two-party system, that accounts for most votes in most seats of any size. These votes determine the outcome of most elections in most circumstances.

There are increasingly more supporting fringe groups but in times of crisis—and, may I note, that these are the types of crises that Labor in government routinely creates—those voting patterns of leakage voting collapse and the two-party system of deciding governments is again reinforced. We are talking about whether private political funding does impact on that swinging voter group, a subfaction which decides the outcome of elections. The wonderful quote of Walter Judd is just as applicable today as when it was said over 50 years ago. He said—

People often say that, in a democracy, decisions are made by a majority of the people. Of course, that is not true. Decisions are made by a majority of those who make themselves heard and who vote—a very different thing.

That means that, for people to have an impact, they must try to ensure that they are heard and that they themselves must vote or most likely get like-minded people in greater numbers than any opposing group to vote along with them. Getting to be heard can and often does take finance, although that is not always so. Sometimes it is worse if political parties accept some funds, such as from cigarette companies. It is a false assumption to state that those with the deepest pockets and the greatest political donations will always win. Sure, it helps, and particularly in banana republics and dictatorships it is a near certainty, but in a democracy it is not the case. I put to members that that is most likely the situation in every case in Australia. Evidence supports my position.

The Premier incorrectly links one vote, one value to the issue of political donations. At the same time, she does not equally offer to reform everything—issues like the number of seats in South-East Queensland compared to regional Queensland, excluding those who pay taxes who are not afforded permanent residency in Australia and maybe even demanding of those who do not want to vote that they must vote by virtue of relevant age and status as a citizen at a certain address.
This address issue has certainly confused the minister today and on a previous occasion when he has put forward his points on the bill. Some people may complain about how many people live in a certain dwelling from a certain cultural persuasion—and some often talk about how many people you can squeeze into a mini minor—but this is nothing when compared to how many people who happen to vote Labor are registered as living at the one address. Irrespective of whether these people are registered as voters, these are the ones who change the outcome for political candidates and their parties, and it does not take too many of them to do so. This is where the real money and efforts come in, and this is what Labor in particular does not want to talk about or address in this bill. This bill, rightly or wrongly, weights all the blame for perceived electoral bias on people or groups who do not support Labor in big enough numbers, and no blame—and, therefore, effectively no new limits on those donors—is placed on those who do support them; that is, the unions.

I listened to all this nonsense today about this bill being all things to all men. It is not such a beast. It is a weak but very significant attempt at not just engineering a better result for Labor by excluding its political masters—that is, the unions—from the same rules that apply to everyone else but also seeking to reach down into those individual campaigns, especially those in massive regional and rural electorates, and imposing caps that do not accurately reflect the fair cost of advertising and producing timely campaign literature or the cost of justifying what they do.

I put this to honourable members sitting on the government benches: do you want til-for-tat legislation every few years and a draconian accountancy process that might see the most honest party toiler, irrespective of what party they are in, jailed or destroyed by legislation, with fines of $20,000 going up to $500,000? Who thinks this rubbish up? The penalties must always reflect the seriousness of the offence and the offender and the intention of that individual at the time. They must represent a balance and they must have a focus on both recompense and the ability to generate changed behaviour. I can say this because I have dealt with offenders for a big part of my adult life. Who is kidding whom here? By agreeing to this bill we make a rod for all of our backs, and that is inherently wrong.

This bill is motivated by anger and jealousy and it ignores the legitimate rights of others. If I am not wrong, every religion in the world thinks these motives are also wrong. I now know that the Premier and ‘Big’ Bill Ludwig are angry with Clive Palmer. They will not be the first, nor the last—get in the queue. Clive was the director of the National Party for many years and, of course, he made lots of enemies in that time, but he made lots of friends, too. I am pretty certain that there are plenty who are not happy with the Premier and the head of the AWU, either. I did not respect Peter Beattie after he claimed I had done things which I had not done, but I got over it.

Anger and retribution are poor cousins. Like most, I will learn to live with most of these awful restrictions on fundraising, spending caps, returns, estimated costings and paperwork. I feel sorry for all of those volunteers and small donors whose very worthy, although humble, contributions will largely go to support another new bureaucracy. I do not know what it is going to be called, but I presume it will be the ‘electoral donation management bureaucracy’ and it will be online with the Electoral Commission.

With the tick of a pen, we are authorising the implementation of a whole new world of potential offences and what I would describe as blind offenders for whom not knowing is not a defence. I, too, question where these numbers of $50,000 per candidate, $1,000 per donation, $2,000 per year for companies and $5,000 per donor per year for political donations actually came from. Honourable members, what happens if, like in some countries, in the future we have more than one election in any calendar year or financial year? What are we going to do then? Are those people who supply services not going to be paid? The Premier stated—

I would emphasise that unions will be subject to these donation caps just like everyone else.

But that is not quite true, is it? The costs of union staff providing human capital, even in an ongoing campaign all the time or even just at the time of the election, are not counted as a donation. But that does not apply to non-union people. I would never encourage anyone to create a sham to avoid anything, but this bill encourages the opposition to create its own legal union equivalent—

Mr Lucas: If a union sends its organisers out to campaign, they are covered. They have to disclose.

Dr DOUGLAS: Just hear me out. Do we all really want this to happen? It will, because the so-called reform is unduly prescriptive and it should be either all inclusive or not at all. Forget all of this nonsense that was said by the member for Greenslopes about LNP fundraising. The LNP is a grassroots organisation. I was a member of the National Party that became the Liberal National Party. Basically, people pay their subscriptions, they go and make resolutions, they get policy made and they get representation here.

Government members, this is template New South Wales, last-ditch legislation. The former leader of the upper house of the Labor Party in New South Wales, Rodney Cavalier, correctly states—

Unions are the creatures of faction, factions are the instruments of unions. They are indivisible. Break union control, the faction system breaks with it. Workers, note, are not a part of this equation.
He stated that on 1 April 2005 in an address to the Fabian Society. That is not democracy and Labor does not respect either the worker or their vote. To me, this bill is attempting to force union control on this great state and at a time when union membership is falling—unions represent only 17 per cent of all workers—and unions have no electoral right to do so. The Premier is the union puppet in this matter. As the Australian head of the ALP, the Premier needs to stand up and be counted and she is not doing so. She must seek to represent everyone, for that is what you do when you are the Premier and you are representing, in her case, all the ALP members of Australia.

This bill will not save Labor, it will not save the Premier, it will not save the unions and it will not save the public any money. In fact, it will cost the public $28 million. ‘Never apologise,’ says the member for Greenslopes. He may yet get to eat his words. In the descent of any political party into the abyss of irrelevance and political oblivion the capacity to raise money evaporates and so it will be in the Queensland brand of Labor. Labor has just done as it has done in every other state. It has walked away from its constituency when it all got too hard. Labor has decided to nobble its opponents and reach out for a financial lifeline from the ever-dwindling public purse. Far from being an honest, virtuous government, the Bligh Labor government seeks to blame everyone else's problems for its own failings. Just like the looters who cause such awful pain in times of crisis, as they did in the recent floods, Labor wants to loot from each and every union group to a value of up to $500,000 or $75,000 per seat and loot from the public purse for funds over and above that as well. Rodney Cavalier has again correctly stated below—

The Labor Party has ceased to exist.

It has—

become a cartel party, essentially dependent on the unacknowledged largesse of the taxpayer.

I put it to government members that they need to say to themselves that, if being in government means that they have to give up on democracy to achieve it, then the price is just too high. I started off by saying that this legislation is based on a flawed process and I have demonstrated that that is indeed a true statement. In response to the comments of the member for Cook, what evidence does he have to prove that we in the LNP have at present been buying votes? What version of democracy does he believe in when he says that this bill is democratic? As the Deputy Premier and the member for Everton have acknowledged, I am a reader of political history and I can say that, clearly, Ben Chifley would not believe in when he says that this legislation is based on a flawed process and I have demonstrated that that is indeed a true statement. In response to the comments of the member for Cook, what evidence does he have to prove that we in the LNP have at present been buying votes? What version of democracy does he believe in when he says that this bill is democratic? As the Deputy Premier and the member for Everton have acknowledged, I am a reader of political history and I can say that, clearly, Ben Chifley would not today be preselected as a candidate for the Labor Party for any seat. He would not vote for Labor. He would never support a government that ceases to believe in democracy and does not practise what it preaches. The values that Labor has held dearest were established in the shearers’ strike in 1891. In the pursuit of power over glory Labor has failed to achieve what it could do and it seeks to take it by reckless disregard for the democratic process.

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (4.45 pm): Although these bills are being debated in cognate, I will confine my remarks mainly to the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill, although I have some sympathy for some of the objectives in the bill proposed by the member for Beaudesert, particularly in relation to the abolition of how-to-vote cards.

This bill will change the financing of election campaigns in Queensland. It will ensure that our electoral system is free from undue influences associated with large political donations. Each Queenslander should have equal access and influence in the political process and that access and influence should not be dependent on and should not give the perception of dependence on the size of a donation to any member, candidate or party. The bill will reform the process of political donations, expenditure and electoral funding generally to ensure as far as possible the integrity of the system.

The various caps on donations and expenditure without any other measures would limit the ability of parties and candidates to get their message across to the community. That has necessitated the introduction of amendments to the system of public election funding and thus ensure that political parties and candidates can effectively communicate with Queenslanders. Donations will be capped at $5,000 per donor per party per year to Queensland political parties, $2,000 per donor per year to endorsed candidates for Queensland political parties and $2,000 per donor per year to Independent candidates. The funding caps include in-kind donations, money or other property and unions are also subject to these caps.

The other part of the equation is the caps on expenditure by political parties, candidates and third parties. The expenditure cap for political parties will be $80,000 by the number of seats being contested. The cap for each endorsed candidate will be $50,000, or $75,000 for an Independent candidate. Caps on donations in endorsed expenditure can be increased annually in accordance with increases in the consumer price index. The bill also introduces caps on the amount that may be expended by third parties. If they spend over $10,000 on an election or $2,000 on a single electorate during a capped expenditure time, they will be required to report to the Electoral Commission of Queensland with whom they will be required to register.
This bill was introduced into this parliament by the Deputy Premier on 7 April this year. Donation caps apply to any donation received after 1 January this year, as was announced in the Reforming Queensland’s electoral system white paper, released in December of last year. The dates are important, because I have been provided with a copy of a letter sent by my LNP opponent in the next election, Mr Rob Molhoek, to many constituents and residents presumably around Queensland. This letter is either an indication of the contempt with which the LNP treats this legislation or apparently the LNP’s determination to continue to operate its donation protection racket, as referred to by the Treasurer yesterday. This letter from Mr Molhoek states—

I need your support if we are to win Southport back for the Liberal National Party.

He then helpfully points out—

Under current and proposed disclosure regulations donations under $1000.00 can be made anonymously, a hundred donations of $975.00 are all it will take to achieve the fundraising goals needed to win Southport back from Labor.

He refers in his letter to ‘current and proposed disclosure regulations,’ so he has obviously read the bill, or at least the white paper, and, as I said, the bill was introduced prior to the date of his letter. Presumably he had also read the white paper on the issue. He would be aware then that the cap on expenditure by endorsed candidates from donations is $50,000. Nevertheless, he is seeking 100 donations of $975 or $97,500.

Mr Lucas: Sounds like Gordon Nuttall with the money that he was getting.

Mr LAWLOR: It is something similar, actually. It is almost twice the legal expenditure limit in donations and he says that it is ‘all it will take to achieve the fundraising goals’. If it is not complete contempt for the provisions of the legislation, it is abject failure in mathematics. I would not like to be backing him to pass the NAPLAN test. It is such an elementary calculation that I think we can only assume that the former explanation—an absolute contempt for the legislation—is the more likely example. Also attached to the letter, I might add, is a form that allows the donor to indicate the amount of a donation. A donor can tick $100, $250, $500, $975, $2,000 or ‘other’—in other words, in excess of the limit of $2,000. One could tick ‘other’ and they could donate. This actually encourages people to break the law. There is no warning on this form about the fact that if they do they will be subject to prosecution. Nevertheless, it is pretty gung-ho.

If my opponent is able to raise his goal of $97,500 he will certainly be able to run a Rolls Royce campaign for Southport. He is no stranger to this type of campaign and also to dodgy donors. I was reminded of this recently by an elderly couple who have been financially ruined by investing in the infamous MFS company which went broke some years ago, costing investors hundreds of millions of dollars. They pointed out to me that the directors of MFS, Michael King and Philip Adams, supported Mr Molhoek in his effort to win the mayoralty contest for the Gold Coast City Council.

Mr Shine: Birds of a feather.

Mr LAWLOR: Birds of a feather indeed. Murray Hubbard in the Gold Coast Sun on 6 February 2008 reported—

Mr King, a founder of MFS, has so far tipped $150,000 into Cr. Molhoek’s bid for the city’s top job. Cr. Molhoek said he had registered the latest $100,000 instalment on his council website. This followed a $50,000 donation by Australian Investments Limited last year, of which Mr King and Mr Adams are directors.

The funding is from Michael King and Philip Adams personally... ‘I have just updated my register to show $150,000 in donations’ said Cr. Molhoek.

‘About six years ago, Michael said to me, if I was serious about this career, he would back me’ Mr Molhoek said.

They are the sorts of people who have supported Mr Molhoek in the past. Mr King and Mr Adams are broke and unfortunately have devastated and broken financially and physically many thousands of investors, many of them Gold Coast residents. If this letter and form is any evidence, it seems that the LNP is up to its old tricks. Mr Molhoek will have to find replacements for his dodgy donors, Michael King and Philip Adams.

Mr Lucas: What about Tom Tate? Tom Tate ran against Molhoek. He is obviously now in favour with the Liberal Party.

Mr LAWLOR: That is a different speech. I would need a couple of hours for that.

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—LNP) (4.53 pm): I rise to join the debate on the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill 2011, which was introduced by the Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, the honourable member for Lytton, just last sitting week on 7 April. This is a cognate debate with the Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill presented to this House by the honourable member for Surfers Paradise on 19 May 2010, which I point out has sat on the Notice Paper for a week shy of a full year, and the Electoral Reform Bill introduced by the honourable member for Beaudesert on 24 November 2010. We are debating three bills about electoral reform that are wedged between the
federal budget and the appearance of a convicted former Queensland Labor politician—a former minister to boot and a person for whom this parliament was recalled to protect only a few years ago so his mates could wax lyrical with glowing references to his exceptional good character. Some of those mates are still here and must be shuddering to think what will be exposed when Mr Nuttall visits parliament tomorrow.

I would like to be able to stand here and say it is a good sign of democracy at work to have three bills before the parliament dealing with electoral reform. Granted, the honourable member for Beaudesert’s bill does address the topic of waste, but the government’s bill reeks of corruption and political bias, as honourable members have heard from the shadow Attorney-General, the member for Kawana, and other members of the opposition. As my colleague the honourable member for Kawana so clearly and truthfully declared in his speech, the LNP will be opposing the government’s bill as a phony sham that the Premier and her toxic government introduced in haste to bail them out of trouble. It does seem odd that the Premier is out of the country as we debate this bill and, as mentioned by the honourable member for Kawana, it has not garnered much support from Labor members to speak to it. No wonder though. It is not something to be bragging about back in their electorates, is it?

The shadow Attorney put forward a strong argument that the good people of Queensland will understand. They will see once and for all just how insincere and wretched this Labor government has become. He also flagged a number of amendments that seek to bring some fairness and balance to this legislation. However, the private member’s bill from the honourable member for Surfers Paradise that seeks to amend the Electoral Act 1992 and the Local Government Act 2009 to put a stop to false and misleading electoral advertising being distributed throughout Queensland communities is commendable and deserving of bipartisan support.

This bill, introduced almost a year ago, was borne out of disgust over Bligh’s counterfeit claims and promises pre and post the 2009 state election. Ensuring honest and truthful election advertising is a crucial element of a fair and just democratic electoral system. This opposition bill is about restoring confidence in our electoral process and restoring honesty in government. It is about ensuring that when people look to our state parliament, irrespective of what side of the political divide they stand on, they can respect our democratic system rather than be mistrustful of it.

The government’s bill is meant to have come about from results of the integrity and accountability discussion paper of 2009 and the government’s white paper, Reforming Queensland’s electoral system, which was released in December 2010. This latter document was available for public consultation until February 2011, which many would suggest is not a time of year that people would pay it much notice as they made their preparations for the Christmas holiday season.

The government’s bill proposes to amend the Electoral Act 1992 to limit political donations to candidates endorsed by a political party to $2,000 and each political party $5,000 for state campaigning and to cap campaign expenditure by political parties to $80,000 per seat being contested, third parties to $500,000 state-wide and candidates to $50,000 for an endorsed candidate and $75,000 for an Independent candidate. It also proposes to increase public funding to candidates and political parties based on how much they spend; provide for increased reporting requirements on campaign donations and expenditure; require political parties, candidates and third parties to establish and maintain dedicated state campaign accounts; require third parties to register with the Electoral Commission if they are going to spend more than $10,000 campaigning during an election period or $2,000 in a single electorate; allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote; and require postal votes to be made in an approved form.

It is anticipated that there will be considerable costs resulting from this legislation as these proposed reforms increase the amount of public funding for elections provided to political parties and candidates. But big spending Labor does not want us to know about that. Elections already cost taxpayers money. However, under this new legislation it has been revealed that these reforms could rack up an additional $26 million spend—$26 million from the public purse that is not going to be invested to improve our schools, roads and hospitals. This is appallingly poor timing given the dire situation many Queenslanders find themselves in after the recent summer of natural disasters and places unacceptable burdens upon them. The Premier is behaving in an unbalanced and unstable manner and must be stopped before she completely destroys our great state once and for all. She has lost all concept of responsibility, so desperate is she to hang on to power.

Not only has she and Queensland’s most despised male politician, the Treasurer and honourable member for Mount Coot-tha, sold off our assets without our consent; now they want to blow another $26 million or so under the guise of cracking down on political donations. As I have said before in this House, you can fool some of the people some of the time but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time. Unlike this self-serving Bligh Labor government, the Campbell Newman LNP team will work for Queenslanders and not for ourselves.

As this is a time for Queensland to recover from widespread flood and cyclone damage, it is not at all appropriate to be changing legislation. From the comments of people opposite, it would appear that they class as second-rate the people who have suffered during the floods and cyclone. However, it is not appropriate to change legislation to bring in laws that will cost taxpayers $26 million. Across the
state there are plenty of pressing projects that are desperate for funding assistance to assist with recovery. The Premier’s flood relief appeal money has trickled out at a snail’s pace, leaving householders still homeless and small businesses struggling to stay afloat.

In the Currumbin electorate, $26 million would go a long way towards a number of overdue projects such as the widening of the M1, clearing the Currumbin bar or building the heavy or light rail system. It is no secret that the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary is desperate for funding to prop up the operating costs of its highly utilised wildlife hospital, but this miserable government has never given a brass razzoo to that precious and much loved local icon. During the last election campaign the Premier had the hide to use—or should I say exploit—this special attraction for political gain, once again proving that she has no shame.

Without doubt, most unions are affiliated with Labor. I am told that currently there are 22 affiliated unions that, under the provisions contained within this legislation, will be permitted to access $500,000 each. Last night the honourable member for Keppel revealed as much, if not more, in his speech on the adjournment debate. I quote from Hansard. He said—

... the Labor Party is actually the political arm of the union movement.

Obviously Labor has the support of the unions, but just who is leading whom? It sounds like the unions are directing the parliament from outside the precinct. However, finally even some unions are waking up to the fact that affiliation with Labor is not necessarily—

Government members interjected.

Mrs STUCKEY: It is very rude to interrupt, isn’t it? However, finally even some unions are waking up to the fact that affiliation with Labor is not necessarily in their best interests and they are realising that their continual financial support of the Labor Party is not fair on the workers they are supposed to represent.

Mr Watt interjected.

Mrs STUCKEY: I hope that those squawking from across the chamber will get to their feet and actually debate this legislation instead of simply sniping across the chamber. The core responsibility of unions is to look after people, which is why several years ago some very dedicated but disaffected emergency services union members broke away and created their own union, EMSPA. I stand in this House and say that I am proud to have been a catalyst in the formation of that union. Other disgruntled union members, such as the ETU’s Mr Simpson, are also becoming more outspoken as Labor takes them for granted.

The government and the Deputy Premier have no qualms pushing the line ‘one person, one vote’. We on this side of the House agree that this is a fundamental basis of our modern democratic system, but this bill’s proposals will see the amount paid to parties per vote go from $1.60 to upwards of $8 and up to a whopping $38 for the Greens. It is outrageous that the Greens will receive such an unequal payment of $38-plus per vote for attracting a mere four per cent of the vote. Where is the fairness? I do not hear too many members opposite calling out that that is fair. They would not want that going back to their electorates, would they? The LNP believes that the amount payable per vote should be limited to no more than that received by the winning party. For example, if the winning party is to receive $3.30 per vote then that should be the maximum that other parties receive.

This bill is not about transparency and accountability; it is more about choking the LNP. Wasn’t it only in the recent 2009 election when Labor conveniently forgot to disclose a union donation of the not insignificant amount of some $200,000 or $300,000? One has to wonder how most on that side actually lie straight in their beds at night, or at any time for that matter. Labor politicians’ ability to twist facts to suit themselves is shameful.

In 2006, the campaign for Currumbin saw Labor try every trick in the book to wrest the seat back to its fold after Merri Rose’s dramatic loss. As I said after that election and I say again today, Labor spent a fortune but it could not buy Currumbin. Voters were fed up with the avalanche of mail coming through their letterboxes. In conservative terms, Labor spent some $300,000 on that Currumbin campaign. There were five or six billboards advertising its candidate at a cost of $12,000 each, six or seven direct-mail letters that cost $15,000 a throw, over 15 pieces of unaddressed mail and even a last-ditch effort the day before the campaign to call everyone in the electorate to beg for a vote for the Labor candidate. On the Friday evening I came home to hear a message on my answering machine, urging me to vote for the Labor candidate.

It was a different story in the 2009 campaign. Labor deserted its candidate. Mind you, he was not too proud to allow Senator Joe Ludwig to do full-colour printing for him and direct-mail it to voters in certain suburbs, inviting them to meet him. I thought that sort of spending of federal government allowances was not allowed. But you know Labor: one rule for everyone else; another for themselves.
Mr CRANDON (Coomera—LNP) (5.09 pm): This debate is a cognate one dealing with the Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill 2010, the Electoral Reform Bill 2010 and the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill 2011. The Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill 2010 was introduced by the member for Surfers Paradise and it is about honest, open and accountable government. As part of enshrining an honest and accountable system of government, the LNP is making a commitment to major reform of parliament and electoral processes. We know that ensuring honest and truthful election advertising is a crucial element of a fair and just democratic electoral system. This bill is about restoring the confidence of the people of Queensland in our electoral process and restoring honesty in government, enabling the people of Queensland to respect our democratic system rather than being suspicious of it. To do this, we seek to introduce a series of offences into the Electoral Act 1992 and the Local Government Act 2009. It will be an offence for a person to authorise the publication of false or misleading electoral advertising. The bill also makes it an offence for a person to make a false or misleading statement purporting to be fact that is inaccurate or misleading to a material extent. It gives certain powers to the Electoral Commission to direct the advertiser of the misleading or false information to withdraw it from publication or publish a retraction.

We all remember the barrage of false claims and false election promises from this tired, old Labor government. Queenslanders have been betrayed, let down and cheated by a democratic system that has no checks in place to stop tired, old Labor. When Queenslanders are told that their assets will not be sold, they have a right to believe their assets will not be sold. What about the 100,000 breadwinners—100,000 jobs—will be created story? Queenslanders have a right to believe that those 100,000 full-time jobs will be created. No fuel tax was another dishonest statement, as we all know as we feel it in our hip pocket every time we fill up our tanks. This Labor government refuses to deal with dishonesty in the parliament and dishonesty in political advertising. We on the other hand are committed to drive the reform agenda that will restore public confidence in the parliament.

This bill is the next step towards an honest parliament. The true test will be whether this Labor government is willing to step up and support it. The amendments also extend the same standards to local government elections. The Electoral Reform Bill 2010 is a joke perpetrated on this place by a joker and a stuntman. This is the member who goes from stage to stage with his one-man band. Who can remember the Big Brother gatecrash that started his career as a stuntman? There have been plenty of stunts since then, all designed to maximise his media coverage. A proposal to move all poker machines to Roma Vegas is one more recent effort, culminating yesterday in his stunt in this place that found him giving a radio interview on ABC Radio in which he was well and truly done over by the interviewer. He was arguing both sides of the argument at various times throughout the interview. We then heard a representative from Sisters inside that put paid to his argument. I will not give any more oxygen to that particular bill.

The Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill 2011 is a farce. A farce is a comedy which aims to entertain the audience by means of unlikely, extravagant and improbable situations, disguise and mistaken identity and verbal humour at varying degrees of sophistication which may include, among other things, word play. Let us look at this bill and compare it to this description—a
comedy. There is no doubt that this would be comical if it were not so absurd. There is no doubt that the author considers himself a comedian. A farce aims to entertain by means of unlikely, extravagant and improbable situations. We certainly have these features. Under ‘reasons for the bill’, the explanatory notes state—

The Bill aims to improve the integrity and public accountability of state elections. The reforms aim to limit any potential for undue influence being exercised by any one donor or lobby group in relation to an election campaign—or any perception of such influence.

I have one word to describe the dishonesty of this statement: unions. No-one in this state would ever believe that the unions do not exert undue influence in an election campaign and the unions are specifically excluded from the definition as a donor or lobby group. Indeed, the unions can work with their political arm, the Labor members of this House, and target seats as required by the political arm. If each union registers as a third party, they can spend up to $500,000 each across the state. We can see that the definition of ‘farce’ is accurate yet again in that it refers to disguise and mistaken identity. That is what the Labor Party would have us believe is not the case. However, the member for Keppel let the cat out of the bag last night when he drew the curtain back and exposed the identity of the relationship.

Finally, I turn to the word play that this tired, old Labor government uses to couch the real reason for this reform as outlined by the Leader of the Opposition earlier in the debate. After all these years this government is doing it tough. It copped a hiding during the global financial crisis. So instead of being able to rely on its own organisation to fund the election, it wants the public purse to pay for it, all the time having the unions in the wings to inject their members’ annual fees into targeted seats. So union members should make no mistake that, if this bill passes through this place, they are going to pay twice.

As Queensland residents, they are going to contribute anywhere between $26 million and $30 million—or even more perhaps—to all political campaigns instead of the current $3 million and they are going to pay half of it up front before the election even starts. As union members they are going to fund targeted union campaigns to the tune of another $11 million—a total of $37 million to $40 million from mums and dads. This tired, old Labor government is so desperate that it is prepared to hit its own union members twice. That is like a mother eating its baby. It does not care.

It is desperate, and desperate people do desperate things. Remember, it has lost Queensland’s AAA credit rating and it sold our assets to fund the huge interest bill it created on the forecast $80 billion debt. That is desperate. Those union members who are going to be hit twice by this legislation are the same ones who desperately need more hospital beds, the asbestos removed from their children’s schools and upgrades to the highways that they have to traverse in heavy traffic every day to get to work. And how much could $26 million do in the ongoing reconstruction effort?

Farce is also characterised by physical humour, the use of deliberate absurdity or nonsense, and broadly stylised performances. There is no doubt that we see plenty of that from the Attorney-General and the rest of the ministry in this desperate, tired, old government. Many farces move at a frantic pace towards the climax, often with a twist of the plot. How true is this? As the Leader of the Opposition alluded to, government members are in their last days and so the climax is upon them. By perpetrating this diabolical plot on the people of Queensland they are trying to put a twist in the plot.

In a farce the protagonist may get away with what he or she has been trying to hide at all costs, even if it is a criminal act. We can once again liken that statement to this bill and this government. It may very well get away with it because it has the numbers in this place. However, generally in a farce there is a happy ending. The government may win this battle because it has the numbers in here, but at the end of the day it has to face the people of Queensland at the next election. It will be reminded of the $26 million that it has foisted upon the residents of Queensland and it has to face its union members, who will be paying far above anything they ever imagined just so it can try to hang on to government. We will remind them that not only do they have to pay the $26 million bill; they will also be paying $11 million in union fees towards its election campaign. Finally, ‘farce’ in general tends to depict human beings as vain, irrational, venal and infantile neurotics, and that absolutely describes this tired, old Labor government.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (5.19 pm): I rise to speak in this cognate debate, and I will deal quickly with the two private members’ bills. The first one, the Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill, is an attempt to ensure that participants in elections are truthful and are required to be truthful and that if they are intentionally untruthful there are consequences. I support that. I know that the level of resentment and anger and frustration in my electorate over the broken election promises at the last election continue to increase, not subside. There is disquiet and anger about the sell-off of Queensland Rail. It was astounding at the time that it happened. I have never seen such a reaction from the unions, other than the AWU which supported the sale.

I have never seen them so angry and against the Labor government. Then there was the fuel tax issue and the promise that the fuel subsidy would remain, but then there was the backflip and the fuel subsidy was removed which hit mums and dads so hard at a time when things were already quite difficult. Again, that was something that people were angry and frustrated about. I know that the people in my electorate want candidates at elections to say what they mean, mean what they say and tell the truth, and I will be supporting that bill.
The previous speaker had some very dismissive and critical comments to make about the member for Beaudesert. I would like to deal with the content of the Electoral Reform Bill. There are five very general categories. It provides the opportunity for people to voluntarily vote, optional voting, which I do not support. I believe that voting is fundamental to our democracy. In other jurisdictions where voting is optional there is a poor voter turnout. Whilst the argument in favour of optional voting is that those who are genuinely interested will turn out to vote and those who are not interested should not anyway because it is an uninformed vote, that is a bit like saying, ‘Don’t tell the kids they have to eat their vegies when they are little. They’ll make a decision later on.’ I think compulsory voting is important, so I will not be supporting the optional voting clauses. I do support compulsory preferential voting, and I will be supporting those clauses in this bill.

The outlawing, if you like, of how-to-vote cards and signage on government property is an issue that has been around for a long time, even in local government. There were councillors who chose not to have how-to-vote cards. That usually resulted in them not being elected. The only way for how-to-vote cards and similar bunting to be effectively addressed is for it to be one in all in, and that is what this bill proposes. I do believe, however, that there has to be an indicator in the polling booths of the candidates and their selected preferences in terms of preferential voting, and that can be done with appropriate signage.

The Electoral Reform Bill 2010 requires voters to produce an ID, and I do support that. I think that there has been ample evidence of misleading information given particularly for enrolment at elections. I do not believe there are many people in Queensland of voting age who would not have a form of ID, and I do not think it would be a difficult process to install. We have licences. We have photo IDs. There are many forms of identification that people carry with them with photographs that indicate who they are.

The third bill, and the most important bill in terms of its impact and the fact that it is a contradiction in terms in this debate, is the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill 2011. I think this is one of the most offensive bills that has come to this chamber in terms of the party proposing this bill standing up and pretending and carrying on as if it is a bill that introduces transparency and accountability when in reality it is discriminatory and it is unclear in so many ways.

Mr Lucas: You get $20,000 for admin that I can’t have. That’s what it does.

Mrs Cunningham: Minister, you weren’t even at the briefing and your staff had difficulty answering our questions. It was embarrassing for them to have to answer the questions that we asked because the bill is so discriminatory. It is really the Clive Palmer bill, and it has been called that for a long time. And it is—it is the ALP’s reaction to the LNP’s backing by Clive Palmer. I think it is regrettable that this parliament has been captured by these types of issues. It is well known that the ALP is backed by the unions and they fund the ALP with huge amounts of money.

There has been comment by the LNP speakers that the unions are not caught by this bill, that they are not obligated to register as third parties in relation to this bill. I would seek the minister’s clarification on the record to ensure that the unions are required to register as third parties and that they will face those limitations and whether each union is an entity in its own right and therefore there will be a plethora of unions that can donate up to that capped amount. The ALP came to power in 1989 and ever since periodically we would hear about the Joh gerrymander. I believe this is the ALP equivalent of a gerrymander only it is a financial gerrymander. I do not think it can be put in more simple terms. It allows for parties to receive $1 million each in administrative fees upfront and $20,000 will be paid to Independents after the expenditure is made. The amounts of money that are involved are offensive, but I find the lack of ability for the community to know about this bill offensive too.

In the explanatory notes it says that the discussion paper was released in December and that the close of comment was February. I have not got the exact date that the discussion paper was released but certainly my office received it on 5 January. What were we all doing on 5 January? You were on holidays or if you were a parent you had your kids at home. You may have had family around. Were you looking to see if there was any literature from the Queensland government about making the community pay for election campaigns? No.

The closing date for submissions, if I remember correctly, was 17 February, just after the kids went back to school. There were nine submissions. I made a submission, so there are eight other people in the entire state of Queensland who made a submission to that discussion paper. Was that low number because of a lack of interest? Not at all. It was because of a lack of knowledge. Everyone I have spoken to in relation to the proposal in this bill for public funding of election campaigns have been mortified, angered and offended and they do not support it. And that is the fundamental reason that I will not support it. An LNP member was speaking earlier and the member for Everton, I believe, interjected and said, ‘So you won’t be taking your money?’ That is not even a rhetorical question.

Debate, on motion of Mrs Cunningham, adjourned.
Mr FOLEY (Maryborough—Ind) (5.30 pm): I move—

That this House calls on the state government to prioritise funding for state controlled roads for rural and regional Queensland in this year’s budget.

Those of us on both sides of the House who are regional members see massive amounts of money spent in Brisbane as the capital city. Every time we blink there is another tunnel or road being built. In light of that sort of expenditure, we are really just looking for basic repairs to roads in our areas. From discussions I had with the minister earlier today it is clear that roads right across Queensland have been damaged by floods and different weather events. Obviously, every member here faces that situation. So many members, particularly on this side of the House, have had whole sections of roads destroyed. We are not just talking about potholes.

I think we can clearly say that roads are the key to the vibrancy and economic development of our local communities. Without roads—pardon the pun—we go nowhere. They are the primary mode of transport for not only business but also consumers. They provide access for residents to necessary facilities such as schools, shops, churches, sporting fields and cetera. They also provide the means for people to travel and enjoy the highlights of a region. Just recently we have heard the Premier urging people to come and visit Queensland. That is pretty hard to do without good roads. So many of the places that we are being urged to visit are holiday places in regional and rural Queensland.

For these reasons, and many more, it is obvious that roads are the most important and vital pieces of infrastructure in regional and rural communities. That is why I have moved this motion this evening. This motion calls on the government to prioritise funding for roads within its control in this year’s budget. We are not talking about pie-in-the-sky figures in 2014 or some time down the track; we are talking about a timely injection of money. Obviously a lot of that will need to be gained from the federal government. We ask that the government not just spend all the dollars in the south-east corner but that it move through and repair roads in rural locations.

Earlier today we had some debate about the Bruce Highway. I share many of the concerns raised about that highway as I, like a lot of members, have a seat which is substantially traversed by the Bruce Highway. But tonight I want to focus on roads under the auspices of the state because that is something this government has direct control over. It cannot palm that responsibility off to another level of government. We clearly have a situation where our constituents often do not clearly understand the difference between state, federal and local government controlled roads. All they know is that they have been out driving and their wheel alignment needs fixing because they drove into a pothole the size of France.

I turn to some of the roads that are a real problem in my electorate. The Cooloola Coast Road—and I have spoken to the minister on numerous occasions about this particular road—is the most treacherous and dangerous in my electorate. The road joins the Boonaroo Road from Maryborough to Rainbow Beach and Tin Can Bay. It is also a quick way to get to Gympie. That is a very heavily used road. It is also used regularly by trucks as well as commuters travelling from Maryborough to Gympie as an alternative to the Bruce Highway. So often the Bruce Highway is cut because of road accidents, trucks losing loads and so forth. It is also used a lot by tourists travelling from Maryborough to Rainbow Beach.

There are lots of motorbike riders who use that road. It is a beautiful, scenic drive between Maryborough and Rainbow Beach through some of the pine forests. It is a very popular road for motorcyclists, I know a number of motorcyclists, being one myself, who have done severe damage to their motorcycles because of the condition of that road. There have been a number of accidents as well.

The road is in an appalling condition and is littered with potholes. It is rough. It is far too narrow. It has numerous unofficial exits into pine forests which are used regularly to this day by logging trucks and deer. What that means is that vehicles following them have no alternative if the truck pulls off quickly but to swerve into the oncoming lane to go around the truck. That is why it is a very dangerous road. It needs widening as well as fixing.

I have been approached about this issue by many constituents who have suffered tremendous damage to their vehicles in trying to traverse this road. One particular gentleman who is a semi-trailer driver for a local transport company was saying that the company he works for does as many as 30 semi-trailer loads a day on that road. He advised me recently that management has mandated that drivers cannot use the Cooloola Coast Road because it has become far too dangerous. This decision came after one truck lost its power steering because the steering pump was destroyed because of the road conditions.
The trucks also apparently have very regular tyre blow-outs. As members know, it can be extremely dangerous if a truck is on a skinny, two-lane road and it has a tyre blow-out. There is nowhere for them to go. In some parts this road is so narrow that trucks have their right tyres on the centre line and their left tyres in the gravel. That puts it into perspective. There is also a section of the road that deteriorates to such an extent whenever we have rain that Main Roads officers have to wind the speed limit back to 40 kilometres an hour. Apparently these temporary 40-kilometre-an-hour signs blow over.

Persons who are not familiar with the road continue to drive to the normal speed limit and consequently come to grief. My constituent has seen numerous car rollover accidents because of this in his role as a truck driver. As a result, truck drivers have to drive back around through Maryborough and through the heart of Gympie en route to Brisbane because they cannot use that road. The diversion takes an extra 20 minutes to half an hour. That is probably the most pressing example in my electorate of poor roads costing businesses and ultimately the consumer as they pass that cost on. The cycle continues.

I now turn to the Maryborough-Hervey Bay Road, which, unsurprisingly, connects Maryborough to Hervey Bay.

Mrs Pratt: Are you sure?

Mr FOLEY: Last time I checked. I take the interjection from the member for Nanango, who has informed me that that must be so. The road is critically important to tourism as it is the gateway not only to Hervey Bay but also to Fraser Island. Many residents live in Hervey Bay and drive to Maryborough daily for work and vice versa. I have often spoken in this House about the need for a light rail link between the two cities to take some of the traffic off that road. I must say in fairness to the government that there has been a great deal of money spent on the Maryborough-Hervey Bay Road in recent times. A major roundabout has been built and is now being finished off. Its completion has been held up due to bad weather.

I acknowledge current efforts by the government with regard to this road, but today I am calling for that road to be upgraded to a four-lane motorway with two permanent lanes running in each direction. That would do wonders for the Fraser Coast and my electorate and cater for the future predicted growth of the area, in particular Maryborough because it is the industrial hub. We have lots of people who are choosing to live at the bay because they like the seaside but find employment in Maryborough.

I will also mention a proposal from my business community to construct a road from the Bruce Highway north of Maryborough through to the previously mentioned Maryborough-Hervey Bay Road. That alone would take an enormous amount of traffic, including semitrailers and buses that currently travel through Maryborough en route to Hervey Bay. This would make our local streets through town safer and less congested and make the trip a lot quicker and more convenient for commercial and tourist traffic.

I am a realistic member, as most people would know. I do not believe that money grows on trees. It would be nice if it did. I would be absolutely delighted if money for this proposal or at least the planning for it were included in the next budget. I would urge the minister again to pay very rapid attention to the Cooloola Coast Road and also finish off the Maryborough-Hervey Bay Road. With those remarks, I commend this motion to the House.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (5.39 pm): I rise to second the motion. Roads are the lifeblood of this state. Many years ago, a lot of our freight was carried on the rail and the road was relieved of that pressure but, more and more, Queensland Rail and now Queensland National are refusing to take anything other than bulk cargo. We just had an incident where containers were stopped for a short period. Much of the material that needs to be transported from Brisbane to Gladstone now has to go by road and our roads are suffering as a result. I do not envy the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Main Roads as they try to fund our roads.

I intend to raise some priorities in my electorate tonight that are critically important. We have growth in the electorate of Gladstone that is unprecedented. Many ministers have talked about the LNG industry in Gladstone. It is incumbent on this government as well as the federal government and the companies to invest in infrastructure. The companies are doing it; the state government is not.

One of the most pressured intersections in the electorate of Gladstone is the Kin Kora roundabout. At the last traffic count at the end of last year, 27,000 cars a day were using that roundabout. In Brisbane terms, that may not be a lot; in Gladstone terms, it results in queuing for half a kilometre and more and wait times that are unacceptable for a regional centre of our size. Two options have been looked at for Kin Kora: one is lights, a signalled intersection, and the other is an overpass. I am advised by departmental officers that signals will probably be installed and that they have a 20-year life. I am told that an overpass would have a 25-year life. I can say overwhelmingly that my community would prefer an overpass as they see that as a longer-term option. Of all the roadworks that are necessary in the electorate of Gladstone, the Kin Kora roundabout would be the most pressured and the one that causes the community the greatest amount of heartache.
The Calliope Crossroads has been funded by the federal government, with money promised in a couple of federal elections. They have given $50 million for detailed planning, acquisitions, et cetera, but it is a $150 million job and it is also critical. The queuing there of an afternoon now is up to a kilometre in length. On weekends when there are functions at the historical village, the queuing can be almost two kilometres long. The problem is not only the fact that people are waiting; the problem is that people are tempted to do unsafe things and that is a real risk at the Calliope Crossroads.

I commend the state government for its funding of the Kirkwood Road roundabout at the Benaraby Road end, with $7.5 million being given to the Gladstone Regional Council for that work to commence. The design has been done. The Dawson Highway connection is an offset intersection and will need to be upgraded once that full connection is done. Having dual lanes in the final section of Philip Street is a high priority. I would commend the minister to look into that final section so that all of Philip Street can be dual lanes. The Benaraby intersection at the Bruce Highway is also a priority. The issue of the Benaraby intersection has been around since I was on the council, and it has been very difficult to get the state government to prioritise it.

Again, I raise the issue of the industrial development that is occurring. The pipeline from the Surat Basin to Gladstone will require pipes. For one of the companies involved, those pipes have landed in Gladstone. Each semitrailer takes four pipes, so members can imagine the truck movements that will be required to get those pipes out to where they have to be laid.

This is an issue of not only convenience to the community but also safety. I believe the community of Gladstone deserves to see not only the LNG companies and the federal government investing in infrastructure in Gladstone; this state government must also put their hands in their pocket now and get money into infrastructure because the state government will reap huge amounts of royalties which should be reinvested in the community of Queensland. These are the priority road projects that require urgent funding. There is other less critical road infrastructure that is required, but I would ask the minister to consider Kin Kora roundabout as a priority.

Hon. CA WALLACE (Thuringowa—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Fisheries and Marine Infrastructure) (5.44 pm): I move—

That after the word ‘Queensland’ the following words be inserted: ‘in particular those affected by natural disasters.’

By its very nature, the floor of this parliament is often a combative place. It is a place where important proposals are put up for debate and counterarguments are made. More than any other place in Queensland, this chamber—which is no bigger than a tennis court—is a marketplace of ideas. But sometimes an honourable member proposes a motion that demands universal support from the floor of this House. This motion—and, in acknowledgement of that, the motion from the member for Maryborough—will receive the support of this House. I spoke to him earlier and he accepts this amendment we have put forward tonight. It is an acceptance that the people of regional Queensland deserve better roads and it is something that I as main roads minister fight for every day of the week.

I am proud to be main roads minister here in Queensland, which is a great state. Down south, if you are a roads minister in New South Wales or Victoria, you may upgrade roads in Melbourne or Sydney but very rarely do you get into the regional areas, but we do that in Queensland and we do that because it counts. In Queensland, we value our regions, and our investment in roads proves it.

Queensland is the most decentralised state in Australia and has the largest state controlled road network at 33,000 kilometres, which represents 25 per cent of the total major road network across Australia. In recognition of the Queensland government’s commitment to rural and regional Queensland, a significant funding pool is provided for roads outside the south-east corner, and so it should be. A total of $1.6 billion is being spent in 2010-11 on roads in rural and regional Queensland, and this is 46 per cent of the total road funding allocation, but the fact is that 34 per cent of the Queensland population live outside South-East Queensland. So 34 per cent of the people live outside South-East Queensland yet 46 per cent of the road funding is spent on that population—and so it should be.

Let us look at the $1.6 billion we are spending on roads in rural and regional Queensland—and that figure does not even take into account the $2.5 billion we will spend across the state on repairs after this flooding event—and compare it with what some of the other states are spending. Let us look at Victoria, for instance. Our $1.6 billion for rural and regional roads is three times the size of Victoria’s entire roads budget. If anyone ever comes to you and says that they want us to spend what they spend in Victoria, you need to say, ‘No. I won’t stand for it because I won’t see our roads budget cut.’

Let us look at what happened when the tories were last in power in this place. What was their road budget?

Mr Cripps: Oh!

Mr WALLACE: He interjects, but I can say that all the tories spent on roads was $999 million and, of that, $1 in every $5 was spent on the road between here and the Gold Coast. That is a truly shocking record.
I am a Home Hill boy, proudly bred. I know how important it is to continue to spend money on roads in regional Queensland. I talked about this in this place this morning. I talked about the Townsville Port Access Road. I talked about how important it is that we spend money in Mackay, Emerald, Cairns and Winton. I talked about how important it is that we upgrade the Bruce, the Warrego, the New England, the Capricorn and the Dawson. I am in there fighting every day of the week for rural and regional roads, as members on this side of the House are. Do not forget that ‘Claytons’ Campbell admitted that he only drove the Bruce Highway a quarter of a century ago.

We know that more needs to be done and that is why we are fighting for further funds. Just look at our massive $272 million maintenance and preservation program. A huge 62 per cent of that will be spent outside the South-East Queensland area. What is that going to be spent on? That money will go towards the following: $6 million to continue the $12.3 million project to repair, widen and strengthen the Capricorn Highway; $2.5 to commence the $5.8 million project on the Burnett Highway; $2.2 million to commence the $3.9 million project to widen and strengthen the Carnarvon Highway; and $2.59 million on the Maryborough-Biggenden Road.

I take the comments from the members for Maryborough and Gladstone. They are well-considered comments from people who drive in their electorates regularly. They know the importance of roads to the people in rural and regional Queensland, and we on this side of the House will not desert them. Unlike ‘Claytons’ Campbell, I drove the Bruce over Easter; I drove it up and back. I know what the problems are and I will continue to deliver because, like Oliver Twist, I want more for our roads. I support your motion.

Mrs KIERNAN (Mount Isa—ALP) (5.49 pm): It is my pleasure to second the amendment moved by the Minister for Main Roads and member for Thuringowa in North Queensland. I commend the member for Maryborough for putting forward this motion for debate this evening. I would like to add to this debate by concentrating on the electorate of Mount Isa, which, I have to say—

Mr Watt interjected.

Mrs KIERNAN: It is a great part of the world. My electorate covers a third of the state. It has a very extensive state controlled road network and it also incorporates three Main Roads districts. So I have a very real and vested interest in the roads in my electorate.

I have a keen awareness of the roads in my electorate—along with, I would have to say, one of the best ministers for Main Roads that we have had. I can attest to the fact that the Minister for Main Roads has travelled on many not only state controlled roads but also most definitely other roads in my electorate that councils want to bring to his attention. So I thank him for that.

I work very closely with the 14 councils in my electorate, Main Roads and RoadTek to keep up to date with what is happening in my electorate, particularly with the road network. Back in 2009, I think it was, the member for Gregory and I were talking about shared roads in our part of the world. We invited the minister and representatives of the nine adjoining shires that border the Winton shire to a meeting down there. We spent a day and a night working with those councils. As a consequence, something like $100 million is being invested in the Gregory Developmental Road.

I also want to put in a plug for regional roads groups, which I know operate right across the state—in particular the ones that operate in my electorate. These roads groups are made up of mayors, councillors, council engineers, Main Roads managers and Main Roads technical people. I think they are one of the success stories of a consultative process.

Mr Wallace: Hear, hear!

Mrs KIERNAN: I take that interjection from the minister. They are great groups, particularly in my part of the world where the councils are located. In fact, it is not us telling councils or local government areas what they want; they determine and prioritise. It is one of the best consortiums and working groups that you could ever hope to work with.

I want to touch on the issue of funding. I really understand the sentiments of the member for Maryborough and the member for Gladstone. We also have to ensure that as we are repairing roads we improve our road network. In my electorate we are pretty much doing that. For instance, in 2009 during the floods in my electorate over $100 million worth of road infrastructure was damaged. That is the estimate. In the Carpentaria shire alone there was $23 million worth of damage. Guess what? This year—2011—they are backing up again with their best guessimate of $10 million in damages on state controlled roads and $15 million on local roads.

Recently we announced $5 million for the Corduroy crossing, which is going to alleviate some of the pressure on the folk in Karumba. That is a big fishing area and a lot of commerce can get cut off. So we are also providing $7 million for sealing the Wills Developmental Road. Again, these roads are the lifeblood of the area. We have put $20 million into the Hann Highway—another inland road. Recently, the minister again—I think he lives in my electorate—was out in Winton—

Mr Wallace interjected.
Mrs KIERNAN: A second home. The minister met with Western Queensland members of local government. I table the media release from that meeting.

Tabled paper: Copy of an article from the Longreach Leader, dated 21 April 2011, titled ‘Roads Minister brings cheque book to WQLGA conference’ [4332].

At that meeting there was a further announcement of $23 million for roads. I have to say that in my electorate roads also mean jobs—jobs for local workers and local contractors. Certainly, the Mount Isa electorate appreciates all of the dollars that we get.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (5.54 pm): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise to speak to the motion. I recognise the amendment that the minister has moved. It is great that for the next hour we are as one for all Queensland, standing up and trying to make sure that our roads are properly recognised in the budget. In less than one month in this place the Treasurer will produce a document just like this. He will make a budget speech and he will have Service Delivery Statements. In a document just like this we will see Main Roads recognised. In those documents we will see a whole range of headings—road system planning, cost-effective projects—and, most importantly, we will see many roads in rural and regional Queensland and also in South-East Queensland given priority and also, I hope, funded properly.

In my area there are many roads. Whilst we can come in here and put forward our wish list, I believe that we also need to put forward some information to the government that we believe can assist it in finding those important dollars to fund the very roads that are important in Queensland. I can flag for the government a number of areas in my part of Queensland that I think can generate significant new income to help meet the costs of these new road projects.

I refer to the Mary Valley. It was not so long ago that a former state government spent a lot of money in buying prime agricultural land in the Mary Valley to build the proposed Traveston Dam. Much of that land is not being used to its full potential. At some stage much of that land will come on the market. My proposal to the government is to bring forward the sale of that land. I propose that the government put that land on the market now to put some money into the coffers so that we can help meet the costs of funding many road projects throughout Queensland. More importantly, let us make sure that a proper water licence goes with the land when it is sold so that that land can perhaps become the future food bowl for South-East Queensland and beyond. We have an amazing opportunity in the Mary Valley. I am saying to the government that we can show how it can generate significant money. Let us put the land on the market, put the water licences back on the market and see this land reach its potential. Unfortunately, at the moment a lot of the land is wasted, abandoned and derelict.

Another proposal that I think could save significant dollars for our bottom line is to bring in a local government regulation to allow a second house to be built on a block of land so that we can see grandma and grandad—the extended family—live side by side to take the pressure off our nursing homes and our retirement villages. Let us allow the extended family to live as one so that we have the younger members of an extended family supporting the older members of that extended family, be they an uncle or an aunt. There is no reason we cannot have two houses on one block of land. State and local government red tape stops that. I believe that if the government supported this proposal we would see significant savings on the bottom line in a whole range of other state government departments.

I now turn to a number of roads in my area of the Sunshine Coast. First up I flag the Nambour Connection Road and call for traffic lights at the very important intersection of the Nambour Connection Road and Blackall Street at Woombye. I note that the minister is in the House. I thank him for travelling to the Sunshine Coast earlier this year to meet with the community at this very location, where he had provided a lot of money to install overhead streetlights. I understand that at the moment traffic counters are there to see whether we can build a case for a set of traffic lights at that location in the future. I look forward to inviting the minister back to the Sunshine Coast, and especially to this intersection—

Mr Wallace: Will we go back to the cafe?

Mr WELLINGTON: I would love to invite the minister back to the cafe to meet with the members of my community.

I now raise the issue of the National Highway. The Bruce Highway has been mentioned. That highway runs right through the Sunshine Coast, including through my electorate. I refer to the Cooroy-Curra section of that highway. Specifically, I flag a proposed intersection just north of the Cudgerie community. I know that the minister and the department have been working hard on trying to get this intersection prioritised and funded, but I flag it now in the lead-up to the budget. We need to get this intersection prioritised for the peace of mind of the members of the Cudgerie community.

The Nambour Mapleton Road is another important road that needs ongoing work. I understand that early next year $6.5 million will be allocated to upgrade part of that road—from Willandra Place to Mapleton. But I use this opportunity to again raise the matter that we need further funding to be allocated to not only construct an overtaking lane on the final climb of the road to Mapleton but also continue upgrading the remainder of that road.
We recently saw $7 million allocated to the final stages of Obi Obi Road because of the land slip due to the natural disaster the minister referred to. Parts of Obi Obi Road are gravel. We need the state government to come to the table and allocate money to improve the safety of that gravel road. The Kenilworth-Eumundi Road is a high volume haulage route.

(Time expired)

Mr Hoolihan (Keppel—ALP) (6.00 pm): I am pleased to speak in support of this motion. I was pleased that the member for Maryborough accepted the amendment as proposed by the minister. The opportunity to speak about roads is uppermost in the mind of every person in this House. I think I should preface my comments by making one point: the member for Maryborough mentioned that we do not want to concentrate on the Bruce Highway, we want to deal with regional roads. That is quite true. But under the Howard government there was no funding given to the Bruce Highway so that the state was therefore required to spend money on maintaining a Commonwealth road. It diverted moneys from state roads to have to meet the obligations of federal road funding.

Mr Foley: Shameful.

Mr Hoolihan: I take that interjection, it is shameful. I have driven the Maryborough-Hervey Bay Road. I have a sister and brother-in-law who live in the area. It is quite a bad road. Funding for that road has had to be put into the major highways because there was nothing that came out of the feds. In my region the Bruce Highway forms the western boundary of my electorate with Mirani in part and with Rockhampton. During the time that we got nothing from the feds, there was a total of around $45 million spent on regional roads. The Rockhampton-Emu Park Road received $18 million, the Kinka link road which joins Yeppoon and Emu Park received $10 million and the Yeppoon western bypass received $16 million. The Yeppoon western bypass was vitally necessary and at that stage the original road, Neil’s Road, was, in fact, a council road which we built and then exchanged with the council. That road is necessary to get pineapples and rare fruits from the northern areas around Yeppoon.

There is currently $1.38 million being spent on the Stoney Creek Bridge on the Yeppoon-Byfield Road. That is for a total of $4.07 million. There is a total cost of $10 million for a grade separated crossing over the Blackwater rail line on the Capricorn Highway. People might say that the Capricorn Highway is not in the electorate of Keppel, but about 20 per cent of the working people in my electorate work in the mining area and travel the Capricorn Highway four days on four days off. So the value and the quality of the road on which they drive really matters to me.

Mr Wallace: It is a very important overpass.

Mr Hoolihan: I take the minister’s interjection. It is a very important overpass because it will open up the Gracemere-Stanwell industrial corridor. There is $5 million in total for a Yeppen Flood Plain planning study, but as part of that there is currently scoping and design work in relation to the flood proofing of the Bruce Highway by upgrading Yeppen Crossing which is to the south of Rockhampton. That involves the electorates of Mirani and Rockhampton. It will make access to the north a lot better when the Fitzroy River does not cut the road south of Rockhampton.

The amount of $803,000 has been allocated for the installation of traffic signals on state roads in the Keppel part of Rockhampton. There is a variety of other funding for regional roads. In Gracemere $400,000 for Capricorn Street and Charles Crescent; $140,000 for Johnson Road; $75,000 for a culvert at Marmor. From the Rudd government, now the Gillard government, there has been federal funding to upgrade the safety of the Bruce Highway, Rockhampton to St Lawrence—upgrading traffic signals, line marking and anti-skid surfacing; $200,000 for concept planning on the Bruce Highway, Benaraby to Rockhampton, south of Rockhampton. The member for Gladstone is aware that this area of road is quite—

Mrs Cunningham: Feral.

Mr Hoolihan: I will take that interjection also. It is feral and does lead to substantial accidents. There is also federal funding for pedestrian and cycle facilities. We are prioritising our roads. There may well need to be an increase—

(Time expired)

Mr McLindon (Beaudesert—TQP) (6.05 pm): It is great to see that we can be one big happy factional family and support this, no doubt unanimously. The intent of this motion is fantastic because it encapsulates the whole of Queensland. What is important, regardless of our endorsing of this motion, is that action speaks louder than words. We only have to look back at the last 10 or so years in Queensland to see what has and has not happened on both the state and federal front. We have seen limited funding for the Bruce Highway in the federal budget. We have had some 500 floods over the Bruce Highway in the last two years. It has been identified. I take note of the government’s amendment to include in particular roads that are flood effected by natural disasters. That is a very rational amendment that we support. But we have to look at every single facet. At the end of the day it is decentralisation that will support a motion such as the one before the House tonight.
Decentralisation will empower the communities that need this infrastructure regardless of the fact that 61 of the 89 seats are in South-East Queensland. It is bottom heavy in the most decentralised state. These communities have been folding over time, especially their infrastructure. I was driving in my Combi up for the coal seam gas moratorium that we are calling for, that neither the government nor the opposition are supporting, and the roads are so bad out Chinchilla way that it shook my engine around and it has cost me $3,500. It is a $66 billion industry and they could not even get the roads right for the local community.

Mr Shine: Were you arrested out there?

Mr McLINDON: I will take that interjection. No, I was not arrested out there. I was doing everything I could not to get arrested, member for Toowoomba North. Bob Irwin took one for the team.

A government member: He is a good man.

Mr McLINDON: Yes, he is a very good man. It is unfortunate when people have to go to those extremes to call for a moratorium on coal seam gas and, of course, to link in to the bill, the roads that are not being provided out there. Decentralisation is the absolute answer to the motion before this House. How will we do that? By looking at the core parliamentary structure and processes in this House which is undoubtedly—I will say it a million times between now and the state election—the reinstatement of the upper house. A terrible injustice occurred almost 90 years ago when it was ripped out of the democratic process in Queensland. We have become the least accountable state in Australia. That is connected to why our roads are so poor.

I thank the minister for coming out to the good electorate of Beaudesert and meeting with me at Cafe 29 for coffee. I thank him for his time and effort. No doubt Mr Speaker has seen the Mount Lindesay Highway being upgraded on his patch. I hope it continues in the Beaudesert patch. That is making progress in the second fastest growing region in South-East Queensland. We also need to realise that it is not just roads that will be the answer to the problem.

In the 50-year plan we need to look at passenger rail. That will take a lot of cars off the road. We have to look at planning in terms of moped lanes. I was laughed at by the LNP when I mentioned this, but it is true. There has been a 1,000 per cent increase in mopeds in the last 10 years. This is the way of the future. With the cost of petrol and registration soaring through the roof, it is good not only for the environment but also for the hip pocket.

We have to start looking at the big picture. We have to have a 50-year vision with a fast-speed high-track monorail from the Gold Coast all the way to the Sunshine Coast. This is the way of the future. It is not just roads. Decentralisation is the answer. Can the opposition come up with $700 million for a Clem7? No, it cannot. That is centralisation. That is attracting more traffic on traffic. That is not the answer. Can members imagine what $3 billion could have done for Townsville, Cairns, Rockhampton, Mackay, Gladstone or for anywhere in rural and regional Queensland? If one looks at the Newman administration under the BCC, it decided to centralise on top of centralise.

The LNP is not a party for rural and regional Queensland. It has demonstrated that in opposition and it will sure as hell demonstrate that in government, which is why The Queensland Party exists. We want to bring back the upper house to implement a decentralisation strategy across this state, because when you distribute the power you distribute the wealth. Until such an equation is implemented in this parliamentary system, we will continue to get what we have always got.

The Beaudesert electorate has 874 kilometres of unsealed roads and 32 bridges that are in dire need of construction or reconstruction. That will not happen under the current regime. The good news is that the good mayor of the Scenic Rim has decided to stay on and fix the roads. He does not want to throw his hat into the ring and go up against me, because he knows that I am standing in this parliament to fight for the good people of Beaudesert.

Why would you want to run a good man against a good man? That is ridiculous! Why can we not work together as one big happy factional family? It is great news for the people of Beaudesert that they will have a strong voice in the parliament that, without fear or favour, can work alongside the Scenic Rim Regional Council to get the best bang per dollar for all of the good people of Beaudesert.

Mr O’BRIEN (Cook—ALP) (6.10 pm): It is a great pleasure to rise in support of the motion before the House and the amendment moved by the minister. I congratulate the member for Maryborough for his timely motion that comes before the House. It is timely because the greatest threat to regional roads has just been unleashed on Queensland. The proof is already there that 'Claytons' Campbell will not put money into regional and remote roads. We have the evidence.

Recently—he is not the member for anything, so whatever he is—’Claytons’ Campbell travelled to Far North Queensland, North Queensland and parts of Western Queensland. While there he was asked what commitments he would give to local roads and local infrastructure. Do members know what he said? He said he could not promise a single cent—not a brass razzoo, not a zack, zip, nothing. As soon as he got back to Brisbane, as soon as the wheels of the plane touched down in Brisbane, he promised $250 million for flyovers at a couple of rail crossings in Brisbane.
While he is travelling through regional and rural Queensland he cannot promise a cent. He said he was not there to make any promises, but as soon as he got back to Brisbane he put $250 million on the table for a couple of rail crossings. Therefore, the greatest threat to regional and remote roads is already out there. Already he has been out there saying that there will be no money spent in regional and rural Queensland, but as soon as he got back to Brisbane $250 million magically appears. While Campbell Newman cannot make any promises for regional and remote Queensland on roads, this government is getting on with the job of building roads in the most remote parts of Queensland and in some of the toughest conditions. On many previous occasions I have lectured this parliament on the state of the Peninsula Development Road.

Mr Watt: Do it again.

Mr O’BRIEN: I know the member for Everton, in particular, looks forward with great anticipation and excitement to my updates on the Peninsula Development Road. He is always stopping me in the halls to ask if there is anything that he can do to assist my campaign for better services. I say this to the member for Everton: do not worry because we have a very good minister who has put over $15 million into the Peninsula Development Road this year. That has been matched by the Commonwealth government. After years of neglect by the federal government, finally we have an ALP government in Canberra that is putting money into the most regional and remote road in this state. That will have great benefits.

This year we will finish bridges over Ruth Creek and Carols Crossing on the road to Laura. That will include some sealing of the approaches and some additional sealing as well. We will come within just kilometres of having the road fully bitumen sealed to Laura. Prior to this government coming into office, that was just a dream. I can now foresee a time, within the next 12 to 18 months, when that road will be fully bitumen sealed to Laura and we will go on from there. Other works are being done on other parts of that road. People say that it is in the best condition that it has ever been in. This year it has been hammered by Cyclone Yasi and the extraordinary wet season that we have had. However, because of the work that has been done in a sustained and systematic way over the past five to six years in particular, it has come up well. Drivers who drive that road regularly say that it is in the best condition that it has ever been in.

This government is not just constructing the Peninsula Development Road. This year we have put an additional $3 million into the Kennedy Highway between Atherton and Cairns to upgrade the road and widen the shoulders. Just the other day we announced additional millions of dollars for the Captain Cook Highway to improve safety on that road, and that money has been very well received. That road is one of the most beautiful and scenic roads in Australia. It is up there with the Great Ocean Road in Victoria. Each year a lot of tourist traffic traverses that road. It is a difficult road and we need to ensure that safety is paramount. In the next few years we will be spending millions of additional dollars on that road.

Mr Wallace interjected.

Mr O’BRIEN: I take the interjection from the minister. I know he has taken a keen personal interest in the road to Chillagoe. This year an additional $1 million will be provided for bitumen sealing. We will be building a crossing over the Chillagoe Creek to improve access for kids travelling to school, as well as local traffic and traffic travelling to and from the mine. People have been getting caught there. It is a dangerous crossing, but $1 million has been committed to improving that crossing. It is part of our commitment to regional and remote Queensland to build and improve services for Queenslanders wherever they live while those opposite cannot promise a single additional cent for regional and remote Queensland.

(Time expired)

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (6.15 pm): I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Maryborough—

That this House calls on the state government to prioritise funding for state controlled roads for rural and regional Queensland in this year’s budget.

I am pleased to support the minister’s amendment, which adds, ’in particular for roads affected by natural disasters’. I have no problem with any of that.

We must recognise that the natural disasters that have confronted Queensland in the first few months of this year have had a huge impact on infrastructure. It has been said that only seven or eight electorates were not impacted in some way by the disasters. I believe that repairing road damage will contribute to the majority of all works that will need to be done over the next few years, and it will take a few years. These things will not be rectified in a day. The truth is that most councils are happy with the way the work is proceeding, but there is so much of it that it is very difficult to prioritise. Again I thank the government, because its people came very quickly to the South Burnett and assessed the damage and the work that needed to be done. One of the major problems involves the Blackbutt Range. We thank the minister for the work that is going on there. What everybody is keen to know is this: now that all of the equipment is there, and we know that there is a lot of equipment there, will the minister approve the building of an overtaking lane up and down the range?
Mr Wallace: We will see what we can do.

Mrs PRATT: I take that interjection. I look forward to that. It would be a shame to have all of that equipment there and not rebuild the road to a 50-year standard.

Mrs Cunningham interjected.

Mrs PRATT: The minister can see that tonight we will all be plugging very strongly for our areas. Everybody who has the opportunity to speak tonight will do that.

I was talking about the road damage in the electorate. The South Burnett Regional Council is facing a $140 million bill to repair local government roads and the cost for state government roads is estimated to be $150 million-plus. That equates to a lot of work. The council has raised with me the issue of day labour costs, which is a huge issue for all of the western councils. As most would be aware, with natural disaster relief and recovery arrangements it used to be that day labour costs for repairing this kind of damage were recoverable. I ask the minister to correct me if I am wrong, but I believe that that all changed in 2009.

Mr Wallace: No real changes but more policing, if you like. But, yes, that is correct.

Mrs PRATT: Basically, the council told me that in 2009 the state government changed the interpretation and no longer allowed ordinary day labour costs as claimable. The minister can correct that if he needs to. Looking at the South Burnett Regional Council alone, if it has to rely on its own labour, for the next seven years every penny that it has for roads will be spent and it would be back to square one. That needs to be clarified. I know the Deputy Premier was in Kingaroy recently and he said that he would look into that, so I am hoping that he will.

One thing that we need to recognise about some rural and regional areas, particularly in the South Burnett and the Brisbane Valley areas, is that there are no rail services whatsoever. Therefore, all the trucks and services delivering goods west and north-west must travel the roads. There is an enormous number of trucks on the road. It is particularly evident at the moment on the range road when we have to wait for half an hour and the line of trucks is enormous. We need to concentrate on that.

This is a very appropriate motion. Everybody can agree that there is a need for it. We look forward to seeing extra money in the state budget this year and hopefully in years to come not only to help with the flood recovery but also to fund all future works. We must build our road infrastructure for the future because roads are the veins of the rural areas of Queensland. They help to keep everyone in touch. Some communities only have one function a year and if their roads are out of service they will have no funds coming to that area because nobody will come if they cannot traverse the roads easily. We need to address that. As I have said before, for every dollar that comes to the bush they receive $5 worth. It is a good investment.

(Time expired)

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (6.20 pm): I, too, congratulate the member for Maryborough on this very good motion. It is a tremendous chance for us to put before the House the marvellous things that are happening in terms of road funding in regional Queensland. The facts are that regional Queensland roads are having a motza spent on them by the federal government and by the state government, although that is not for happy reasons entirely. If we had not had the floods and the cyclone, of course, there would not have been the need for the huge expenditure to fix the roads that have been damaged by our disasters this past summer.

As a regional member I have been particularly pleased—and I congratulate Minister Albanese and Treasurer Swan as well as our minister and Treasurer—with the recognition that simply fixing up the roads post flood or post cyclone is not good enough. Taking advantage of the dreadful opportunity, as it were, and improving the roads—better flood proofing them, better disaster proofing them, doing some works that needed doing that are ancillary to that roadwork—will benefit the communities in the long term. We are having a motza spent on our roads. In the Far North our wet season was so heavy and Yasi did so much damage that for once I certainly cannot suggest that Far North Queensland is not getting its fair share.

I do not particularly want to talk about those roads that have been fixed up or are being fixed up due to the disasters. I do want to put on the record that our minister for roads at the state level has been quietly—others might say not so quietly—getting on with the major intersection works and other roadworks that are required on state controlled roads in Cairns and nearby areas. There is a major intersection in Cairns that needs assistance with regard to pedestrians and requires a huge fix-up. I am pleased to say that the minister’s department is part way through that work and that more money has been allocated for that. I am pleased to say that a lot of work is already occurring on the road between Cairns and Port Douglas and there is more money for further work on that road which goes through not only my electorate but also the electorates of Barron River and Cook. There is more money to improve the western bypass in Cairns, which is a commuter road for people from the northern beaches as well as from Cairns’ western suburbs. It is used every day of the week and on the weekend as well.
We really appreciate that good work being done up north. We need the roadwork. What would happen, however, if there was a change of government next year and former Lord Mayor Newman took over the cash in the till? What would he be spending money on in Cairns? Nothing! He came to Cairns and he said, ‘I don’t know about any roads projects. No commitments. I don’t know whether you need an entertainment precinct. I’m not committing to that. I don’t know about this cruise shipping and dredging of the inlet. I’m not committing to that.’ To add insult to injury, he then referred to the electorate of Mulgrave as ‘Musgrave’, which really convinced us that he cared deeply about us! After he left town there was a bit of a vox pop conducted by the Cairns Post. People were asked, ‘What did you think of Campbell Newman?’ One of the people who responded said, ‘Is he the bloke that — wasn’t he in movies? He’s got a salad dressing or something in his name.’ He is nobody up north and he is going to stay nobody.

He will not do the sorts of things Craig Wallace is doing for us. It is because he comes from the regions that he understands regional roads and their priority. As a psychologist I worry a bit about Craig Wallace. He is such a good roads minister. I think that is because every morning he gets up and he thinks, ‘We’re at point A and we’re going to have a road, and it’s going to be a good road all the way through to point B.’ I even suspect that he dreams at night about roads—regional roads—in Queensland. There are more exciting things to dream about. He is such a good roads minister. I thank him sincerely.

I let people in the House know that he intends to spend some time in Cairns and look more closely at the future needs of the region of Far North Queensland. So it is not just these local projects that are underway and it is not just next year; it is the long term that our state roads minister is committed to ensuring is solid for the region of Far North Queensland.

(Time expired)
Amendment agreed to.

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

Motion, as agreed—

That this House calls on the state government to prioritise funding for state controlled roads for rural and regional Queensland, in particular those affected by natural disasters.

Sitting suspended from 6.26 pm to 7.30 pm.

MOTION

Order of Business

Hon. KL STRUTHERS (Algester—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (7.30 pm): I move—
That general business orders of the day Nos 1 and 2 be postponed.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.
Motion agreed to.

ELECTORAL REFORM AND ACCOUNTABILITY AMENDMENT BILL
ELECTORAL (TRUTH IN ADVERTISING) AMENDMENT BILL
ELECTORAL REFORM BILL

Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill resumed from p. 1389, on motion of Mr Lucas, Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill resumed from p. 1389, on motion of Mr Langbroek, and Electoral Reform Bill resumed from p. 1389, on motion of Mr McLindon—

That the bills be now read a second time.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (7.30 pm), continuing: Prior to the dinner break I was speaking about interjections that were made while the member for Currumbin was speaking in relation to her concerns about this funding. There were interjections from the government side saying, ‘So you won’t be taking the funding?’ I believe that that interjection was rhetorical. I reiterate that I believe this is one of the most unfair and biased pieces of legislation that has come to this parliament in the time I have
been a member. That is not to say that other bills have not been concerning, but this bill has been dressed up as fair, honest and transparent, as the member for Greenslopes called it. It is anything but that. The interjection was a rhetorical question. Any person running for the parliament will be forced to take what funding is available. Again, that cost in great measure will be sheeted back to the electorate. The feedback I received in my electorate was of total opposition to funding political elections. I am sure that those interjectors who said, ‘So you won’t be taking the funding?’ know that that will not be the case. It will be a matter of necessity.

There is a lack of clarity in the bill in relation to what will qualify as expenditure. The questions we asked during the briefing were not all able to be answered. That was not the problem of those giving us advice; it was the fact that this bill is unclear. Another section of the bill discusses the meaning of a gift. Section 177AD(5) states—

For this part, the amount or value of a gift consisting of or including a disposition of property other than money must, if the regulation provides, be decided under principles stated or mentioned in the regulation.

I asked those giving us a briefing when the regulations would be made available. I was advised that the QEC would draw up these particular regulations and that the information they had was that the QEC at this stage had decided it would not regulate this section. That just compounded the lack of clarity and the inability to clearly understand what will qualify, what will not qualify, what is a gift and what is an expenditure. That makes this not only an unfair and dishonest piece of legislation but also a very difficult one to follow.

I also have to mention the inequity in this bill, although my greatest concern is the concern of my electorate about the issue of political funding. But there is huge inequity. In capping expenditure, a political party can spend $80,000 per seat and a candidate belonging to a political party can spend $50,000 in that seat. So, effectively, if each electorate were allocated that amount of money, $130,000 can be spent by a political party and an endorsed candidate, but an Independent’s cap is $75,000. I cannot believe that that kind of discrimination could be accepted—

Mr Lucas: Do you think the Labor Party spends anywhere near that amount in my seat?

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: No, but I know that it does in seats where the ALP is trying to win the seat. So an Independent candidate in a seat that the ALP wants to win will be limited to spending $75,000 on their campaign while the ALP can spend $130,000 on its campaign in that seat. It is hugely iniquitous.

Mr Moorhead interjected.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: I am sorry. That is how the bill reads: $80,000 for the party to spend; $50,000 per candidate per electorate.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O’Brien): Order! Member for Gladstone, it might assist if you referred your comments through the chair.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Perhaps if I have interpreted that incorrectly the minister can clarify it.

It is an iniquitous bill. The major parties in aggregation will receive $1 million each in administration; Independents will receive $20,000 in administration paid after the expenditure is incurred. I believe that a party political candidate per seat will receive $40,000 in administration if the $1 million aggregate is not reached. It is a hugely iniquitous bill. It is discriminatory. It is a dishonest bill, and I will not be supporting it.

We have not heard very much from the Queensland Electoral Commission. They are subject to direction. I understand that. But I wonder about the practicalities of administering this new obligation under the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill. In my dealings with the QEC—and each election I do have significant dealings with them as an Independent—I have found them to be very helpful, and they endeavour to clarify anything that is not quite clear to do with changes in obligations for elections. I believe that this will create quite a significant amount of work for the QEC, and I would be interested to know just how they believe they can easily manage the extra workload.

One of the previous speakers—I believe it was the member for Greenslopes; it may not have been the member for Greenslopes, so I apologise if I am maligning him unjustly—talked about a single donor. Obviously for the LNP that single donor to whom this bill is directed is Clive Palmer—

Mr Lucas: That is rubbish. That is utter rubbish. Don’t you insult me by suggesting that. That is utter tripe.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Deity Premier.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: That issue has been bandied about in this chamber in interjections, in speeches and in ministerial statements—that Clive Palmer will have the LNP rolling in dough and all sorts of things. This bill is designed precisely to stop that. That is exactly who this bill will catch—and anyone similar to him. The statement was made that if someone invests great amounts of money it is unlikely they would ask nothing in return. The same criticism has been made and can be made of unions who back the ALP—

Mr Lucas: That’s why the rules apply to them.
Mr Hinchliffe: It’s the same rules.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: Well, I am waiting to hear whether they are the same rules in terms of the unions, because if all unions singularly can contribute to the cap then they are not the same rules at all. I look forward to clarification of this. I am sure it will happen in the summing-up. But for somebody looking at the proposal and having listened to the debate in this chamber and having listened to the barbs that have been thrown across this chamber over a considerable period of time, the position that I have just expressed is not an unreasonable one to get to—that there are very clear entities that are targeted by this legislation and that the intention is to limit the ability of individuals to bankroll certain parties. I cannot come to any other conclusion.

In the briefing we were given there was discussion about a gift and what it does and does not include. Section 177AD(4) states that a gift does not include a fundraising contribution of $200 or less or, if a fundraising contribution is an amount of more than $200, the first $200 of the fundraising contribution. It was explained that if a dinner ticket is $199 it will not form part of the cap if spent but a $1,000 disclosure requirement will remain. So if the aggregate of fundraising payments for dinners etcetera is $1,000 then the disclosure of gifts accumulated in excess of $1,000 will be required. I would like clarification that that understanding is correct.

The meaning of ‘electoral expenditure’ is listed in parts 177AB through to 177H. I would have to say that in the debate there was still some disquiet about which sort of newsletter would be non-electoral expenditure and which would be electoral expenditure. The phrase that is constantly repeated is that if it advocates a vote for or against a candidate or for or against a registered political party then it is part of the electoral expenditure. But a lot of newsletters will have political material in them. They may not say ‘Vote 1 for so and so’, but it will have political material in it. I am interested to see whether or not that form of newsletter is electoral expenditure. Having said that, I find the bill offensive. I do not believe that it is fair and transparent. I do not believe the community in my electorate and indeed in the broader Queensland context would support this bill if they knew the cost to them in total. There have been amounts of money from $26 million up to $31 million thrown around. History shows that usually those costs are modest when they are assessed. I do not believe the community of Queensland has either given qualified or unqualified support for this legislation. Its discriminatory nature is completely reprehensible and I will not be supporting the legislation.

Mr DICKSON (Buderim—LNP) (7.41 pm): I rise to speak on the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill. The explanatory notes state that this bill amends the Electoral Act and will reform political donations and electoral campaign expenditure and funding for state elections. In particular, the bill imposes a cap on amounts donors can make to political parties, candidates and third parties for election spending. It also places caps on certain expenditures by political parties, candidates and third parties in the period prior to an election. I am particularly interested in the provisions concerning third parties. I note that the reforms aim to limit any potential for undue influence being exercised by any one donor or lobby group in relation to an election campaign. That raises two issues. A trade union can be regarded as a lobby group for the purposes of this bill. I am wondering how much in donations has already been contributed to the Labor Party fighting fund by the trade unions in the lead-up to the next state election.

I also note that, as a result of the effects of capping electoral donations and expenditure, the bill provides for increased public funding to political parties and candidates for elections. Apparently this objective is going to ensure that the public continues to receive information on issues raised in election campaigns by increasing public funding to political parties and candidates. That is magnificent. According to this bill, making the taxpayers fork out more for election campaigns is going to make it better for the taxpayers. I can just hear the taxpayers all over Queensland cheering at the thought of stamping up more of their money for election campaigns. Yes, mums and dads will be funding the political parties to the tune of a minimum of $26 million every election, as well as funding the running of photocopiers, buying coffee machines and keeping the lights on.

Here is an idea: why does the government not use that $26 million to provide some relief from spiralling bulk water costs? The Labor government wants to push ahead with plans that are going to see the capping of retail water, but that will see bulk water costs passed on to Queenslanders’ rates notices. Within the bill the donation caps for candidates or third parties is $2,000 for the period starting 1 January 2011 and ending 30 June 2011. For the subsequent financial year there is a CPI based formula to be used to calculate the cap. I note that it is acknowledged that these proposed reforms will increase the functions and costs of the commission, particularly in relation to monitoring and enforcement. These matters will be considered in the 2011-12 state budget which should be interesting. Queensland is broke and the next state budget is going to be considering how the taxpayers of Queensland will fund these reforms. Why does the Treasurer not get a calculator out now and see where the money is going to come from before the so-called reforms are introduced?

This is so typical of this Labor government, whether it is council amalgamations, the so-called water reforms, building a dam at Traveston or supporting the carbon tax. It just does it without any thought for the detail and how it might be paid for and who will pay for it. The Premier’s foreword in the white paper on this issue states in part—
We have a responsibility to ensure Queensland’s electoral system is free from undue influences. We have a responsibility to ensure that running for office is not restricted to the wealthy.

The background in the white paper follows up with this—

The Queensland Government’s model also seeks to encourage participation in our democracy, including ensuring standing for office is not restricted to the wealthy.

A section of the explanatory notes gives us a clear indication as to the real intentions of this bill. The section states—

However, it is submitted that the capping is justified in ensuring that all people in the community, irrespective of their individual wealth, have equal access to the political process.

Labor is obsessed with the wealth of others. This bill is particularly concerned with wealthy individuals who may wish to contribute to political parties or be part of the political process. It is a bit like the other Labor proposal out there at the moment—the Labor Party proposal to do with wealth redistribution. It is called the carbon tax.

I also note from the government’s white paper that the laws will not prevent parties from trying to gather small financial contributions from larger supporter bases. I suppose the prime example of that would be the Labor Party putting the squeeze on the trade unions for heaps of cash and then the trade unions distributing it to the Labor Party via individuals within the union membership making individual donations. I suppose that will probably work as well.

The white paper certainly makes for interesting reading. Not only does it highlight that the Queensland government intends to apply a cap on political donations to third parties but that the government intends to cap how much third parties can spend on electoral expenditure during campaigns. Labor believes the absence of a political donation and expenditure cap for third parties would mean that the restriction placed on candidates and political parties could easily be circumnavigated by the establishment of outside bodies to make unregulated expenditure. Some may say that this is in reference to those nasty wealthy going out and whipping up an outside body in order to get around the cap. No-one would be surprised at what this government is thinking, but I am thinking there might be some other reason behind the expenditure cap for the third parties.

In this chamber on 7 April, when speaking with regard to the cap on expenditure, the Deputy Premier said—

As I have already outlined, the caps on political donations and expenditure will apply not only to political parties and candidates but also to third parties. Of course, third parties such as business, conservation, residential and industrial groups have a legitimate right to have their say in our democracy—and this legislation recognises that while ensuring it is appropriately regulated.

The Queensland government is on the run. It is running away from the electorate. It is running away from the bar’ or ‘a courageous stance’. He referred to the bill with terminology such as that it was pushing the boundaries forward so that we are entering into a new epoch.

I think it is very unusual that a Labor government comes up with a plan that gives people X amount of dollars and another group of people a totally different amount of money and another group of people a totally different amount of money again, and the government calls that equitable! It is like giving one group $3, another group $6 and another group $10, and this government calls that fair! But this is the Labor way. This is how the people of Queensland have got used to. I hope the people of Queensland when they go to the next election take all their bills with them and use them as how-to-vote cards because that will get rid of this tired, old Labor government, and the can-do LNP is going to take it out.

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—LNP) (7.49 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the debate tonight but only in relation to the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill 2011 and only in regard to a couple of points contained therein. I had the opportunity this afternoon to listen in my office to the contribution by the Minister for Education, the member for Greenslopes. He became very passionate about what he was saying; I think he sprayed everybody in the House with his rhetoric. He started by praising the bill as being an ALP movement forward. I think he referred to the bill in such terms as ‘lifts the bar’ or ‘a courageous stance’. He referred to the bill with terminology such as that it was pushing the boundaries forward so that we are entering into a new epoch.

Mr Hinchliffe: A further democratic reform.

Mr McARDLE: Indeed, that it furthered the democratic process, as the minister indicated in his own rhetoric. When you hear an ALP member or minister make a statement like that, you need to take a step back and take a deep breath because you know there is something coming to hit you right between the eyes, and of course this bill provides that.

The minister gave some detail into other bills besides the bill before the House as being a precedent and as establishing that the ALP had pushed the boundaries of democracy in this state. I listened with great anticipation as to whether he would deal with all of the issues that the ALP have dealt with in the past 10- or 12-odd years to push the boundaries of democracy in the House. I had to leave
my office so I did not quite hear whether he referred to the December 2005 sitting when the ALP, in its
endeavour to assist democracy, called the House back to allow what is sometimes referred to as the
Gordon Nuttall let-off motion to be passed by this chamber. I did not quite catch whether the minister
alluded to that in his contribution as one of the forward movements of the ALP. I did not quite catch
whether the minister referred to the Criminal Code Amendment Bill 2006 that took out the provision
under which Mr Nuttall first found fault with this House and then with the CMC and other entities. I table
a copy of that bill.

Tabled paper: Copy of the Criminal Code Amendment Bill 2006 [4433].

I did not quite catch whether the minister referred to that as pushing back the boundaries of
democracy into a new era. I did not quite catch whether he referred to the Criminal Code (Truth in
Parliament) Amendment Bill 2008, through which the then Leader of the Opposition, the member for
Southern Downs, tried to reinstate the provisions to ensure that the boundaries of democracy were put
back to where they should be. When the minister stood in the House, he was certainly courageous in
what he said the ALP was doing, but he did not quite complete the picture by painting what we would
say are the negative aspects of pushing back the boundaries of democracy in this House. That
apparently had slipped from his memory.

The bill before the House raises questions about two aspects as far as I am concerned. I want to
talk about third parties and in particular the issue of the trade unions. The trade unions, if they are third
parties, have the capacity to fund $500,000 into the election campaign across the state or $75,000 into
individual seats. I went back to the disclosure returns of the ALP for the first half of 2009. The document
I used is the financial disclosure returns for the first half of the year 2009, and the webpage was
accessed as at 1 February 2011.

In that first half of 2009, a number of donations were made by trade unions. There was $10,000
provided by the Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union: $5,000 of that went to the Mundingburra
SEC and $5,000 went to the Rockhampton SEC, and they were both ALP recipients. The Australian
Federated Union of Locomotive Employees gave $2,000 to the Childers branch of the Australian Labor
Party. A sum of $20,000 was given by the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union: $1,000 went to the
Waterford RHC; just over $8,000 went to the Townsville SEC; over $10,000 went to the Coomera RHC;
and over $1,100 went to the Everton SEC.

There was $28,866 provided by the Australian Rail, Tram and Bus Industry Union of Employees
to the ALP: $2,000 went to ALP Childers, $2,000 to ALP Cairns, $2,000 to ALP Mount Isa, $900 to the
Cleveland SEC, $5,000 to the Yeerongpilly SEC, $5,000 to the Aspley SEC, $5,000 to the Mundingburra
SEC, $3,000 to the Burpengary SEC and just under $4,000 to the Yeerongpilly SEC.

In January-February 2009, a sum of $36,000 was provided to the Queensland ALP by the ASU.
Between 9 March 2009 and 31 March 2009, a sum of $230,000 was provided by the AWU: $185,000
went to ALP Queensland, $20,000 later went to ALP Queensland, $10,000 went to ALP Gladstone and
$15,000 went to the ALP Currumbin-Elanora RHC.

The CEPU donated $27,500: $7,500 went to the Cook SEC, $10,000 went to the Townsville SEC
and $10,000 went to the Barron River SEC. Then in a second donation between 26 February 2009 and
31 March 2009, the CEPU donated $2,500: $1,000 went to the ALP Stafford SEC, $1,000 went to ALP
Brisbane Central and $500 went to ALP Ormiston.

Between 4 March 2009 and 12 March 2009, the CFMEU donated $244,200.07 to the ALP:
$5,000 went to ALP Charters Towers, $10,000 went to the Yeerongpilly SEC, $6,000 went to ALP
Broadwater, $3,000 went to the ALP Mansfield SEC, $3,000 went to the ALP Brisbane Central SEC,
$3,000 went to the ALP Ashgrove SEC, $2,000 went to ALP Ipswich, $5,000 went to the ALP Gaven
branch, $3,000 went to the ALP Burleigh campaign, $4,000 went to the ALP Bundamba SEC, $2,000
went to the ALP Yeronga SEC, $1,000 went to the ALP Burpengary SEC, $3,000 went to the ALP
Whitsunday SEC, $5,000 went to the ALP Everton SEC and $189,200.07 went to the ALP Mirani
campaign.

On 1 June 2009, the ETU contributed $9,600: of that, $2,500 went to the Kallangur SEC and
$7,000 went to the Kallangur SEC. On 9 March, just over $7,000 was paid in by the Finance Sector
Union of Australia, Queensland Branch; the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union paid
$60,125; the National Union of Workers contributed $11,800; the Queensland Services Union paid
$2,000; the Queensland Teachers Union of Employees paid $1,600; the Shop, Distributive and Allied
Employees Association of Queensland paid $70,000; and the Transport Workers Union of Australia,
Queensland Branch, paid $1,000.

The return that was lodged with the ECQ on 25 August 2009 indicated that in the first half of 2009
a total of $6.2 million was received by the ALP as donations. This amount was later reconciled down to
about $5.8 million but there is also reference to a further amount of $4.3 million received as ‘other
amounts’. If those unions become third parties, they will make the same contribution and that is what
this is all about. This bill is all about protecting the capacity of the unions to make ongoing contributions
to the ALP and bolstering the individual campaigns to ensure they are going to achieve the funds that
they need.
The second aspect of the bill is the sum that taxpayers will be asked to pay back to political parties of somewhere around $26-odd million. Many members in this House are quite concerned about the fact that those funds could and should be used elsewhere across the state. The Premier often gets up in the House and makes comment that we in this state have been through the toughest times for 100 years. There is no doubt about that. We have had floods and cyclones and many people have suffered. They have lost not just their livelihoods but their homes and also family members. We know that those people can never get those things back. We know that if you lose your home through devastation—through flood or fire—rebuilding is part of the exercise of healing. But, of course, the healing goes on for years and years. We also know that if you lose a loved one in those circumstances the grief and the horror can go on and on and may, in fact, never end. We also know that going through a cyclone and the ravages of what Queensland has been through can leave deep psychological and emotional scars that can indeed take many years to repair. The question that then has to be asked is why, at a time when Queensland could use every dollar that it could muster to assist those people to make their lives a bit easier so that they can cope better with what they are going through, this government is throwing out $26 million to satisfy its own ego? The minister would appear to dismiss the $26 million as a very small sum of money. It is disappointing that the minister makes that sort of reflection.

Mr LUCAS: I rise to a point of order. I did not in any way make that statement. Therefore, the honourable member's comment is offensive and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr McARDLE: I withdraw. The figure of $26 million is, of course, a significant sum of money. That money could be much better used in dealing with the many people who are coping with agony and misery on a daily basis. The bill before the House is fatally flawed on a number of levels. I congratulate the member for Kawana for his dissertation in taking this bill apart and highlighting the negative aspects and also highlighting the fact that he will move amendments that will give the ALP the opportunity to come back to this side of the House, accept its error and put in place a system that will be fair for all concerned.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—LNP) (8.02 pm): Turn the TV on any night you like and you will see the government running ads about how households can save money on electricity. The ads suggest that mothers looking after their families should put on the washing after 10 o'clock at night so that they can save on electricity by having a lower tariff. This is all because of the massive cost of living that is hitting the average person in their pocket. Whether it is electricity prices, whether it is water charges, whether it is the 10c a litre extra in petrol due to the petrol tax from the GST, or whether it is the increases in the cost of drivers’ licences, registration—any fees or levies that you would like to think of—that the government believes that they should have the right to fish. They believe that pensions should be better. They believe that the cost of living should be lower. They believe that the government is running the state badly with the cost of electricity, water, gas, drivers’ licences, petrol tax and everything else.

So whilst the government is telling mothers at home to do their washing at night after they have put the kids to bed, it brings into this parliament a bill that is going to cost another $26 million of taxpayers’ money. Yes, that mother who has to do the washing after 10 o'clock at night has to fork out something as a contribution, like every other taxpayer in Queensland, to fund an electoral system in taxpayers’ money. Yes, that mother who has to do the washing after 10 o'clock at night so that they can save on electricity by having a lower tariff. This is all because of the massive cost of living that is hitting the average person in their pocket. Whether it is electricity prices, whether it is water charges, whether it is the 10c a litre extra in petrol due to the petrol tax from the GST, or whether it is the increases in the cost of drivers’ licences, registration—any fees or levies that you would like to think of—that the government believes that they should have the right to fish. They believe that pensions should be better. They believe that the cost of living should be lower. They believe that the government is running the state badly with the cost of electricity, water, gas, drivers’ licences, petrol tax and everything else.

Straight after the last election thank goodness one or two unions had the courage to say, ‘This is wrong. We weren’t told before the election that you were going to sell off all the income earning assets of the state’—income earning assets that were earning more in income than the interest that was saved. Those assets are gone now—$15 billion worth of assets were sold off. The government was going to have $84 billion of debt. It sold off $15 billion worth of assets and it is still left with $80 billion of debt. So how is that for financial management? The point I am making is that at a time when people are doing it the toughest they have ever done we have this government bringing in state based funding of election campaigns. This government is desperate. It is on the nose. Its fundraising is failing. People do not want to support it. Even its lifelong supporters in some of the unions now see the error of their ways. All of the members of the Nurses Union can see that some of them have not been paid properly for over a year. The situation is the same with all of the other unions. All of their members have to put their hands in their pockets for petrol taxes and increases in electricity prices and water prices because of the incompetent financial management of this government.

In the midst of all of this and whilst the ads are running on TV telling families to save on electricity by doing things at night that they should be able to do during the day, this government brings in another $26 million. In the context of the state budget, you might say $26 million is not a high percentage, but it is very symbolic and it means a lot to the average person. It tells them a lot about this government and how it operates—spend, spend, spend. It says, ‘Don’t worry about the deficit, don’t worry about people
having a true democratic attitude towards elections; let's get some post-war Moscow type system where the state funds things and everybody can get some money.’ That way the government does not have to go out and do it on the basis of its own talent. It does not have to go out and run the sorts of things that it runs in its electoral councils so that it can get an adequate amount of money. The government wants enough money to be able to run the sort of campaign that it wants to run and if it cannot raise that money it wants to take it out of the pockets of the people in the state, whether they support the government or not.

If anything describes what has happened to this government—how it has run out of energy, how it has run out of pizazz; how it is on the nose with the public—it is the dying twitches of this government in trying to bring in this funding so that it has some money that it can access in a desperate attempt to win the next election. Really, government members need to go to the opposition benches for another three or four terms to renew themselves, because they have just died internally. Another aspect of this legislation is the unfairness in the way in which the unions have been treated. A company that has a number of organisations within it is unable to provide a donation from each of those organisations, but the union movement can be split up and all the different branches of the union can be split up. The basic unfairness of this legislation is its treatment of the union movement.

Finally, I want to speak a little bit about corruption and how it relates to this legislation. Corruption can often be described as something that is done illegally for money or for gain. Corruption could also be, in the eyes of many people, something that is forced into place that does something that is basically wrong, corrupt and breaks the trust and the faith of the people. With this legislation, how could any average person believe that a system that is going to give different parties different amounts of money be anything other than corrupt?

On the example provided this morning by our shadow minister, on the figures of the last election the LNP would have got approximately $8.10, the Labor Party approximately $8.40 and the Greens $36 a vote. How can anyone who has a smidgin of morality about them accept that as being anything other than unfair, grossly wrong and corrupt? The Labor Party will do anything to win the election. We have seen, election after election, the way in which they provide a little bit of incentive to the Greens to get their preferences. We saw it with Wolf Rock, when that was closed off as a protected area because of the so-called threat to the grey nurse sharks; we saw it with Moreton Bay; and we saw it after the last election when straight after the election they came in with the payback regarding the clearing of brigalow suckers. Now we are seeing it in this legislation, which is a Pandora’s box. The Greens have won lotto with this particular legislation and they will be provided with something like $36 per vote when compared with the LNP at approximately $8 per vote, going on the figures of the last election.

How could any fair minded Queenslander accept legislation like this? How could any fair minded Queenslander agree that this legislation should be passed in the parliament? This legislation is corrupt. This legislation, whereby a vote has a higher monetary value for one particular party is wrong. It is wrong in principle. It is corrupt. It has obviously been set up to provide some sort of a benefit to the Labor Party and the government that brought this legislation in. I hope that at the ballot box at the next election the people of Queensland remember the fact that this government tried to grease the palm of the Greens with taxpayers’ money.

I started this speech talking about the taxpayers, those family people who are being told by the government that electricity is so dear they should do the family’s washing after 10 o’clock at night. They are the people who are being asked to put their hands in their pockets and fund the Greens at almost five times the rate of the LNP to provide some advantage to the Labor Party. Any lawyer, any philosopher, any ordinary person in the street would see this as nothing but corrupt.

I think the desperateness of the principle that has been established in this legislation—the bare faced, blatant nature of it—means that the people of Queensland can see that this government is finished. It is desperate and it is doing the sorts of things that must go against the principles of some of the members over there who have principles of fairness—those who have espoused over the years the concept of one vote, one value and that everybody’s vote should be worth the same. If that is true, why are they prepared to give five times the monetary cash value to one party over another party? There is only one reason: to get preferences in a desperate attempt to hang on by their fingernails to government.

This bill hits the pockets of Queenslanders who are in desperate financial circumstances because of financial mismanagement by this government which means that the basic cost of living has gone through the roof. This bill is unfair in the way it treats the unions and gives them an advantage over other people who wish to donate because they love the country or love the state or because there are particular issues that they think need attention. Finally, this bill is corrupt for all the reasons that I have mentioned in relation to the cash value of votes for certain parties being far in excess of the cash value of votes for other parties.
Mrs KIERNAN (Mount Isa—ALP) (8.13 pm): I rise to speak in support of the government’s Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill 2011 forming part of the cognate debate with the Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill 2010 and the Electoral Reform Bill 2010. I had prepared the speech that I wanted to give tonight in support of the government’s bill, but after listening to some of the debate, particularly from the opposition members, throughout the day and certainly this evening, I was a little bit confused. I went back to have a look at where we started, what we actually took to the people of Queensland through the discussion paper, and the basis on which we are here debating this bill tonight. I think we need to remind ourselves where we have come from and where we want to go. This white paper was sent widely throughout Queensland for discussion. I took on board the little snip from the member for Currumbin about the number of government speakers on this bill and the fact that we are not in here debating it. I think the most important debate on this bill has been outside the House and hopefully within our own electorates with the people we represent. I am absolutely certain that government members took to that task. I want to read from the foreword of the document we did consult with. It states—

Over the 150 years since the first Queensland elections, we have continually built on our democratic system to create what we have today. Holding the election on a single day began in 1902, women received the right to vote in 1905—

Ms Darling: Hear, hear!

Mrs KIERNAN: I take that interjection. The foreword continues—

... voting became compulsory in 1914, Indigenous Queenslanders were given the vote in 1965—

Ms Darling: Hear, hear!

Mrs KIERNAN: And I take that interjection. The foreword further states—and the voting age was lowered to 18 in 1973. These changes illustrate that as democratic systems evolve, the law must stay in step. Governments are elected to change things for the better, not maintain the status quo. We have a responsibility to continue to build on our foundations to ensure our electoral system remains one of fairness, transparency and integrity. We have a responsibility to ensure Queensland’s electoral system is free from undue influences.

Given the background of where this started back in 2009, our government committed to a raft of integrity and accountability reforms in Queensland. Hence we are in the position we are in tonight debating this very important bill.

The government’s bill before the House tonight will amend the Electoral Act 1992 and intends to reform political donations and election campaign expenditure and funding for state elections. In particular, the bill imposes caps on amounts donors can give to political parties, candidates and third parties for election spending. It also places caps on certain expenditures by political parties, candidates and third parties in the period prior to an election. The bill also improves enrolment and voting procedures so that they will enhance electoral participation in Queensland.

This reform comes out of the need for a higher level of scrutiny by the public and the expectation that the processes be more honest and open. That is the message that I have received as a local member through consultation within my community. I have to say that there are various levels of understanding in the general population as to how elections are currently funded. Apart from the media slamming and having open season on members of parliament when they go out to fundraise, seek corporate or individual contribution, which is painted sometimes as something quite sinister, people are quite often stunned when they actually find out the cost of running a local campaign, let alone a campaign at the state level.

This bill aims to improve the integrity and public accountability of state elections. The donations which I have accepted in the past were openly given, with no expectation of any favours in return. I think that over the last five years I have earned the respect of my electorate. They know that I have acted and will continue to act without fear or favour. I think a few ministers will attest to that as well.

Ms Jarratt: We’re the ones with fear.

Mrs KIERNAN: I take that interjection. Members from all parties are subject to public questioning and scrutiny on donations to election campaigns. By introducing a cap, we are levelling the playing field. To be fair and equitable, introducing a cap will require an increase of public funding to political parties and candidates for elections and administrative funding for political parties and Independent members. That is the intent and the intent is that we have a level playing field. The opposition, through the unelected leader of the LNP, ‘Claytons’ Campbell, may well decide that it is opposed to the bill before the House tonight and I find that quite interesting. Perhaps he will find that now his activities will be a little bit curtailed.

The bill aims to improve enrolment and voting procedures for Queenslanders. The reforms are aimed at encouraging participation in the electoral process. It is intended that the legislation allow 16 and 17 year olds to provisionally enrol to vote. It will allow people who enrol or update their enrolment details after the writs for an election have been issued, and up to 5 pm on the day before polling day, to
make a provisional declaration vote. The legislation will allow electors who wish to vote before polling
day to cast an ordinary vote at an office declared by the commission to be a pre-poll voting office that
accepts ordinary pre-poll votes for their electoral district. These are great reforms and are long overdue.
They will be greatly beneficial in communities such as the Mount Isa electorate.

In respect to the Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill, the purported reason for this bill
is to prevent from being distributed to Queensland communities deliberately false and misleading
electoral advertising that undermines the fair and honest electoral process. I have been a member of
this House for many years—now going on nearly five—and I have known of only one mob that makes it
up as it goes and that is the opposition, which is the author and producer of this bill. Therefore, I find it
pretty hard to support. The other good one is the provision of the new offence of misleading electoral
advertising. Under this offence, any person who authorises, causes or permits the publication of an
electoral advertisement that contains a statement purporting to be fact but that is in fact inaccurate and
misleading commits an offence.

My only comment in respect of the Electoral Reform Act 2010 relates to the proof of identity
provision, which requires that the issuing officer must sight one proof of identity. I heard one of the
Independents say, ‘You know, everyone’s got a card with their picture on it. Everyone’s got a birth
certificate.’

Mr O’Brien: They have no idea.

Mrs KIERNAN: They have no idea. I take the interjection from the member for Cook, because we
know full well that the assumption that everyone has proof of identity—a driver’s licence or something
with a picture on it—is an absolute nonsense. We know that particularly in our electorates of Cook and
Mount Isa the vast majority of people can be absolutely disadvantaged by this provision. If there is an
expectation that people who turn up to vote will have proof of identity, instead of 12-hour polling days we
will have whole weekends just to clear the passage of people trying to prove who they are. That is an
absolute nonsense. Certainly I give the government’s bill my whole-hearted support and I commend it to
the House.

Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Skills and Mining) (8.23 pm): It
is with a little bit of reluctance that I rise to contribute to this cognate debate. I was not intending to
contribute to the debate, but having heard some of the extraordinary misrepresentations of the
government’s bill by members from the other side I could not resist. I had to draw the House’s attention
to the extraordinary lengths to which the opposition has gone to try to create a

Maybe I can set the context by agreeing with the member for Toowoomba South. I had the
opportunity to hear in part the contribution made by the honourable and learned member for
Greenslopes. In his speech, he set out the contribution that Labor governments and Labor
administrations have made to the advancement of democracy and to democratic reform in this state.
This is another step in that direction. As the member for Mount Isa suggested to us not long ago, it will
level the playing field. It will also ensure that all Queenslanders have a similar ability to contribute to our
democracy through the exercise of their vote and through the ways in which they can contribute to
supporting candidates or political parties of their choice. No matter what their means, this provides them
with a fairer ability to contribute.

A number of speakers opposite suggested that the public funding element of this legislation is
somehow a derogation of democracy and that that funding would be better spent in other ways. If that is the case, this
is a great waste of public expenditure, all members opposite should give their pay back and we should
all go home. I can understand that they might be moving towards that thought, as they have decided that,
as there is not one amongst them who is capable of being a leader, they will outsource their
leadership. Given our democratic process, the outsourcing of that leadership is an example of their
belief that that process is not worth it and that it is not the way forward. I think it is a disgrace that in this
state the so-called conservatives are abandoning some of the strongest Westminster traditions.
Through this Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill the Labor government is progressing
one of the clear and important traditions of that system by making our democracy fairer and more
accessible to the community. This legislation does that by providing a level playing field and a greater
opportunity for all people to contribute.

On the theme of allowing a greater number of people to contribute to our democracy, I will
mention one other element of this cognate debate before I leave the debate to the rest of the chamber.
The member for Beaudesert has introduced the Electoral Reform Bill, which contains a grab bag of
interesting concepts, but there is one in particular upon which I will reflect and about which I will put
some comments on the record. It is the suggestion that there should be a movement away from the
compulsory aspects of our electoral system. No doubt the Deputy Premier will concur that I am a great
pedant. I will be a pedant about one particular aspect of this bill. In his legislation and his contribution to
the debate tonight, the member for Beaudesert has reiterated the idea that in Queensland we have such a thing as compulsory voting. In fact, we do not have compulsory voting. As part of our electoral system, we have compulsory attendance at a polling booth. No-one is forced to vote if they do not wish to, but the reality is that the vast number of people who attend polling booths take up the opportunity to participate in our democracy. Isn’t that a much better thing for the value and worth of our democracy? It means that our governments have a strong and genuine mandate from across the population.

In contrast, in those parts of the world that do not require compulsory attendance at polling booths—basically everywhere other than Australia and Belgium—it is the significant minorities who are the people who support and contribute to the electoral process. I think that weakens the strength of those democracies and it weakens their government’s ability to claim appropriately a mandate to undertake the governance of those policies. That is why, in defeating the Electoral Reform Bill as proposed by the member for Beaudesert, I reiterate and confirm my commitment to that compulsory attendance at a polling booth as well as the commitment of the Australian Labor Party and this government. The compulsory participation in our electoral system is one of those fantastic obligations that is part of our political, social and legal system. They include such obligations as jury duty and respect for the law. Those obligations in our community are very important and any derogation of them would lessen our democracy.

To that end, I would reiterate that one of the features in the political systems of democracies with non-compulsory voting—with voluntary participation in the polling process—is that the extremes come to the fore. In those processes, political parties and political leadership appeal very strongly to their base to get them out to vote and we see extreme positions being taken. We see this in the United States. One of the great criticisms in the United States at the moment is that the politics have become so extreme and so extraordinarily divided. In many ways, they have moved away from the centre ground, further alienating the very people who need to be engaged in the political system. On that mark, I support the retention of the compulsion to be engaged in the political process. I support the reforms that are fundamental to the government’s Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill. Those reforms are justifiably about supporting fairness and a level playing field for all participants in our electoral system. That is yet another step forward in democratic reform and democratic improvement to the greater political democracy that this state enjoys.

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (8.32 pm): I rise to participate in debate on these three bills: one from the member for Beaudesert, one from the opposition and one from the government. I will be very brief. The member for Beaudesert has introduced a bill with good intentions. I am very disappointed that the proposed new expanded committee system is not already up and running as these three bills could have been referred to those new committees for further investigation, further refinement and further amendment. Although I understand the member’s good intentions, unfortunately I am not able to support the bill in its current form—the draft from the member for Beaudesert. I congratulate him on having the strength to introduce the bill for further debate and scrutiny. I will be supporting the opposition’s bill. Again, I would have hoped that the new committees were up and running so that this bill also could have been referred for further refinement. However, I am practical enough to understand that the government does have the numbers in this chamber and, notwithstanding its good intention, the opposition bill will not see the light of day.

That brings me to the final and largest bill we have to consider, and that is the government’s Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill. I will not be supporting this bill. I have heard many speakers from the government side give all of the reasons why it should be supported. Quite frankly, I do not believe now is the time that we should be asking the Queensland taxpayers to pick up the tab for this very expensive program. In just over a month the Treasurer will enter this chamber and present the 151st Queensland budget which will set out where the government proposes to spend the funds over the next 12 months. Quite frankly, there will be some hard decisions. Many wish lists that members of this chamber have put forward may not be satisfied. Yet here we are proposing to spend significant taxpayer dollars in a hardship year to allegedly improve the electoral system. Quite frankly, the last election was not a sham. It was not totally discredited. A credible government was elected; a credible opposition was elected and members of the crossbenches were also elected. I believe the system we had at the last election is good enough to carry us through the next election, whenever the Premier chooses to call it. I think it is a cost that Queensland taxpayers should not be asked to foot at this time, and I will not be supporting it. I look forward to the minister answering the very many questions that have been put to him during this debate and congratulate the shadow minister on his contribution and the detail that he has gone into in scrutinising this bill.

Mr WATT (Everton—ALP) (8.35 pm): This, I believe, is one of the most important bills being debated in this House in recent years. It goes to the integrity of our political system and the need to keep it free of corruption. I have spoken before in this House about the fact that Labor governments in Queensland have a very strong record when it comes to improving the integrity and accountability of Queensland governments. It was a Labor government that established estimates committees for the first time. It was a Labor government that introduced freedom of information laws and, more recently, the...
Queensland the most accountable system of government in the country. I have seen today is not really surprising, because of course the opposition today remain descendents of members of the opposition—absolutely nauseating speeches—lecturing us about how government continue under the LNP.

Queensland politics remains clean. The reforms ushered in by this bill are the latest plank in giving Queensland the most accountable system of government in the country.

There are three features of the bill on which I want to focus: capping donations, capping expenditure on an election campaign and increasing public funding for election campaigns. I believe that the first of these, caps on donations, is a long overdue reform. The government supports capping donations at $5,000 per donor per party per year for donations to Queensland political parties, $2,000 per donor per year to candidates endorsed by each Queensland political party and $2,000 per donor per year to Independent candidates as a whole. These caps will include in-kind donations, money and other property. I accept that many people in the community would like to see donations to political parties banned altogether. We have all watched in horror as money has come to dominate politics in the USA. None of us wants to see Australian politics become like that. The facts of life are that attempting to ban political donations would be in breach of the Australian Constitution, so that is not an option.

I accept that there is a place for modest donations in politics. There is nothing wrong with individuals, community organisations, unions and businesses making modest donations to candidates whose views they support. But there is something deeply wrong with a system that allows candidates and political parties to take gigantic donations. It quite rightly raises the perception that large donors buy influence or favours from the recipient of their donation. It unfairly favours large organisations over the average person in the street. It is excellent to see this bill prevent the massive donations that have started creeping into politics in Queensland.

As well as capping political donations, the bill also caps electoral expenditure by registered political parties, candidates and third parties. The expenditure cap for a political party will be $80,000 multiplied by the number of seats being contested for a state-wide election. The cap for each endorsed candidate will be $50,000, which can only be used for electoral expenditure in the candidate's specific electorate. The cap for each Independent candidate will be $75,000 in recognition of the fact that Independents do not have the resources of a political party at their disposal. So the bill puts in place big restrictions on donations and spending on individual campaigns. It does, however, recognise that election campaigns are a fact of life and that it costs money to run them. Since private funding of campaigns in the form of donations is being limited by this bill, it increases public funding to political parties. The bill provides for the amount of public funding for elections for political parties and candidates to be determined by reference to a sliding scale based on their expenditure. Parties and candidates must still reach four per cent of a vote to receive funding, but the amount of funding will not be based on the number of votes received.

In addition, parties and Independent members will receive public funding for administrative expenses in recognition of their lessening dependency on private donations. Again, we can understand community concern about increased public funding going to political parties and to election campaigns. We can all think of things in our own electorates that require public funding, so we need to make good decisions about how public funding is expended. But I believe that increasing public funding when we are reducing private donations to political parties is the price of a fair and honest election process, one that is not subject to rigging by big donors.

Unfortunately, this debate has revealed that this government's commitment to ensure Queensland politics remains clean is not shared by the LNP. Speaker after speaker today from the opposition has opposed various elements of this bill. I suppose we should not really be surprised by this, because the conservative side of politics in Queensland has long supported rigging the political system to advantage the super rich. We only have to look back at the establishment of the Queensland parliament where the system was rigged in favour of appointing members of parliament from wealthy backgrounds, landowners, and average working people were shut out of the Queensland parliament. That was a fact under conservative administrations at the time.

Mr Hinchliffe: Multiple voting for property owners.

Mr WATT: The member for Stafford reminds me that it also involved a system of multiple voting for property owners—pretty good if you are a rich person, not very good if you an average working person. Of course the upper house itself in Queensland was also rigged in favour of conservative administrations and wealthy landowners, and I am really sad to say that today that tradition seems to continue under the LNP.

Today we have had to sit through and suffer through a series of nauseating speeches from members of the opposition—absolutely nauseating speeches—lecturing us about how government should be clean and how public money should be spent. Again, I suppose the level of hypocrisy we have seen today is not really surprising, because of course the opposition today remain descendents of the Bjelke-Petersen regime—the most corrupt in Queensland government history. I do acknowledge that the shadow Attorney-General, who led the charge today in the nauseating speeches and is someone who is pretty keen on a lecture, has previously been on the record acknowledging Joh Bjelke-Petersen as his political idol.
Again, I do not think it is that much of a surprise that we see this defence of private control of elections in Queensland. But we do not even have to go that far back in Queensland history. We do not have to go back to the establishment of this parliament. We do not have to go back to looking at multiple votes for property owners. We do not have to go back even as far as the Bjelke-Petersen regime to see the opposition’s disdain for clean government. Of course we on this side of the chamber regularly remind the opposition of the infamous $20,000 per head dinner that was held by the previous Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Shine: Who was there?

Mr WATT: I take the interjection of the member for Toowoomba North. To this day we do not know who was present at that dinner. It really makes me wonder who actually was there because of the lengths they have gone to keep that secret. I think all that really displays is this opposition’s absolute determination to ensure that big money talks in Queensland politics.

Some of this recent reform was sparked by some comments by former Justice Tony Fitzgerald. He made a very famous speech where he commented on his views of Queensland politics these days. I did not necessarily agree with all of the comments that he made. I do not think he properly acknowledged some of the accountability and integrity reforms that had been brought in in recent years by the Beattie and the Bligh governments, but he did make reference to the fact that money was increasingly playing a part in Queensland politics. He talked about the influence that those kinds of contributions can buy.

I suppose we can ask: what kind of influence does big donations to the LNP buy? I did a little bit of research. We are told that the Leader of the Opposition—these days Campbell Newman, the former Lord Mayor of Brisbane—when he was the Lord Mayor had a political slush fund called Forward Brisbane Leadership. One of the donors to that fund was a man by the name of Gary Spence, who members of the LNP may recall is the current vice-president of the LNP in Queensland. According to a Crikey email and their website, they acknowledged a couple of years ago that Gary Spence, being the vice-president of the LNP in Queensland, had donated a total of $100,000 to the Forward Brisbane Leadership group. You might ask: what does $100,000 buy you if you donate to Campbell Newman’s political slush fund? Mr Spence, coincidentally, was appointed to a board administered by the Brisbane City Council—very mysterious. So this is the kind of influence peddling that we can expect to see under the new regime led by Campbell Newman. If you chip in some money to the Campbell Newman regime, what will you get? You get a favour. This is exactly the kind of influence peddling that this bill is designed to prevent.

The other matter that speakers from the LNP have focused on in their speeches today is the evils of the increase in public funding proposed by this bill. Again, speaker after speaker talked about the horrors of increased public funding. They cried crocodile tears about the kinds of things that that money could be spent on. But did one speaker from the LNP in complaining about the increase to public funding commit this LNP opposition to declining public funding if it were on offer? I see them all quickly look at their feet. They do not want to make eye contact because they all know that, despite their opposition in this parliament tonight, once the bill is enacted they will have their hands out lining their pockets taking public funding. I do not have a problem with people taking public funding. I think it is a way to improve transparency and honesty in government, particularly when we are cutting back on private donations. But, please, can we have a little bit of consistency in our argument. If those opposite are going to oppose increases to public funding, I challenge any single speaker from the LNP tonight to rule out taking public funding for their campaigns. I fear that that is going to remain yet another challenge that goes begging.

We are starting to get used to this kind of approach from the LNP under its new leadership team. Campbell Newman when he took over the leadership of the LNP said that all its previous policies were null and void. So we are all eagerly waiting to see what the new LNP will be under Campbell Newman. Tonight it seems to be a group that gets up and criticises public funding but has its hands out at the same time.

It is no real surprise because only a couple of weeks ago again we had to sit through a nauseating debate from the opposition on the Stradbroke Island bill—another fantastic piece of legislation from this government where we are going to protect Stradbroke Island once and for all. Again, we had to endure speaker after speaker from the opposition get up and talk about how bad that legislation was, that it was terrible and that we could not possibly do anything. When the vote came, what did they do? They supported it. What we are coming to learn about the Campbell Newman leadership of the LNP is that they say one thing and do another. They say what they think is politically convenient, what they think is going to get them some votes, but when it comes to the crunch of voting they vote the other way.

Mr Hinchliffe: Just like cunning Campbell.

Mr WATT: Yes, exactly. It is very disappointing that we cannot expect any level of consistency from the opposition under its new leadership. I wanted to speak about a couple of amendments that are being proposed by the opposition tonight.
Mr Bleijie: Which you should support.

Mr WATT: I take the interjection of the member for Kawana, who believes that we should support those amendments. There are two main amendments that I wanted to focus on being moved by the member for Kawana. The first of which is that essentially they want to bring the amount of public funding—this is the public funding that the LNP opposes—into line with the level of primary votes that the political parties receive.

Quite extraordinarily, every single member of the opposition who has spoken in favour of this amendment has given us the reason for doing so: they have revealed that it will actually deliver increased public funding to the LNP. This is the sole reason that they have put forward. They think that the current system being proposed by the government is unfair—that it does not give the LNP enough money. So the public funding that they actually do not want in the first place and oppose us providing to political parties is exactly the same kind of public funding that they want to make sure goes more and more to the LNP. Self-interest and hypocrisy—that is the kind of leadership we are starting to see under the Campbell Newman regime.

The other amendment I wanted to speak about was the amendment that basically restricts the rights of union officials to participate in election campaigns. The LNP for years has tried to put up the union movement as the bogeyman of Australian politics. We have all become pretty bored with that little routine.

The government's bill talks about volunteer labour. If people want to volunteer their time to work on a political campaign that is not counted in the overall amount of expenditure that a person can spend on their campaign. I think that is fair and proper. People should be able to volunteer their time for free to work on a political campaign.

Unfortunately, under the LNP's proposal there is one category of person who does not have the right to volunteer their labour to work on a political campaign. Who is it? The LNP's bogeyman, a union official. The only persons in the entire world that the LNP does not want to see volunteer their time are officials of a union.

It has become a bit trendy for the LNP to blame the union movement for all the woes of society. I am a very proud member of a union. Every single person on this side of the House is a proud member of a union. Unions have fought long and hard to improve working conditions for people. But this is not about that. There is actually an international convention on human rights which preserves the right of freedom of association, for people to associate with whom they want. Who is the threat to that? The LNP. It is saying that every single person in the world can volunteer to work on a political campaign except an official of a union.

That is an absolute disgrace. But, again, we should not be really surprised when this is the party of Work Choices, the party that wanted to ban unions, the party that wanted to introduce cut-price pay rates for people. This is its next move to restrict the rights of individuals—that is, assisting on campaigns.

I commend the bill to the House. As I say, it will really add to the range of integrity and accountability reforms that this government and its predecessor Labor governments have introduced. It will go a long way to ensuring that Queensland politics remains clean. It is a very sad occasion that we have heard the opposition say that it wants to keep backing up private donations—secret donations that it is not prepared to reveal, usually from developers, to assist it run its party and give it policy ideas for the future. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (8.51 pm), in reply: I can only describe the contribution by Labor Party members tonight as woeful at best. In this cognate debate tonight we have debated three bills. We have had the Labor Party's bill debated, the member for Beaudesert's bill debated and the LNP's bill debated. Of course, the LNP's bill talked about truth in advertising. The government has said that it is not going to support our bill.

I ask members on this side of the House: why on earth would the Labor Party not support truth in advertising at elections? When I am pondering that thought things come to mind. One is a fuel tax—a fuel tax that was essentially ruled out prior to the 2009 election. When I further ponder it other things come to my mind. The sale of Queensland's assets comes to mind. If we had any form of truth in advertising in terms of what political parties were going to do—

Mr Lucas: That there will never, ever be a GST. That is another one—that there will never, ever be a GST.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take that interjection from the Deputy Premier. The matter the Deputy Premier refers to then went to an election. John Howard, the Prime Minister at the time, took the GST issue to an election. He did not do it afterwards. He looked the people of Australia in the eye and said, 'We are going to have as our policy in the Liberal-National coalition a GST. If you don't like it, don't vote for us. If you support it, vote for the coalition.' What happened? There was a clear-cut policy at the election that there would be a GST introduced and Australians voted for it.
Let me explain for the Deputy Premier’s understanding tonight what the fundamental difference is. I enjoy the opportunity to debate the Deputy Premier’s interjection about the GST. When we talk about the sale of assets and about the abolition of the fuel tax subsidy we are talking about promises that were made prior to an election that those things would not happen. Then following the election the government turned around and did it.

In my own electorate of Kawana we have the Sunshine Coast University Hospital, which the Deputy Premier knows about all too well. There was an election commitment that 2014 would be the time for the delivery of that hospital. Two months after the election the hospital was delayed. If we put all that together, I can understand why the government members would have an issue with having truth in advertising prior to elections. They would fundamentally and systemically fail the test.

The cognate debate comprising these three bills involves debating an important fundamental legislative change. We have had members opposite say that they are standing up for democracy. We had the interesting contribution from the member for Greenslopes. The former Attorney-General came in here and said that this is all about democracy for the people. If it is such an important legislative reform agenda for the Labor Party then why have there been so few speakers from that side? If it is so important to their heartland, if it is so important to their electorates, if it is so important to democracy in Queensland, then how is it that less than a quarter of government members could stand up in this place today and speak in support of this bill.

Mr HOOLIHAN: I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I ask you to draw the member’s attention standing order 234(1). He is calling into question the motives of members of the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Powell): Order! Can you confine your comments to the bill at hand.

Mr BLEIJIE: Can I seek clarification while I am on my feet. The advice that I have received is that in my summing-up in this cognate debate I can refer to all matters that have been debated today.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Onwards and upwards we go. Let us look at the contributions of some of the members opposite. Let us look at the contribution of the member for Keppel. In talking about the truth in advertising bill, the member spoke about the need for much consideration and issues to be taken into account when we are dealing with and looking at truth in advertising. In his contribution, not necessarily in support of the bill, the member was saying that for these types of reforms around truth in advertising—and he gave us the precedents around Australia—we must give consideration and time must be spent on them. But the Labor Party in Queensland has now been in government for nearly 20 uninterrupted years. I think at least the last 12 years is probably enough time to consider the implications of a bill dealing with truth in advertising. I think it could do that. In actual fact, no, I do not think it could. I can see where the member is coming from, because I do not think the Labor Party could plan that type of bill in a 12-year period. I do take it back because it would not be long enough. Perhaps if we had not had the two-year interval in the middle then 20 years may have been enough. But 12 years was not going to cut it.

The member for Greenslopes made an interesting contribution in the cognate debate. Interestingly, he was not on the speaking list. After my contribution and that of the member for Calile I saw the member for Greenslopes trumpet into the chamber, all excited that he was on the speaking list. I can imagine that, because those opposite are worried about what is going on, they had to call in their comrades from Greenslopes to come and assist, to rally the troops and to really give it to us.

It was an interesting contribution. The member for Greenslopes said—and I have not seen Hansard, but I think I wrote it down correctly—that I am an old man in a young person’s body trying to break through the skin. If that is the case then that is an extraordinary attack on young people. It is an extraordinary attack on young people who have a future desire to serve in this place.

Tonight we saw an extraordinary attack on young people by the member for Greenslopes. The member for Greenslopes also referred to comments that I made in my contribution when I referred to the fact that school children are looking forward to a can-do government, and no doubt the Deputy Premier will comment on that as well. When I go and speak—

Government members interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I deserve to be able to give an explanation. I was attacked by the member for Greenslopes and I am using this opportunity to answer that question of attack that was raised in this place. For anyone on the other side to consider that a member of parliament would go into a local school with the local principal’s permission and advocate a vote for or against a political party is ridiculous. What I was saying in my contribution is that year 7 students are well trained in democracy in their place. For anyone on the other side to consider that a member of parliament would go into a local school with the local principal’s permission and advocate a vote for or against a political party is ridiculous. What I was saying in my contribution is that year 7 students are well trained in democracy in their place.
Mr BLEIJIE: Can I say that just one year 7 student that I speak to would have more intelligence and competence than the collective members of the Labor Party sitting opposite tonight—just one year 7 student! In fact, I would probably put it that the year 5s that I addressed at the Pacific Lutheran College would have more intelligence. The intelligence and the know-how that those children have in terms of our democracy and our political systems in Queensland is unbelievable. I question at times whether those opposite—even those opposite who have served in this place for a long time—could debate one of the year 5 or year 7 students, and I do not believe they could. The first person I would put up against a year 5 or a year 7 student would be the member for Greenslopes, the Minister for Education.

I congratulate all members on this side of the House for their worthwhile and intelligent contributions tonight. They have raised the issues that need to be raised. Just prior to the member for Mermaid Beach’s contribution tonight, he received advice from me that the government had tabled some 54 amendments to this legislation. We will no doubt deal with those amendments as the night progresses, but I think it is interesting to note that in my contribution to this cognate debate I raised the issue of the sustainability declaration—which the former infrastructure and planning minister would be well aware of—and that it was poorly drafted and that we would also see many, many amendments to this legislation. That is the attitude of the Labor Party in Queensland: ‘Just rush it through this place and don’t worry about the details because we’ll fix it later.’ The fact is that it costs money to fix it later and that every dollar spent fixing this mess is a burden on the shoulders of the taxpayers that they should not need to wear.

In my contribution to the debate tonight I also said that this is a dog’s breakfast of a bill, that it is all over the place and that there are so many uncertainties that need to be addressed. I also made the point that these uncertainties will have to start to be addressed, to which the Deputy Premier interjected, ‘You don’t think courts can make the interpretation.’ Of course I think the courts can make the interpretation, but if we are debating the bill and these things in this place tonight then we should feel comfortable with the legislation that goes out of this place and we should feel comfortable that there will not be an open slather of interpretation through the courts. The bill should sufficiently provide advice to candidates of political parties and Independents of what is in and what is out on this issue. Less than 60 minutes after my contribution we were told that there would be 54 amendments moved in this place by the government to a bill that has not even been voted on yet. I think that is a testament to the poor drafting and to the advice that the Deputy Premier’s department and potential policy advisers gave to those drafters. I repeat: we are already dealing with 54 amendments to this bill tonight. It is unbelievable that we have to deal with so many amendments before the bill is even voted on.

The member for Everton always gives a lively interpretation of the issues before the House. He said in his contribution that the LNP was leading the change with respect to the cognate debate. Well, we have to lead the change in terms of the debate and the public funding aspects of what this will cost Queenslanders, because if we do not then no-one will be because the government is certainly not leading the change. The member for Everton also talked about crocodile tears and what we should spend the money on. I take personal offence at that because the member should have listened to the contributions of members in this place today as to where the money could have been spent. I made particular reference to flood victims in Grantham, cyclone victims in North Queensland and flood victims in Toowoomba. We only have to read the paper on nearly a daily basis to see that people’s claims for insurance are being rejected and that their claims for funds from the Premier’s flood appeal are being rejected. Those tears are not crocodile tears; they are real tears in the community.

I made the point that, when we have legislative reform that will put an extra burden on the taxpayers and cost them up to $30 million at this stage. I believe that someone in a tent or someone who is couchsurfing and who has not got a home to go back to because of the floods could legitimately ask why the political parties are funding their campaigns and increasing the dollar amount they get for their vote at a time when people can least afford it. And it is not just that the people of Queensland can least afford it; it is that Queensland can least afford it. We are heading into a major budget deficit in a month’s time. There will be major economic implications for the budget in a month’s time and we are having this legislation rushed through this parliament, as I said, 24 hours after the federal budget and 24 hours before one of the most corrupt former members of this place, Gordon Nuttall, appears. I could be called a cynic for asking why we are debating this today—one day after the budget and one day before Gordon Nuttall. I believe it is because members of the media are not as interested in this issue as they should be and are not taking particular note of it because they are wrapped up and involved in the budget processes and the Gordon Nuttall saga tomorrow. I firmly believe that this legislation should have gone through the committee system. I note that the member for Nicklin agreed with the point that it should have gone through the new committee system and should have been subject to rigorous debate in this place, which simply will not happen.

The member for Everton also said that we are complaining about taking public funding. I would also point out to the member for Everton that, in my contribution and the contributions of other members on this side, we made the point that public funding is with us now. The LNP supports public funding because it is in the process now. We get $1.60 a vote roughly at the moment. The point that we are making though is that this is happening at a time when we could have spent this $26 million to...
Can I address the issue that members opposite have been raising in relation to, ‘If you don’t like it, don’t take the money.’ This bill is a beast of the Labor Party that we had no input into and the Independents had no input into. So when this bill goes through the processes tonight and the parliament passes it, it will be the government’s entire beast. I qualify that by saying that when you cap donations to political parties and you cap particularly the way the LNP receives donations and how much it can receive, it is ridiculous to suggest, as those opposite have suggested, ‘Don’t take the money.’ We will be forced to accept the political donations caps. So essentially, by not having access to the money, basically our campaigns would be null and void. We would not have any money to run them. If the government stood in this place and said, ‘We withdraw the bill from the House and we are returning everything back to normal,’ then we would not be having this debate and this issue would not arise. I say to the Deputy Premier that, when members of his party criticise us because we can simply not take the money, get rid of the caps on the donations and then it is a different story. But when you are dealing with caps on donations, in reality you have to look at the public funding rationale behind this bill. As I said, it is forced on us. This bill will go through this place, as all the crossbench members have mentioned tonight. The legislation will be with us from hence forward. The Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill addresses an element that is crucial to any election campaign and that is political advertising. The bill is aimed particularly at candidates and political parties that have a do whatever it takes approach to achieve public office in Queensland. Generally, what we have seen on display in this debate really epitomises the modern Queensland Labor Party. I am often told that what politicians do—and I think I reflected on this in my contribution—that destroys the fabric of our democratic system is to either make promises that they never deliver or make promises before an election and then do the opposite straight after. Those are essential elements of the modern-day Queensland Labor Party. In Australia and in Queensland, voters have seen two cases of this occurring. Just days before the 2010 federal election, the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, trumpeted the words—

There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead.

Yet just months later, after being elected to minority government, the federal Labor government is in the process of enacting this carbon tax on the people of Australia. As we have seen in this place this week, the Queensland Labor Party will not stick up for small businesses in Queensland upon which the carbon tax will have a detrimental impact. In Queensland the Treasurer made the commitment that if the Bligh government was re-elected the fuel subsidy would be restored. Just three months after the June budget of 2009, the fuel subsidy was ripped out. That added an extra 8.6c a litre to the cost of petrol for motorists in Queensland.

So when we are looking at truth in advertising, when we are looking at truth in politics, the government on one side of the political fence went to an election saying, ‘The assets are safe; we are not going to get rid of the fuel subsidy; we are going to build the Sunshine Coast University Hospital,’ and then within a short period after the election it changed the goalposts. You cannot tell me that it was all of a sudden and that the global financial crisis hit in a period of one month, because it did not; it happened over a long period.

When we look at truth in advertising, I recall at the last federal election the Labor Party candidate for the electorate of Fisher was a former member of this place, Chris Cummins. Incidentally, he has been a member of this place, he has tried to get into federal parliament and he has also tried to get into council. He was successful in getting a seat on the council and he tried to get back into council after he left this place. At the time he distributed a brochure to residents titled ‘Say no way to LNP hospital delay’ which claimed that the Sunshine Coast LNP had continually delayed the building of the Sunshine Coast University Hospital. The flyer stated that any relocation would delay a new $2 billion hospital for up to five years. No mention was made that it was the Labor Party state government that delayed the much needed Sunshine Coast University Public Hospital by two years. I am not sure if that line of argument speaks more of the intelligence of the candidate, Chris Cummins, or of the level of political tactic that we have come to in this state. It is that kind of blatant distortion of the truth that people are fed up with. That line of argument probably has more to do with the intelligence, or none thereof, of the person who distributed the flyer. But it was a blatant disregard for the facts in that, of course, the LNP did not delay the hospital, because it was not in government and did not have the power to delay the hospital.

The bill that we introduced—the Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill—gave the power to the Electoral Commission to direct an advertiser of misleading or false information to withdraw the publication or publish a retraction. The forms of publication that were debated today cover advertising on the internet as well as advertising through the traditional print, radio and television media. There are penalties in place of up to $10,000 for any person who authorises, causes or permits the publication of an electoral advertisement that contains a statement purporting to be a fact that is inaccurate and misleading to a material extent.
It is important that when Queenslanders view, read or listen to political advertising that the statements that are being reported are, in fact, truthful. Honesty and integrity in our political system needs to be a priority for all members of parliament regardless of their political colours. The bill presented by the member for Beaudesert included amendments that would institute compulsory preferential voting and a voluntary voting system. It would also prohibit the distribution of how-to-vote cards and prohibit the display of political material on land occupied by the state. The bill also contained provisions that required identification to be sighted by an issuing officer in order to obtain a ballot paper. In my view, that was the only worthwhile provision in his entire bill. To some extent it had some merit.

Can I say in relation to the bill presented by the member for Beaudesert—because he had much to say in relation to my contribution to the debate of the opposition’s bill—it is wishful thinking completely. It really goes to the heart of how this member now shamefully represents the people of Beaudesert who, in good faith, voted for him as a Liberal National Party candidate. At the ballot box people voted according to his how-to-vote card, which was a Liberal National Party how-to-vote card, and then elected him to this place as a Liberal National Party member of parliament. So it really is the height of hypocrisy that a member who became an Independent and who has now set up his own Queensland Party can stand in this place and advocate for the Westminster system, loyalty and so forth when he was elected as a Liberal National Party candidate.

Mr McLINDON: I rise to a point of order. The Westminster system does not even mention political parties. I take offence to that. If the member understood the Westminster system he would not have made that comment and I take offence to it. I ask him to withdraw. If he understood the Westminster system—

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw. I was going to leave the member for Beaudesert, but he has encouraged me to continue with his representations in this place. I repeat: the member for Beaudesert was elected with a how-to-vote card as a Liberal National Party candidate.

Mr Lucas: Oh, you’re responsible!

Mr BLEIJIE: You can have him if you want. The member’s bill wants to cancel how-to-vote cards, yet some 2½ years ago he had his how-to-vote cards and electoral material plastered on state owned land, plastered all over the place by volunteers, friends and members of the Liberal National Party, saying, ‘Vote for me. I am a member of the Liberal-National team.’

He sat in this place for a period of time as an Independent, advocating that the Independents are the only ones who can do anything. Then he set up his own completely separate political party. For this member and the bill he has introduced it is all about the moment—the political opportunity. He is telling people what he thinks they really want to hear but has no plans to deliver. It does remind me of the old days of One Nation. Essentially that is what they did. They would go out spruiking this, spruiking that, telling people what they wanted to hear. We have seen it all again today with the member for Beaudesert’s bill.

He espouses the upholding of the Westminster tradition. Tonight he espoused that tradition in his contribution, but I recall him having to be called into line for something that was quite anti Westminster tradition and which I will not repeat because I understand that we do not discuss those particular issues in this great chamber because that would be anti Westminster tradition. It really says something about the member for Beaudesert that he talked about the member for Hinchinbrook and me but then had to be pulled into line for his own comments.

I dispute the premise that the member states in relation to compulsory preferential voting. One minute the member for Beaudesert is saying in his bill that he wants compulsory preferential voting on the ballot paper but the next he is saying that people should not have to compulsorily vote. One minute he stands up and believes in people compulsorily filling out a form but the next he does not believe in the compulsory aspect of going to vote. It just does not make sense.

The distribution of how-to-vote cards at polling booths is a final offering of information and assistance to many voters in the state who decide their preferred representative either on polling day or when walking into a booth. It does not contain detailed policy explanations. It does not contain all the elements of political brochures that one would expect to be distributed during the campaign. It is simply a voting pattern that a candidate wants their supporters to follow.

Today we have debated and tonight we will move some amendments that will really test the integrity of the Labor Party. It will test everything its members have said in this place today. It will test their comments in relation to upholding democracy. It will test their integrity in terms of a real legislative reform agenda and it will be an integrity test on the balance of fairness in our state electoral system.

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Acting Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State) (9.22 pm), in reply: Firstly I thank all honourable members for their contributions to this debate on the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill 2011. I will make a couple of observations. The shadow minister, the member for Kawana, made some observations about how many people from the government and the opposition side spoke in the debate. I think it was seven government members and nine opposition members, off the top of my head. I have never really thought that was a good indicator. I am more interested in the quality of debate that proceeds here. Similarly, length of time is not necessarily an indicator.
The honourable member reminded me of Santo Santoro, who, whenever anyone interjected, would then warn that he was going to speak for longer as some sort of a punishment or threat. That is a matter for the member. I would tell him that it might be better to avoid hubris. Similarly, if he wants to get stuck into the member for Beaudesert that is fine by me—the member for Beaudesert is a big boy—except that criticising the member for Beaudesert for starting as an LNP member and then changing his party would be fine if he did not have the member for Condamine sitting in his own party room. He started as an Independent and went to the polls on that basis and then joined the LNP. I wonder what Peter Taylor, the very good mayor of Toowoomba, thinks about that.

This bill marks a new chapter in Queensland’s electoral history. This package of reforms will break the nexus between big money and the state electoral process while ensuring political parties and candidates are still able to communicate with Queenslanders. The finance reforms have three key planks: caps on political donations, caps on political expenditure and a more central role for public funding of parties and candidates. These reforms are designed to work together to reduce reliance on private funding for parties and candidates and to reduce the potential for political influence to be brought in state campaigns.

The cap on donations should also encourage parties and candidates to seek a broader base of community support. This will promote greater public engagement in the political process. Public funding will ensure these new restrictions on donations do not prevent political parties and candidates from communicating with electors about important issues of policy. However, any party who does not wish to receive public funding is under no obligation to claim it. I also foreshadow that I will be moving an amendment to ensure a party is also under no obligation to receive administrative funding. If those opposite think the price for a fair and democratic Queensland electoral system is too high, they can back it up by refusing public funding.

The restriction on donations and expenditure extends to third parties such as trade unions, business and environmental groups. Let me be very clear that it is the intention of the bill that a union which donates to a party or a candidate, either in cash or in kind, is subject to the donation cap exactly the same as everybody else. So the figures read out by the member for Caloundra of union donations in a large number of electorates would be covered by that and, in fact, would not be allowed. They would fall under the cap on donations for campaign funding. If a union runs a campaign which advocates a vote for or against a party or candidate, this will be an in-kind donation and subject to the donation caps exactly the same as everyone else. If a union runs an election campaign about issues which affect its members, it will be a third party and will be subject to the third-party expenditure caps just like any other organisations.

Third parties play an important role in our democracy. For example, in today’s Courier-Mail is an article from a mining company criticising the state government in relation to its banning of mining on Stradbroke Island. That is legitimate third-party campaigning. If one actually sought to preclude or prohibit that then they would run the risk of being not only unconstitutional but also unfair. They are no different from unions in having an entitlement to campaign on those sorts of issues.

Mr Sorensen: What are you talking about? There is no election campaign on at the moment.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! Members will address their comments through the chair.

Mr LUCAS: I say to the honourable member for Hervey Bay that it is better to have people suspect you are a fool than be convinced of it.

There are also a range of other amendments in this bill aimed at improving access to and participation in the democratic processes of this state. The bill amends the Electoral Act to allow 16-year-olds to provisionally enrol to vote. A significantly greater proportion of 16-year-olds are enrolled for participation in the democratic processes of this state. The bill also provides that a person will be able to enrol or update their enrolment details up to the day before polling day.

I would like to address some of the matters raised by members in the course of the debate. Firstly, I would like to address the ridiculous suggestion that this investment in democracy could be better spent. I think that is a bit rich coming from those opposite, who seem to be happy to outsource democracy when it comes to their leadership—a leadership outside the parliament and selected by their party president. Does that make the $76 million budget for the Legislative Assembly each year a waste? Yes, it is expensive to have an election and it is expensive to have a democracy. There are some parts of the world that avoid parliamentary democracy. We have seen in the Middle East what can happen as a result of that. It is a far greater expense. Political parties and candidates must be able to communicate with electors. That costs money—money which can come from either wealthy benefactors with special interests with strings attached or public funding. That has been the message coming quite clearly from the community. Those opposite want to remain in the days of cash for access and brown paper bags and we will not let that happen.
The member for Kawana came in here today waving around the Shepherdson report, claiming that it was somehow more relevant and more recent than the Fitzgerald report. What a joke! The issues in the Shepherdson report referred to by the member included a preselection in 1986—when, I might add, he was about three years of age. Joh Bjelke-Petersen, whom he indicates is one of his mentors, was charged for having received corrupt payments in which year? 1986! That was not discussed. I think we need to be consistent here. We need to abhor corruption on both sides of politics. Tomorrow we will have the despicable Gordon Nuttall here to account for his conduct. I abhor corruption on both sides of politics. None of it reflects well on the political process. We want to make sure that our rules deal with that conduct and as much as possible stop it from happening in the future.

I will set the record straight on the suggestion that these reforms favour one political party over another or include a special exemption for unions. The reforms apply equally to everyone in the political process, including trade unions, business groups, charities and green groups. The suggestion that this is designed to favour one party is absurd. The member for Kawana read out a list of donations from unions to the ALP. Under this bill, the amount that he referred to would be banned from state campaign donations. He has proposed an amendment in relation to unions affiliated with the ALP. Frankly, it is bizarre to suggest that all affiliated unions could be caught under the ALP cap. It is just as ridiculous as saying that all mining companies should be subject to a single cap because of their common interest or their affiliation to the Queensland Resources Council. Firstly, it is highly likely that the LNP’s proposal would be unconstitutional. Further, many unions have very different political views not only to the ALP but also to each other. It could not be said that the AWU and the ETU share the same view on any particular issue any more than it could be said of the Queensland Resources Council and AgForce. It is ridiculous.

For example, I note that the CFMEU gave $10,000 to the Greens in the second half of 2010. On the suggestion of the honourable member, the shadow minister, if the ETU was an affiliated organisation this picture, which is of an Ipswich campaign billboard against Rachel Nolan, would be counted as campaign expenditure for her because it happened during an election campaign. That is how ludicrous and poorly thought out this is. Thanks very much for that; that is really good! Of course, the government will not discuss that. As we are speaking of accepting public funds, I remind the House that the former Leader of the Opposition, the member for Surfers Paradise, was happy to have public funding for his billboards. That did not trouble him too much. They were not troubled too much about the way they used opposition expenditure willy-nilly and they did not think too much about the needs of the Queensland community at that time. Of course the government will not support the amendment.

While we are discussing unions I want to clear up some confusion that some members opposite seem to have about union staff and volunteer labour. If a union is providing paid staff for a campaign, that would be a gift in kind and subject to the donations cap. Only volunteer labour is excluded. The opposition has moved an amendment that seems to exempt union employees from the definition of a volunteer, even if they are campaigning unpaid on their own time. Again that would be unconstitutional, because it would be saying that anyone who is a union employee, even if they are doing it on a volunteer basis in their own time, is in a different category to everybody else in the community. Clearly, that is unconstitutional and ridiculous.

The member for Kawana has asked for an explanation of the difference between volunteer labour and providing a service under the bill. Clearly, volunteer labour can only be provided by individuals and not by corporations or other organisations. It is not possible to provide examples of every situation and context. However, for example, if party members perform services for free in their own time, whether those services are legal services or typing services, it is intended that that work will be considered volunteer labour. On the other hand, where a corporate law practice or secretarial services company provides services for a campaign that would be characterised as a gift in kind and caught by the cap. The member for Gladstone and the member for Kawana want to go to the nth degree with examples. However, these things operate like most things operate, with an element of commonsense.

The opposition also raised concerns about the fact that the bill only covers donations for state campaigning. That is very peculiar when the opposition, in fact, does not want any caps on donations at all. The reason that this rule is applied to donations for state campaigns only is that the constitutional reach of the state does not extend to federal campaigns or, indeed, to the administration of party donations, because they do not administer both state and federal matters in terms of those political parties. Of course I would love to have a situation where we could extend our ambit to that and maybe one day the Commonwealth might legislate in that area, too. The honourable member should take that into account.

The members opposite also seem concerned about how the cap amounts were derived. Those amounts were decided after careful consideration of appropriate and fair levels of caps in reforms in other Australian jurisdictions. I note also that those amounts were subject to public consultation through the reforming campaign finance white paper.
The member for Buderim and others raised concerns about expenditure caps. As I said before, it is LNP policy to support a cap on campaign expenditure. In fact, I note the opposition’s comments about minor parties profiting from public funding. The member for Gladstone is not here, but she talked—in quite strident terms, for her—about how this deals with Independents. One of the things it will do is give Independents some certainty that if they get the four per cent and they spend some money in running for a seat, they have a prospect of getting a significant amount of that reimbursed. That is hardly in the personal political interests of the ALP. In fact, if a number of Independents are running for a seat, there is $75,000 plus $75,000 plus $75,000. If we look at election results where Independents get up, frequently it is in seats where several Independents ran. Increasingly that will be the case. That will be counted individually for each of them, which is not the same for political parties that might run multiple candidates, as the National Party did many years ago when Eric Deeral got up in Cook. Of course, they did not want him to get up. They wanted the non-Indigenous person to get up, but it went wrong for them. In any event, that is what happened.

It is also important to note that under this bill no-one can make a profit from public funding. Reimbursement is based on a percentage of spending. Public funding will never exceed the amount spent. There is no basis for the claim by the member for Kawana that the LNP would get a different amount to the ALP if both sides spent the same amount and, as they ordinarily do, ran candidates in 89 seats. The opposition’s amendment in this regard is quite bizarre. The member for Kawana refers to it as ‘one vote, one value’. Clearly, he does not understand that phrase. The opposition’s amendment will mean that each party’s public funding will be dependent upon the amount spent and number of votes received by a completely different party. I fail to see how that is a fairer system and we will not be supporting that amendment.

Some members have expressed concern about interpreting requirements under this bill. As I said before, these are matters of common sense. No legislation can specifically cover every possible situation. The member for Kawana asked about the A-frame that holds up his corflute. If the A-frame is integral to the display of electoral material that is covered by the act, it will be covered too. If that is one of the big issues that is occupying his mind, I am concerned for him. He needs to get out more often.

The government has already announced that the Electoral Commission will be appropriately funded to administer the new requirements. The ECQ is independent and how it does that is a matter for it. However, as part of its compliance functions, I suspect advice will be available to members. I think it is totally legitimate for the ECQ to liaise with political parties in relation to these sorts of administrative matters. It is one of the things that I will look at in the context of the local government electoral act, to encourage that. Often it is a good way to talk in a bipartisan fashion about administrative and machinery things.

The member for Kawana questioned the retrospective application of the bill. I am happy to clarify that retrospectivity will operate once the bill commences, and parties and candidates will be required to establish a state campaign account. Parties and candidates will be able to put into their state campaign account donations received after 1 January only if the donations were received in accordance with the cap. While the bill includes an element of retrospectivity, the explanatory notes are correct in stating that the bill does not impose retrospective obligations. Of course, that was foreshadowed in the white paper.

Some members have raised concerns about the treatment of Independents under the bill. I do not know if the member for Gladstone heard when I said that you can have multiple Independents running in a seat with $75,000 each, which is not the same for a political party. If a political party runs two candidates, they still fall within its one cap. In relation to expenditure caps, the only electorate specific caps are $50,000 for each endorsed candidate from a political party and $75,000 for each Independent candidate. If there are three Independents, they can spend that amount. If the Labor Party has three candidates in one seat, it cannot spend three times the $50,000. The additional $25,000 is for each Independent.

While the expenditure cap for a registered political party is calculated on the basis of seats contested, it does not form part of any particular electorate specific cap. A political party’s cap, that is, $80,000 for the next financial year multiplied by the number of seats contested, has to pay for all statewide campaigning. Much of this is unlikely to be spent on specific seats. The applicable expenditure cap for Independent candidates is 50 per cent more than the electorate specific cap for endorsed candidates to take. Often, a number of Independents will run. In most cases, political parties do not spend money in campaigns against Independents. For example, to my knowledge, the Labor Party does not spend large amounts of money trying to beat the member for Nanango. It is considered that this ensures a level playing field in relation to expenditure. In relation to administrative funding, Independent members are in a different position to registered political parties, which by their nature often have significant recurrent costs for the administration and management of the party structure and activities.

Accordingly, administrative funding for parties will be provided in advance and that will be a certain amount—the lesser of $1 million or $40,000 per elected member every six months. On the other hand, Independent members could be expected to have minimal administrative expenditure. Nonetheless, the bill makes provision for a situation in which an Independent member incurs administrative expenses. Independent members will, therefore, have to substantiate any claim for
administered by providing the necessary receipts. The member for Gladstone raised concerns about determining whether an electorate newsletter would be classified as electoral expenditure under the bill. The threshold for electoral expenditure was intended to ensure that general communication with constituents via, for example, a newsletter about happenings in the electorate would not be captured; only material that advocates a vote for or against a party or a candidate would constitute electoral expenditure. I will give the member another example. If I wrote a letter to a constituent stating, ‘Just writing to let you know re your query about the train services in Wynnum, there is a new service being introduced at this time. And, by the way, vote for me in the election,’ that then advocates a vote. If it merely provides information to someone, as members usually would—I do not advocate a vote for myself when I am writing to a constituent in ordinary cases—then it is not a question of electoral expenditure.

Finally, I want to discuss the admission of the member for Kawana that he has been touting for votes in schools. All I can say about this is—

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr LUCAS: I will say this: I have been here for 15 years. I have seen governments and oppositions in their highs and lows. I have never engaged in nor seen students in years 5 and 7 engage in political commentary about how governments—conservative or otherwise, federal or state—have gone. If he wants to put his foot on the sticky paper, do that. I say this as well: comments describing the contribution of members of parliament in this House as being the same as those of year 7 or year 5 children do nothing to advance the debate on this issue. I am one of the fortunate people to have benefited at the expense of many people who have gone to only year 7 in their schooling and I have paid for several university degrees which I hold. However, I do not consider myself any better, any more worthy or any more intelligent than those people who did not have the benefit of what I was offered. I also say this to the honourable member. I heard members in this House from his side—one tonight—who have actually spoken out against LNP policy. Another one, whom I will not name—and off the top of my head I think it was last year—came out and spoke directly against the provisions of a private member’s bill that the member’s side of parliament introduced. This parliament is a broad church. I do not think it is helpful or fair to characterise people's standard of education or use that as a method for criticising people.

In conclusion, I want to foreshadow my intention to move a number of amendments during the consideration of the bill in detail, and I want to thank the shadow minister. He and I have had some discussions about facilitating the consideration of the amendments from both sides, and I thank him for the courtesy he has afforded in that regard. Of course, I am similarly working with him in that regard. It simply makes matters helpful. These amendments are mainly of a minor or technical nature and will ensure that the objectives of the bill are not undermined. In particular, I will be moving amendments relating to the powers of the Electoral Commission to ensure that it is able to effectively audit the campaign accounts of the parties and candidates. I again want to thank honourable members for their contributions to this debate. I am very proud that I am a member of parliament that has people from a broad variety of political parties who can give me a hard time. I am proud they have the ability to do that.

There are many countries in the world where, either by deliberate action of government or by constructive action of government, others are not able to participate in the political process.

Division: Question put—That the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill be now read a second time.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O’Brien): Order! Can I just acknowledge former member for Ipswich David Hamill, who is in the public gallery, just as he is leaving. Welcome back to the House, David.


Resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a second time.

Division: Question put—That the Electoral (Truth in Advertising) Amendment Bill be now read a second time.
Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O’Brien): I do apologise, members. The bells should have rung for one minute. I owe you all three minutes of your life. But if there are any further divisions on this matter, the bells will be rung for one minute.

AYES, 37—Bates, Bleijie, Crandon, Cripps, Cunningham, Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Douglass, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, Foley, Gibson, Hopper, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, McArdle, McLindon, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Powell, Pratt, Robinson, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Rickuss, Sorensen


Resolved in the negative.

Division: Question put—That the Electoral Reform Bill be now read a second time.

AYES, 5—Cunningham, Messenger, Pratt. Tellers: Foley, McLindon


Resolved in the negative.

Debate, on motion of Ms Spence, adjourned.

MOTION

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Hon. JC SPENCE (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.05 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That, not withstanding anything contained in standing and sessional orders for this day’s sitting, the House can continue to meet past 10 pm to consider government business until the adjournment is moved, to be followed by a 30-minute adjournment debate.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

ELECTORAL REFORM AND ACCOUNTABILITY AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 11—

Mr LUCAS (10.08 pm): I seek leave to move amendments Nos 1 to 5 en bloc.

Leave granted.

Mr LUCAS: I move the following amendments—

1 Clause 2 (Commencement)
Page 12, lines 5 and 6—

omit.

2 Clause 4 (Amendment of s 3 (Definitions))
Page 12, line 15—

omit.

3 Clause 4 (Amendment of s 3 (Definitions))
Page 13, line 13—

omit.

4 Clause 4 (Amendment of s 3 (Definitions))
Page 13, lines 19 and 20—

omit.

5 Clause 4 (Amendment of s 3 (Definitions))
Page 16, line 14—

omit.
As I indicated, the member for Kawana and I have discussed streamlining the amendments. This is done with the consent of the opposition, as his are with me. I table the explanatory notes to my amendments.

Tabled paper: Explanatory notes to Hon. Paul Lucas’s amendments to the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill [4434].

Amendments agreed to.
Clauses 1 to 11, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 12—

Mr BLEIJIE (10.09 pm): Clause 12 of the bill talks about the way in which someone makes a postal vote application. For the benefit of the Deputy Premier—and I guess it is the same for the Labor Party as it is for the LNP—in the past when an election was called candidates or political parties prepared requests for postal vote applications. An election is called and applications are sent out. The constituents fill them in and send them back to us. We then forward them to the Electoral Commission. This amendment, although minor, inserts the words ‘in the approved form’. I seek some clarification and advice from the Attorney-General with respect to the process by which parties now send out postal vote applications. We can make our own forms. They may have slogans on them. There may be faces of the candidate on them. Under this provision, they will essentially be in the approved form. Will the Electoral Commission put out an approved form that we as candidates cannot amend, or is the idea behind the bill that we can, subject to approval from the Electoral Commission, potentially amend it so it profiles the candidate? I seek the advice of the Deputy Premier on that issue.

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for the question. One of the issues that was raised in the matter of Caltabiano v Electoral Commission of Queensland and Anor by Her Honour Justice Atkinson was that there was some evidence about difficulties in different formats of postal voting forms, including adhesive tape used as a seal which prevented the standard scanning machines from operating and forms that allowed two electors to apply on the one page and sometimes people mistakenly filled those out. There is no intention from my point of view of stopping political parties from legitimately putting campaign material on the other side of it, as both sides do.

I am not sure if I got the full gist of what the honourable member was saying correctly. It is not really possible to collect a postal vote prior to an election because most postal voters may not know whether they qualify for one or not on election day. For example, you do not know whether you will be away on election day if you do not know when the election day is. I do not think he was dealing with that part; it is more that they do not actually have a particular election date normally on them and in relation to them being preprinted. I do not think that is an issue. The short answer is that it is not intended to preclude that.

As I said earlier, I am pretty keen to see how we can work in a bipartisan fashion to establish some sort of dialogue with the Electoral Commission in relation to administrative matters more generally and the conduct of elections. I do not think that is an unreasonable thing to do. It is something we will need to do on a bipartisan basis—actually, a nonpartisan basis would be a better way of saying it because there are Independents involved as well.

Clause 12, as read, agreed to.
Clauses 13 and 14, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—

Mr LUCAS (10.13 pm): I move the following amendment—

After clause 14

Page 22, after line 16—

insert—

‘14A Omission of pt 7

Part 7—

omit.’.

This amendment merely removes the redundant part that provided for a schedule. The old Commonwealth Electoral Act schedule was called up by the state act at the back of it. We have now incorporated it into the body of the act itself, so I have moved this essentially technical amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 15—

Mr BLEIJIE (10.13 pm): I move the following amendments—

Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)

Page 23, line 4—

omit, insert—

‘of 1 or more registered political parties; or

(c) is a registered industrial organisation that is affiliated with 1 or more registered political parties.’.
Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 29, after line 28—
insert—
'(6) For this section, the provision of volunteer labour does not include time spent by an official of a registered industrial organisation working for a political party with which the industrial organisation is affiliated.'.

Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 38, line 18—
'omit, insert—
'Subject to subsection (3), the'.

Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 39, after line 9—
insert—
'(3) The amount of election funding to which a registered political party, other than the winning party, is entitled for an election is the lesser of the following amounts—
(a) the amount calculated under subsection (2);
(b) the total of the election funding amount for each formal first preference vote given for candidates endorsed by the party for the election.

'(4) In this section—
election funding amount means the amount that is equal to the election funding received by the winning party for the election divided by the number of formal first preference votes given for candidates endorsed by the winning party for the election.

winning party, for an election, means the registered political party that has the most candidates endorsed by the party elected as members of the Legislative Assembly at the election.'.

Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 39, line 16—
'omit, insert—
'Subject to subsection (3), the'.

Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 40, after line 4—
insert—
'(3) The amount of election funding to which a candidate, other than the winning candidate, is entitled for an election is the lesser of the following amounts—
(a) the amount calculated under subsection (2);
(b) the total of the election funding amount for each formal first preference vote given for the candidate for the election.

'(4) In this section—
election funding amount means the amount that is equal to the election funding received by the winning candidate for the election divided by the number of formal first preference votes given for the winning candidate for the election.

winning candidate, for an election, means the candidate elected as a member of the Legislative Assembly at the election.'.

I table the explanatory notes to my amendments.

Tabled paper: Explanatory notes to Mr Jarrod Bleijie's amendments to the Electoral Reform and Accountability Amendment Bill [4435].

These amendments deal with only one clause of the bill. Members would note that clause 15 represents essentially nearly the entire bill so it is worthwhile looking at these amendments en bloc. That is what I suggested to the Attorney-General and he agreed as well in relation to his 54 amendments. So when we look at the amendments that I have just moved, I think we look at the bill in its entirety.

I said in the debate today that I believe the fundamental reform of this bill is repugnant in nature, and that is why we have proposed these amendments tonight that really get to the heart of integrity and accountability in Queensland. As was reported in the media and as I stated in the House today, I have essentially called these amendments the integrity test of the Labor Party. If the Labor government wants fairness across the board in terms of these new electoral reforms in relation to these donations, then it really has to take into consideration the seriousness of these amendments which I am proposing.

Some of these six amendments are more substantial and some are consequential amendments. Amendment No. 1 deals with clause 15 and the insertion of a new paragraph, part 9A, which talks about ‘a registered industrial organisation that is affiliated with 1 or more registered political parties’. I made the point in the debate today that there are numerous unions in Queensland and that 22 have affiliations with the Labor Party.
Under the Commonwealth Corporations Act, if a corporation is related to another corporation entity, then they are described as an associated entity and of course they fall under the trap in the bill with the definition of an associated entity. However, when we talk about third parties and unions and 22 potential affiliations with the Queensland Labor Party, then the amendment seeks to say essentially that if there are unions that are affiliated with one or more registered political parties then they are captured under the same provisions that catch other entities—like corporations that because of the Corporations Act may be related and therefore under this bill are an associated entity.

My understanding is that some of the constitutions of the unions even declare an affiliation to the Labor Party and that, to some extent, Labor members of parliament have to be aligned to some form of union. I think it is only fair that, if we are going to put related corporations that are campaigning for a particular registered political party, the same should really apply to the affiliated unions. In this amendment, I have not described it as an affiliation with the Labor Party—this is not an attack on the Labor Party; it is an affiliation with a registered political party. The definition is that if there were unions affiliated with the LNP in Queensland then they would fall under this category as well.

My amendments also relate to volunteer labour, and I know that the Deputy Premier talked about this in his summing-up tonight. There is a provision in the Electoral Commission Queensland handbook that says that, if someone is employed by a union which is doing voluntary work for the Labor Party, there is a potential risk that it is not considered in fact as a disclosure obligation or a gift in kind. This amendment seeks to put in place that if there is an association with a particular employed person of a union who is working in a voluntary capacity then they will fall under the same provisions of services as in a gift in kind under this bill.

We also are seeking to move amendments with respect to a registered political party. I know the Deputy Premier talked about this issue when we were talking about public funding. In my presentation to the House today I referred to the current system of voting and public funding. No-one is denying that we have public funding in Queensland. We do. We get $1.60 vote, but it is based on the number of votes we get. So if one were to receive 16,000 votes out of 30,000 votes, that person would receive the dollar value per vote they get. Under these amendments, because this bill is based on expenditure, if the candidates and the political parties in each electorate spend up to the cap—so you are looking at $50,000 for each electorate for the candidate and $80,000 potentially for the political party, totalling $130,000—if I as a candidate spent $50,000 in my electorate I am entitled to $26,000. If a candidate—I will mention the Greens—received 4½ per cent of the vote, they receive a couple of thousand votes in the same election but they have the same expenditure as I. As I put the figures to the House today, essentially on a vote value, the Greens would receive up to $30 a vote. I cannot see the rationale for getting. So if one were to receive 16,000 votes out of 30,000 votes, that person would receive the dollar value per vote they get. Under these amendments, because this bill is based on expenditure, if the candidates and the political parties in each electorate spend up to the cap—so you are looking at $50,000 for each electorate for the candidate and $80,000 potentially for the political party, totalling $130,000—if I as a candidate spent $50,000 in my electorate I am entitled to $26,000. If a candidate—I will mention the Greens—received 4½ per cent of the vote, they receive a couple of thousand votes in the same election but they have the same expenditure as I. As I put the figures to the House today, essentially on a vote value, the Greens would receive up to $30 a vote. I cannot see the rationale for spending public money where we go from $1.60 a vote to potentially—on the assumption that a candidate spends up to the expenditure cap—the LNP and Labor receiving just over $8 for each vote and potential Greens candidates receiving up to $30 for each vote.

In the political party sense and the candidature sense, essentially upon election the table as appears in the bill before the House has the figures of 10 per cent to 90 per cent or 100 per cent of what you spend. The amendment basically says that you go by that table that is in the bill, but the party that wins government does not set the amount of public funding. Based on that formula already contained in the bill, if it works out that the candidate receives X dollars per vote, then we apply that figure to all candidates and all political parties. So the party that has won the election will receive X dollars based on their vote. I think that if we are going to have any fairness in this bill we should provide a fair and equitable solution that would increase the public funding from what it is now based on the model that is contained in the bill.

These amendments are important. We are talking in this House about integrity and accountability. I note that the Deputy Premier was talking about bipartisanship potentially with the Electoral Commission. This bill is a fundamental legislative reform that will entitle people to X amount of public funding. It will cap expenditure. It will determine what political parties may receive in an election. I think it is fair that we try to balance the ledger and I think it is fair that we have an integrity test on the Labor Party in terms of these amendments that I am moving tonight. I would encourage all of those members opposite to really look into the hearts and minds of those people who live in Grantham and in other areas across the state from whom, as members of parliament, they will be receiving a hefty amount of more money in public funding and really ask themselves the question: what could Queensland do better to serve the people of Queensland and what else can we better spend these taxpayer resources on?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for his contribution. The government opposes the amendments that he has moved en bloc, but I will make some comments in relation to them, although I dealt with them, as he did, in the second reading debate. The amendments seek to expand the definition of ‘associated entity’ to an industrial organisation—and the amendments single out industrial organisations—that are affiliated with a political party or parties. Of course, the example that the member has provided relates to the Labor Party. As both a lawyer and someone who has been involved in the Labor Party for a long time, it never ceases to amaze me—and I am not trying to be funny or arrogant about this—how little knowledge there is on the other side of politics about how the union movement functions and its legal relationship with individual parts of it. I want to deal with that issue.
There are provisions in this bill relating to associated entities, that is, Paul Lucas owning three different companies and each circumventing the cap by donating three different times. That is pretty standard in law in many areas. In fact, the bill calls up the Corporations Act definition. Section 50 of the Corporations Act states that, where a corporation is a holding company or a subsidiary of another corporation or a subsidiary of a holding company of another corporation, the two are related to each other. Section 46 states that a holding company controls the subsidiary by either controlling the composition of the board, controlling the votes at the general meeting or holding more than half of the issue share capital that carries the right to distribution of profits or capital. For example, the AWU has a membership that is comprised of people who work in the callings that it covers and who have elected to join the union. They elect an executive. The ETU does not cover members that the AWU covers. The ETU’s membership is comprised of electricians who work in various callings and they elect an executive. The same applies for the metalworkers union. So the unions are not comprised of the same people. That would be very bizarre. The unions are not essentially the same organisations. In fact, they spend their lives fighting with each other over what people call demarcation disputes and the like.

**Mr Cripps:** But that is like saying Canegrowers and Growcom are two totally different organisations.

**Mr Lucas:** For that purpose they are and for the purpose of this legislation they are treated differently for that very good reason. Because they may have—

**Mr Cripps** interjected.

**Mr Lucas:** That is correct. In fact, it is a very good analogy. They may, in fact, have a common interest in certain things. They may agree with certain aspects of a government’s policy but in other areas they may have quite divergent views. I will give members some other examples. Mining companies are not the same. They are not associated with each other. They might have a common interest in certain areas and they might all be part of the Queensland Resources Council, but this bill does not treat all mining companies as coming together. So Rio Tinto, BHP Billiton, Vale and Xstrata are not all considered the one group because they are all in the Queensland Resources Council. The Queensland Resources Council might agree with AgForce on something, but they are not all the one group. That is essentially the crux of the matter.

The next point is that it is wrong in principle to think that the interests of the union movement are necessarily the same as the interests of the Labor Party—or, indeed, any other party. For example, the Greens received donations from the ETU—I certainly think in Victoria and maybe in Queensland as well; I am not sure—in recent elections. The Minister for Finance and the Arts had the ETU campaigning against her. How ironic is it that by calling it up as an associated entity the expenditure that it provides, if it did provide it in an election campaign, would then be called up in relation to the election of the member for Rockhampton? That is ludicrous. Those sorts of things do not make sense. The next point is that, politically, putting aside industrially, unions frequently have different views. Bill Ludwig wanted Peter Simpson expelled from the Labor Party. I do not think they agree on a lot of things. They might not like Work Choices, but there would be a lot of other things that they disagree on.

That is the nature of these organisations. Increasingly, whether it be unions or indeed AgForce or Growcom, they will look at third-party campaigning. In fact, they will not be advocating votes for particular people in many instances; they will look at policies and reserve their rights to do that, as they do in the United States. Of course, if they make donations then they come within the other area. If one treated them as the same legal entities when they are not—they are not the same as companies with similar holdings—they would end up getting knocked off in the High Court as offending the implied freedom of political communication that exists in the Constitution.

The next point is in relation to volunteer labour. This provision singles out union volunteer labour. One can be a volunteer from any other organisation and that is okay, but if one is from a union one cannot volunteer. That is not okay. That is ridiculous. If a union official paying your wages says, ‘Go down on work time and door-knock with Paul Lucas in an election campaign,’ that is covered as an in-kind donation. If, on the other hand, someone flexes off, whether they are a public servant, a lawyer or a union official, it is legitimate for them to campaign. Again, that runs the risk of getting knocked off. I am not trying to be smart about this; I am just trying to tell it like it is.

Finally, the amendment in relation to voting and expenditure is a philosophical issue. The other two are simply wrong in principle and in law. The final amendment is a philosophical issue about how one might finance campaigns and the like and I have covered that. It has occurred to me that Independents have an inability to actually call on the funds that political parties can call on. It is the risk that they place themselves under in relation to campaigns if they do not win but still perform credibly. What this allows them to do is have some certainty in relation to their performance in those campaigns in relation to their expenditure. I understand what the member for Gladstone said earlier about having
Mr MOORHEAD: I want to confirm a couple of things that the Deputy Premier has said in his response. We have a situation in Queensland where there are 35 registered unions, and my advice is that approximately 22 are affiliated with the Labor Party in Queensland. Members will note that in the bill there is a provision in terms of campaigning for particular purposes for a registered political party if it is one of their goals. I would submit to the House that some of these 22 unions have a direct affiliation with the Labor Party. Some have this affiliation contained within their constitution. I believe, then, that there is a direct correlation between the Labor Party of Queensland and the union. There are many unions out of the affiliated unions to a registered political party that will invest money. In the second reading debate I went through a list and the member for Caloundra went through an enormous list of the donations given by the unions to the Labor Party. It is fair if we are going to do it to corporations under the Commonwealth law that they are associated under the Corporations Act that have to abide by the associated entities under the Commonwealth law. That legislation provides that if they are associated under the Commonwealth law they are associated pursuant to this bill as an associated entity. I do not think anyone in this House can reject or deny the claim that the union movement traditionally is the basis of the Labor Party. I quoted from the member for Keppel’s contribution last night in the adjournment debate, when he drew the attention of the House to the fact that the Labor Party is actually the political arm of the union movement. There is a direct correlation, an affiliation, between these unions and the Labor Party.

An entity that spends over $10,000 has to register as a third party. Every third party can spend $500,000 across the state. If they are a registered third party they have the ability to spend $500,000 across the state. Therefore, each individual union will have the ability to spend $500,000 across the state. The amendment that I am moving deals with the value of the vote and making it equal for all candidates, not so there will be a discrepancy and someone gets $30, someone gets $8 and someone gets $7.

One only has to look through the history of the EARC recommendations and the speech that I referred to by Wayne Goss, the Labor Premier at the time, that referred to EARC. Obviously EARC was set up as a commission to look at electoral boundaries but it also delved into other issues following Fitzgerald. I made mention of that because Goss even talked about the recommendations of EARC as essentially one vote, one value. I think if we are going to have fairness and democracy across Queensland the applicable sum should apply to every candidate: Independent, Liberal National Party, Labor Party or whatever political party a candidate represents.

Mr MOORHEAD: Like the member for Stafford, I have refrained from participating in this debate but it has just come to a point where the opposition’s misunderstanding of this bill and the way that the union movement operates has got to me. The test of a holding company in the Corporations Law is an element of control between the holding company and the subsidiary company. To apply that same test to the union movement is to suggest that the ALP has a controlling stake in the union movement. Let us just say that that is not the case.

Every one of those 22 unions would find offensive the notion that they are somehow controlled by the ALP. The ALP is a democratic process and unions have some say in that, but each one of those unions is fiercely independent and fiercely democratic. Unlike us, they have to go and ask people whether they want to participate in the political debate within that union. Every week they have to ask union members to put their hand in their pocket to pay to be a part of that organisation. They have to have—and they do have—very robust debate, including about affiliation. The union that I am from has a debate every year. At every state conference we have this debate about affiliation.

Mr Schwarten: The Queensland Nurses Union just recently had it.

Mr MOORHEAD: There is plenty of debate. It it very robust debate. Warren Entsch is a former delegate from the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union. He was a mill delegate from the sugar industry. These unions represent a great diversity of people. To suggest that there is somehow a controlling relationship between the ALP and unions is ridiculous. Then to suggest that there is an identity of interest between those unions is ridiculous.

What we are talking about here is third-party campaigning. We are not talking about unions who are handing over half a million dollars to the ALP. We are talking about unions that are running campaigns on the issues that affect their members. The union that I am from, the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union—I have always been quite open about that—does not write to its members and say, ‘Thou shalt vote Labor’. That is not its job.

Mr Bleijie: It donates without telling them.
Mr MOORHEAD: Unions quite clearly tell their members. Under the registration and accountability requirements of the Workplace Relations Act and now the Fair Work Act, unions are required to declare to their members donations they make to political parties. They have to declare whether their officials are on superannuation boards. They have to declare where every cent goes because, unlike many other organisations, the funds of the union belong to members. If unions wind up, the results of that dissolution go to the members who own it. This is a fundamental misunderstanding.

A government member: Disaffiliation means you don’t pay it back anymore.

Mr MOORHEAD: Exactly. The third party campaigning that unions do is not typically a vote for Labor, because unions have an array of interests to represent. In part of these campaigns they go to their members and say, ‘These are the five or six issues that are important to you and this is where each of the parties stand on them.’ At the last federal election, the AMWU went to its union membership, which is deeply committed to trade training, and reported to its members what the federal government was going to do to trade training centres in this state. It talked about a range of other issues, gave a report card to members and explained that. It never said, ‘Thou shall vote Labor.’ It never does. It says to members, ‘On the issues that affect you as a worker this is where the major parties stand. This is where the Greens stand, this is where the ALP stands and this is where the Liberals stand.’ As the member for Springwood rightly points out, the ISQ and Catholic schools do that also. It is a very clear and honest way of campaigning.

Mr Lucas: AMA, RACQ.

Mr MOORHEAD: Indeed. On the issue of officials, I think the LNP forgets that the unions have an industrial role, which is their job. For them, politics is an added extra that they do to add to the political representation of their members. Day in and day out, they argue for better conditions for their members. Union officials do not spend their days sitting around and looking for political opportunities. They spend their days working hard. They have to account to their members. Every month they have to report to their members. They have to explain to union members where their money is going. They have to explain why people should pay their $10 a week to be a member of that union—

(Time expired)

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: With respect, I think that the previous speaker must think that we have lived under a rock. Most of us have had a reasonable association with unions, either as members or as spouses of members, as in my case. Unions have reporting obligations to their members, but they do not ring up and say, ‘Can we give $100,000 to such and such a political party?’ The members find out that that money is going to be given, but it is a fait accompli. Please do not treat us as village idiots. Give me a break! When we have elections, people in the community, members of unions, receive phone calls to say, ‘Vote for so and so or this is what it is going to happen.’ Quite a confronting if not threatening statement is made. Please do not make out that the union movement is benign.

This election is different. I think this election is unprecedented in that, apart from the AWU, all the unions in my electorate have been offended and affronted by the state ALP’s treatment of workers in Queensland with the sale of QR, the taking away of the petrol subsidy, the duplicity that occurred from the last election and post-election. The unions have been affronted by that. I have been up to Rocky and have seen the sign—I do not know if it is still up—about the ETU against the member for Rockhampton. I have never before seen a sign like that. It was a great big billboard.

Mr Lucas: You are illustrating the point.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: But the minister has to acknowledge that it is unprecedented. It does not happen at every election. If you say that the union movement is a discrete group of people who make decisions, in a normal electoral process you can guarantee that the vast majority of unions will support the ALP. All we are saying is that this bill is not fair in its handling of funding. It is discriminatory and that needs to be recognised.

Mr Lucas: I will deal with a couple of things. The honourable member for Gladstone might want to say that she did not come down in the last shower and that it is no surprise that many unions might support the Labor Party. Importantly, she said that when her husband was a member they did not consult him when they made a donation or an affiliation to the Labor Party. My first point is this: in relation to campaign donations they will have the same cap and it will not be $500,000, as the honourable member says. It will be $5,000 to the party and $2,000 for a candidate per party; in other words, $7,000 to the Labor Party if you like.

Mr Bleijie: A third party can donate $500,000.

Mr Lucas: No, it does not and I will come to that in a minute. Secondly, many companies donate moneys to political parties from either side and, indeed, to Independents. Does anyone think that when the National Australia Bank bankrolled the Howard government time after time, it held a vote among its shareholders or asked its customers? Of course not! Members should not put forward this sham that the unions are put to a higher level of democracy than the corporate sector. That is how it is.
A number of members love to lambast us all the time about what Peter Simpson and others think. When I go to cabinet meetings increasingly I will see the ETU demonstrating against various government policies or the Police Union or the Teachers Union expressing views about government wage policy as they are entitled to do. They are activating their role in a democracy. Increasingly what they will do—and as a third party they are entitled to do this—is spend money in advocating for policies. Once they trigger advocacy for a vote for a particular political party or against a particular political party, they fall within the donations cap of $5,000 and $2,000 that applies to third parties. They are simply not in a position to spend $500,000 as the member for Kawana suggests. It is the same if, for example, they said, ‘Here are the education policies of the two political parties in the state election and you should vote against the LNP’ or ‘You should vote against the Labor Party’, because they would be participating in the campaign cap that the donations in a campaign fall under. It is as simple as that. I do not think that we need to protract the debate any further. I think that makes it crystal clear.

Division: Question put—That the member for Kawana’s amendments be agreed to.


Resolved in the negative.

Non-government amendments (Mr Bleijie) negatived.

Mr LUCAS: I move the following amendments—

7 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 22, line 26, ‘registered’—

omit.

8 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 23, lines 5 and 6—

omit, insert—

‘auditor’ means an individual who—

(a) has the qualifications or experience prescribed for this definition; and

(b) is not, and has not ever been, a member of a political party.’.

9 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 23, lines 25 and 26, ‘on the day of the poll’—

omit, insert—

‘at 6 p.m. on the polling day’.

10 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 24, line 14—

omit.

11 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 24, lines 17 to 20—

omit, insert—

‘electoral expenditure’ see section 177AB.’.

12 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 26, lines 3 to 7—

omit.

13 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 29, line 17, after ‘division 4’—

insert—

‘or 5’.

14 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 30, line 7, ‘party’—

omit, insert—

‘candidate’.

15 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 30, line 8, ‘7, 8, 10 and 11’—

omit, insert—

‘3, 4, 6 and 9’.
16 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 31, after line 21—
insert—

‘177BBA Appointment of agents by unregistered third parties

(1) An unregistered third party may appoint a person to be the agent of the third party for this part.
(2) During any period for which there is no appointment in force under subsection (1) for a third party—
(a) if the third party is a person, the third party is taken to be the third party’s own agent for this part; or
(b) if the third party is not a person, each member of the executive committee of the third party is taken to be
the agent of the third party.’.

17 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 36, line 3, ‘a third party’—
omit, insert—
‘the agent of an unregistered third party’.

18 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 36, line 9, ‘registered’—
omit.

19 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 37, after line 18—
insert—

‘(1A) The agent of a third party must ensure the following donations are not paid into the third party’s campaign
account—
(a) a donation that is not a political donation;
(b) a political donation that is made or received in contravention of division 6.
Maximum penalty—200 penalty units.’.

20 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 37, line 19, after ‘subsection (1)’—
insert—
‘or (1A)’.

21 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 37, lines 24 to 26—
omit.

22 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 48, line 17, before ‘A’—
insert—

‘(1)’.

23 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 48, after line 30—
insert—

‘(2) However, a registered political party is not eligible for administrative funding under this division if the agent of the
party has, by written notice given to the commission, indicated that it does not wish to receive administrative
funding under this Act.’.

24 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 49, line 27, ‘endorsed by’—
omit, insert—
‘a member of’.

25 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 49, line 31, ‘(2)’—
omit, insert—
‘(3)’.

26 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 55, after line 24—
insert—

‘(1A) Also, a gift in kind made to a registered political party, candidate or third party is a political donation if it is made
during, or for use during, the capped expenditure period for an election for campaign purposes, whether or not it is
accompanied by a statement from the person making the gift that the gift is intended for that use.’.
27 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 59, line 22—
omit.

28 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 61, line 15—
omit.

29 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 63, line 3—
omit.

30 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 63, line 25, ‘donor’—
omit, insert—
‘person who made the donation’.

31 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 64, line 13, before ‘gifts’—
insert—
‘political donations and’.

32 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 67, lines 1 and 2, ‘State electoral’—
omit, insert—
‘political’.

33 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 69, line 32, ‘donor’s’—
omit, insert—
‘third party’s’.

34 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 72, line 21, ‘donor’s’—
omit, insert—
‘person’s’.

35 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 75, line 3, ‘donor’s’—
omit, insert—
‘person’s’.

36 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 86, line 16, ‘during’—
omit, insert—
‘for’.

37 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 87, line 7, ‘during’—
omit, insert—
‘for’.

38 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 87, line 17, ‘A candidate for an election must not, during’—
omit, insert—
‘The agent of a candidate for an election must ensure the candidate does not, for’.

39 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 87, line 23, ‘A candidate for an election must ensure that, during’—
omit, insert—
‘The agent of a candidate for an election must ensure, for’.

40 Clause 15 (Insertion of new pt 9A)
Page 88, line 5, ‘A registered third party must not, during’—
omit, insert—
‘The agent of a registered third party must ensure the party does not, for’.
These amendments are largely technical ones, so I will not discuss them in any great detail. There is an explanatory memorandum that has previously been tabled in relation to those. I will just highlight a number of them. Amendment No. 8 provides that a person can only be an auditor under the act if he or she is not and has not ever been a member of a political party. That is to ensure integrity of
that audit process, which is important. Amendment No. 23 provides that a registered political party may give notice that it does not wish to receive administrative funding under this act. I think we have discussed that before and I do not propose to speak further on that issue. I have indicated the government’s position in relation to that and the opposition has indicated its position. Amendment No. 26 clarifies the operation of political donations in relation to gifts in kind. As I said, the rest of these amendments are largely technical in nature and are not of great substance. Amendment No. 49 provides that the returns of electoral expenditure do not apply if the expenditure for the capped expenditure period for the election that was incurred by or with the authority of the registered third party is $200 or less.

Amendments agreed to.

Mr BLEIJIE: As I have outlined tonight, clause 15 of the bill is essentially the entire bill. We are dealing with many matters here. I recommend that the Deputy Premier and his departmental staff get their pens and paper out because I have a series of questions that I want to put to the Deputy Premier, and I have to do it all within the time specified otherwise the limitation will go. Talking about clause 15, the Deputy Premier indicated in the debate on the amendments that I moved that registered third parties are not able to contribute $500,000 to the campaign across the state. That is what the Deputy Premier said. In saying that, I draw the Deputy Premier’s attention to the definition of a registered third party under the legislation. A registered third party is basically an entity that is not the registered political party, a candidate. Page 84 of the bill under subsection (g) states—

for a registered third party—

$500000, but no more than $75000 in relation to a particular electoral district ...

So if a party other than a registered political party does want to spend $500,000, they give notice to the Electoral Commission that they want to spend over $10,000. They will be noted as a registered third party. Under the provisions on page 84 of the bill, a registered third party can incur expenditure of up to $500,000 across the state. The campaign expenditure is obviously defined in the bill as well.

I turn now to clause 15 of the bill. As I indicated in my contribution to the second reading debate, I note that the Deputy Premier—and he is the Acting Premier today—tried to give explanations in his response as to the corflutes and their timber stands and so forth. I thought I ought to talk about this for a little while tonight. Proposed new section 177AB of the bill defines electoral expenditure. It states—

(a) the broadcasting, during the capped expenditure period for the election, of an advertisement that advocates a vote for or against a candidate ...

(b) the publishing in a journal, during the capped expenditure period ...

(c) the publishing on the internet, during the capped expenditure period for the election, of an advertisement that advocates a vote for or against a candidate or for or against a registered political party, even if the internet site on which the publication is made is located outside Queensland ...

Mr Lucas: Is this 177AB you say?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, the definition of electoral expenditure. It goes on—

(d) the display, during the capped expenditure period for the election, at a theatre or other place of entertainment, of an advertisement that advocates a vote for or against a candidate or for or against a registered political party ...

(e) the production of an advertisement that advocates a vote for or against a candidate or for or against a registered political party ...

I will not bore members with the detail, but it then lists (f), (g) and (h). It is an exhaustive definition of electoral expenditure in terms of things like production of material and so forth. This is where the issue becomes one of compliance.

In an interjection that the Deputy Premier made to me during the debate, he said essentially that the courts will sort it out. I think it is far better to have legislation that goes through this place without particularly mentioning, ‘Let’s not worry about it tonight in this place. Let’s let the courts sort out the interpretation.’ Some form of interpretation must be given in the bill. When there are uncertainties in the briefing that, as I explained earlier, the member for Burnett, the member for Gladstone and I had, members would certainly agree that elements of the answers to our questions were certainly vague in terms of not really having a full understanding of the aspects of the bill. During that briefing we did bring up what I thought were questions that will come up as soon as this bill receives assent and which should have been thought of prior to the bill being introduced into the House.

There are other issues. The Deputy Premier has mentioned corflutes. I want to know from the Attorney-General whether, if this bill passes tonight, he can give an indication of when he expects the capped expenditure period to start. The capped expenditure period for the initial period starts the day after the day of assent. I am wanting an indication from the Deputy Premier of when he expects the capped expenditure period to start.

The second element I seek advice from the Deputy Premier on is: can the Deputy Premier advise the House if there are any examples of electoral expenditure that can be incurred during the capped expenditure period that would count towards a candidate’s or party’s cap? I will repeat the question: can the Deputy Premier advise the House if there are any examples he can give of electoral expenditure that can be incurred during the capped expenditure period that would count towards a candidate’s or party’s cap?
When we look at particular items of issue that are contained in the bill, the Attorney-General made the comment earlier in the debate that we should not get into simple matters. But the simple matters are what will hold up compliance issues with the Electoral Commission. We are in the phase of a potential election coming up before March next year. I think it is incumbent upon the Deputy Premier to advise of these sorts of things.

At the briefing the member for Burnett showed his MP newsletter that he sends out to the electorate. I raised the issue about an MP newsletter being distributed in the capped expenditure period. I was asking whether that particular type of MP newsletter—bearing in mind that we will be in the capped expenditure period after the day of assent—will be considered to be electoral expenditure. The advice that was given to us in the briefing was: ‘Does it say “vote” on it?’ We replied no. But that would be certainly a very restrictive definition if that is the interpretation of this bill. Are we talking about electoral expenditure only if the item has the word ‘vote’ on it? Or if we are talking about a placard with ‘Jarrod Bleijie MP’ on it, is that advocating for a vote? I am after some advice in terms of the interpretation of advocating a vote. How will that impact on current members of the House going forward to the next election in what we distribute to our electorate that may fall under the expenditure cap—which should not because we are corresponding with our electorate for legitimate purposes for which we have been elected?

There were issues raised about mobile billboards, billboard frames and trailers. I understand that the Deputy Premier could not go through everything, but he did describe the A-frame. What is concerning in his definition of the A-frame expenditure was that the timber frame would in fact form part of the overall cap. So we are going to have a situation with our expenditure cap where candidates are going to spend potentially a few thousand dollars on corflutes with the frames but the frames mean nothing. How does the frame advocate a vote? Surely it is the material or the corflute that we are talking about. Is hiring a billboard included? Is advertising on the side of a bus included? When people donate a bus, is the donation of the bus included?

All of these things will become compliance issues and it will be an absolute headache. What about T-shirts that contain candidates’ names, party logos, electorates or slogans? If I wear the T-shirts I have at the moment, is that advocating a vote? If I wear it to the shopping centre, is that advocating one particular vote or another? I do need an explanation from the Deputy Premier with respect to how broad the interpretation of advocating for a vote is, because it will create much concern and many compliance issues within the electorate.

Also, section 177CB talks about state campaign accounts. I want advice in respect of the GST issues. Political parties at the moment can claim GST on their expenses. How does the bill impact on the GST and what advice has the Attorney-General been given with respect to GST issues?

(Time expired)

Mr Lucas: I thank the honourable member for his contribution. The provisions of proposed section 177AB are not new to electoral law in Queensland. So, contrary to what the honourable member has postulated that this is new and asking how we are going to interpret it, those provisions are in the current Electoral Act 1992 in the schedule at the back, described there as section 308. The reason it is described as section 308 is that it is called up from the Commonwealth Electoral Act and that is because the current electoral law in Queensland calls up federal law which then requires, as part of the existing legal requirements, reporting of electoral expenditure. There is nothing new. I table it for the benefit of the member.


If the member has a copy of the current act he will then be able to read that against section 177AB and see that very much of it is largely identical, with the exception that section 177AB refers to capped expenditure periods and the like. In terms of the definitions of things like broadcasting, section 308(a) states—

the broadcasting, during the election period, of an advertisement relating to the election ...

Section 177AB(a) states—

the broadcasting, during the capped expenditure period for the election, of an advertisement that advocates a vote for or against a candidate or for or against a registered political party ...

So broadcasting is included. It is the period of time the expenditure cap relates to, for example. There is nothing particularly new or unusual here, with respect. So I point out to the shadow minister that he is jumping at shadows in that regard.

In relation to whether something falls within electoral expenditure or not, I think it is a pretty clear, common-sense thing. There is no intention in this legislation to include within your campaign expenditure newsletters that you might send to people, except to the extent, then, that a newsletter might advocate for or against a political party or for or against a candidate and be during the capped expenditure period, which is essentially a year before the election is due. So for the other two years it is not related, and for the year before an election period if it says ‘Vote against the LNP’ or ‘Vote for the
Labor Party’ or ‘Vote against Paul Lucas’ or ‘Vote against Paul Lucas’s candidate’ then it is something that is included. If it is something that is clearly not included then that is not an issue. This is not an unusual thing at all. As I said to the member, section 308 is called up in the schedule of the current Electoral Act.

The member referred to the $500,000 cap in relation to third parties. That relates to their ability to campaign on issues. To seek to restrict that would be like saying to AgForce or to the Conservation Council or to the Queensland Resources Council or Sibelco that they could not actually campaign—and that is against us, by the way. They are very good ads and we would like more of them because they actually do raise the issue. They are actually great. Could they please do some more because they remind people in Queensland that we are actually opposing it? The argument tested them first.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr LUCAS: If the member for Toowoomba South wants to get involved in that argument, I point out that what actually happened was that the opposition voted with the government on the legislation and then the member for Cleveland went over to Stradbroke Island and tried to claim differently. So thank you for raising that with me; I appreciate it.

I draw the honourable member’s attention to proposed section 177FB on page 57 of the bill. An applicable donation cap for a financial year for a candidate or third party is $2,000. It also deals with registered political parties. As I said to the member before, once they advocate a vote for or against someone or spend money to do that that is a donation either in cash or in kind. The other money is about advocating for issues. They could not then advocate for a particular candidate.

Mr BLEIJIE: I cannot recall hearing the Deputy Premier address the GST issue. Give me a minute and you can get back to that. I do need clarification in relation to the GST issue. If candidates spend money and purchase items, they pay GST. Can the GST they get back be paid into the state campaign account? In most instances when someone uses their campaign expenditure to purchase their product, like any citizen in Queensland they should be entitled to that GST back. That is currently the case. We want to make sure that the GST issues are covered in the bill. If it creates anomalies then this will create issues down the track. The second thing is that the Deputy Premier has now just admitted that third parties can spend $500,000. I think before in the amendments he said they cannot. They can because it is described in the Electoral Act.

Third parties have an expenditure cap of $500,000. I think before in the amendments he said they cannot. Third parties have an expenditure cap of $500,000.

Mr BLEIJIE: But they have an expenditure cap of $500,000. When I moved my amendments the minister challenged me and said they cannot spend $500,000. They can because it is described in the bill as electoral expenditure.

I seek advice with respect to a couple of further issues. The Deputy Premier described the cost. I asked in my speech whether this $50,000 and $80,000 came out of some brains trust for the ALP. I hope to goodness it is not out of New South Wales Labor’s brains trust. The Deputy Premier gave the indication that jurisdictions across Australia were looked at. For the benefit of the Deputy Premier, my understanding is that the only state that has these caps on expenditure is New South Wales. That was passed early this year I believe. The government that passed that has been given the boot. So those laws have not been tested. Anything the Queensland Labor Party copies from the New South Wales Labor Party should certainly be taken with a grain of salt. We need to ask ourselves: up until the election of a new government a couple of weeks ago, what sort of situation was New South Wales in?

I see with clause 15 of the bill that there are going to be major compliance issues for political parties and for Independents. I feel for the Independents. The member for Gladstone raised in her contribution tonight the issue of administration funding for Independents. I guess the question that can be asked of the Deputy Premier is this: where did these figures come from? At the briefing I asked for the figures. They could not be given to me. The Deputy Premier has indicated that they have come from jurisdictions around Australia. But someone somewhere has sat down and calculated the figures. I want to know who calculated the figures. Why were they calculated as a $50,000 expenditure cap for a candidate and $80,000 for a political party per electorate across Queensland, which equates to roughly $11½ million? I do not think it is acceptable that the Deputy Premier can stand here tonight and say, ‘Look, some things may be considered as part of the electoral expenditure when some things may not.’ What provision or set-up, externally from this House, has the government provided to make sure that, as soon as this is assented to, people will be able to comply as easily as possible with these new provisions? I do not believe the Deputy Premier answered my first question in relation to when he expects the initial capped expenditure period to start.

Mr LUCAS: It starts the day after assent. The bill will be assented to in due course, but not in the too distant future. In relation to GST, GST remittances cannot be paid into the state campaign account as it is not one of the amounts under proposed subsection 177CB(1). In relation to the amount —

Mr Bleijie: Where does it go?
Mr LUCAS: It would then go to the non-campaign account because the party has other accounts. They can only put campaign moneys in the campaign account. In relation to the $500,000, I said to the member—and I have made it repeatedly clear to him—that we could not stop third parties doing this sort of advertising. That is their democratic right. But if they said, ‘And vote for a particular political party,’ and it was within the period, it would fall within the definition. That is a very clear situation. In relation to campaign expenditure, I have made it clear to the honourable member that it is not a question of uncertainty. The section largely calls up section 308 in the existing schedule which is Commonwealth legislation, which has not only been administered by the state but administered by the Commonwealth.

Clause 15, as amended, agreed to.
Clause 16, as read, agreed to.
Clause 17—

Mr LUCAS (11.19 pm): I move the following amendments—

53 Clause 17 (Insertion of new pt 11, div 5)
Page 149, lines 20 to 23—
omit.

54 Clause 17 (Insertion of new pt 11, div 5)
Page 153, after line 29—
insert—

‘199A Applicable expenditure cap
A reference in section 177IA(1) to the first financial year starting after that section commences is taken to be a reference to—
(a) if section 177IA commences before 1 July 2011, the financial year that commenced on 1 July 2010; or
(b) if section 177IA commences on or after 1 July 2011, the financial year in which the section commences.’.

Amendment No. 53 omits an unnecessary definition. Amendment No. 54 is a transitional provision for applicable expenditure caps under section 177IA(1). Section 177IA(1) provides for applicable expenditure caps for electoral expenditure for the first financial year after commencement and for the subsequent financial year. The amendment provides for a transitional provision in relation to applicable expenditure caps for the 2011-11 financial year.

Amendments agreed to.
Clause 17, as amended, agreed to.
Clause 18, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Acting Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State) (11.20 pm): I again thank the member for Kawana for his cooperative manner. Even though we have had significant disagreements, it has not meant we could not cooperate on the technicalities, so I thank the honourable member for his courtesies. I move—

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

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


NOES, 35—Bates, Bleijie, Crandon, Cripps, Cunningham, Dempsey, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Foley, Gibson, Hopper, Horan, Johnson, Knuth, Langbroek, Mcardie, McLindon, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Nicholls, Powell, Pratt, Robinson, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Rickuss, Sorensen

Resolved in the affirmative.
Bill read a third time.

Long Title

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Acting Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State) (11.27 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.
Hon. JC SPENCE (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (11.27 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Carmel College; Redlands, Public Transport

Mr DOWLING (Redlands—LNP) (11.28 pm): I would like to acknowledge a couple of guests I had in the House today from Carmel College: the deputy principal, John Marinucci, and the two school captains, Jake Weston and Nicola Smith. It was a great privilege to be able to show them around the precinct. They had lots of questions and I thank you, Mr Speaker, for taking the time to stop in and say g’day. It was very much appreciated by them.

On another issue, I recently tabled a petition in this place on behalf of a number of residents from the southern Moreton Bay islands. From memory, it had about 1,600 signatures. They asked some quite legitimate questions of the government and we received a reply late last week. The petitioners basically wanted to know if this state government would support Redland City Council to provide transport between the southern Moreton Bay islands and the mainland. All they asked for was an efficient, affordable and ecologically sound transport system between those locations. What we got back was a two-page letter that talked about ancient history. It talked about the nature of development patterns on the southern Moreton Bay islands and suggested that it started back in the sixties and seventies. All of that was a quite legitimate history lesson, but the letter failed to answer the question. The letter from the minister—and in this case it was from the Deputy Premier, Paul Lucas—said—

I am further advised that Translink is currently holding discussions with Council about additional go-card purchase machines ...

That sentence implies that there is actually a go card machine. In fact, there is no go card machine so there can be no ‘additional’ machines. Further to that, a go card machine is no good to the people who live on those islands because TransLink is not part of that ferry system. So we had responses to erroneous issues that are driving this community mad. The letter almost implied that it was the residents’ fault because they chose to live out there. What they did not choose was pretty much an almost unbroken 20 years of Labor governments with no progress, no development on the islands and no transport support for them.

The letter also said that the state government spends $1.38 billion on transport, as if that was somehow going to help them. These residents have taken to camping out in a tent embassy in front of council chambers in Cleveland to try to raise an awareness of their issues. It is bitterly cold out there tonight, and my thoughts and best wishes go out to them. It is a desperate community lobbying for equity and consideration from not only the council but also the state government so that their transport issues can be addressed. I think it is high time we had a can-do government.

(Time expired)

Justices of the Peace

Ms van LITSENBURG (Redcliffe—ALP) (11.31 pm): One hundred and fifty local JPs packed into the Dolphins leagues club to receive certificates for 25, 40, 50 or 60-plus years of service from the Deputy Premier and Attorney-General. JPs Zora Pool and John Kingston, who have been conscientiously volunteering for over half a century, were elated to receive their certificates and pins. Committed JPs, many of whom make themselves available regularly at Peninsula Fair Shopping Centre and the courthouse to ensure that the public has easy and regular access to their skills, are the heart of our justice interface with the community and help to safeguard the rights and security needs of the public.

The establishment of regular hubs of JPs in places with good public transport where they can be easily accessed is an initiative of the Bligh Labor government and one that the people of Redcliffe value and use regularly. Redcliffe JPs were also keen to receive updates on many changes in practice, to learn about new development opportunities, to ask lots of questions and they enjoyed the presentation from the Adult Guardian. This group of volunteers are amazingly committed to providing the best possible service to the public and they are keen to upgrade their skills to ensure that they can do that.

I am proud to be part of a government that collaborates with JPs to enable them to develop professionally to the extent that they can deliver a service that frees up courts and lawyers and increases services to the public.

Supporting JPs so that they can develop to the fullest extent possible as volunteers fits in with the Bligh government’s Toward Q2’s goals of building a fair, safe and just Queensland. These JPs support and strengthen the community in two ways: by delivering a valuable service and by giving their time to assist others in the community. In doing this, they forge links with others with whom they may not otherwise come in contact and enable seniors or other isolated people to form a connection in the community. Community connections are important links in keeping people active and healthy. So these JPs are helping to build a strong, fair and healthy community.
This is only one of many such strategies that create networks in the community so that people feel valued, supported and empowered to engage in the community to the benefit of every member of that community. Through Toward Q2, these strategies have been a hallmark of the Bligh government and the strength of the communities created was witnessed during the recent disasters. This Labor government understands people and community and we act to benefit all Queenslanders.

Gold Coast, Police Resources

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (11.34 pm): Labor’s failure to plan for increased population densities in the south-east and on the Gold Coast has resulted in our hardworking police lacking the resources and the numbers that they need to deal with increasing crime. These police do the best with what they have, but what they have been provided with by the Bligh Labor government is clearly not enough. Consequently, there has been a spike in drug crimes, robberies and other serious crime in the south-east and particularly on the Gold Coast. So far this year—and it has been widely publicised—there have been 46 armed robberies on the Gold Coast, including a series of robberies carried out by an offender who is just 10 years old. Only 10 per cent of those crimes have been solved, which suggests that police resources are stretched beyond their limit.

People who work in service stations or in convenience stores or, in fact, own those businesses and their customers should not live in fear that they will have a weapon shoved in their faces by desperate, often drug affected criminals. Many of us have seen the graphic television footage of these sorts of hold-ups. Armed robbery can have a devastating impact on victims, more so if the offenders are not caught or if they receive an overly lenient sentence, only to be released back into the community to offend again. Sadly, on the Gold Coast and in Logan that has become a fact of life, but it need not and it should not be.

The Gold Coast is the sixth largest city in the country, and growing, and it is the second biggest in the state. Yet it is treated as second rate by this long-term Labor government. The Gold Coast has a population of just over 538,000. In 2009-10 there were 890 sworn police serving the Gold Coast community. In comparison, Tasmania has a population of almost 508,000 with 1,247 sworn police. That is a ratio of one to 407 in Tasmania compared to one to 604 on the Gold Coast. In 2009-10 there were 309 armed robberies on the Gold Coast. In the same period in Tasmania there were 138 reported armed robberies, which is less than half that in Queensland. In 1999-2000 there were 4,625 reported drug crimes in Queensland’s south-east. In a decade under Labor’s do-nothing policies, that figure has blown out to 7,694 reported drug crimes—a staggering increase of 66 per cent.

Labor’s response to this growth in crime has been to deny that there is a problem and to do nothing. In sharp contrast, senior police who have the onerous day-to-day responsibility for dealing with crime and criminals know exactly what to do. Last year Assistant Commissioner Paul Wilson told the CMC inquiry into Operation Tesco that the south-east region, and particularly the Gold Coast, needs a permanent, organised and major crime squad with dedicated detectives. Labor’s response was to dismiss the idea. But a can-do LNP government will establish a permanent major crime squad based on the Gold Coast. A can-do LNP government will also roll out a state-wide armed robbery prevention and reduction strategy. A can-do LNP government will be tough on crime and tough on criminals.

(Time expired)

Pyjama Foundation

Ms FARMER (Bulimba—ALP) (11.37 pm): I rise to talk about the drive by the Pyjama Foundation to collect pyjamas for children in care and the amazing contribution of the people of the Bulimba electorate towards that cause. I am sure that all members in this House would be familiar with this drive to provide pyjamas to foster-children. These children often must be taken from their homes very quickly and they leave with virtually just the clothes they are wearing. They will often have no toothbrush, no teddy bear—nothing to call their own. For us, having a pair of pyjamas is a given. For these children to have something of their own like a pair of pyjamas is an exception.

Last year when the pyjama drive began I wrote to the almost 200 community organisations in the Bulimba electorate and asked if they would promote the drive to their members. As often happens in my area, the message became viral. Everyone wrote to one other person and that person wrote to another. Within a month my electorate office, which I had registered as a collection point, resembled a factory outlet. We took seven full car loads of new pyjamas to the Child Safety Office at Stones Corner and I know for a fact that as soon as the pyjamas arrived at that office they went straight out the door again to children in need. For the 2010 pyjama drive, the people of the Bulimba electorate contributed over 12 per cent of the total number of pyjamas collected across Queensland.

This year the same is happening again. Group after group, individual after individual, has walked into my office to drop off pyjamas. Often they are people who have no spare cash themselves. On many occasions they are the people who I know have already given a lot of their personal time and money towards helping victims of the natural disasters in Queensland.
I am inspired by every single person who has gone to the trouble of making these pyjama donations. However, I would like to make mention of a couple of groups and individuals in particular who have gone above and beyond to help this worthy cause. The Zimmerman family of Morningside donated 21 pairs; Drew Freeburn on behalf of Gloster Shirts donated 20 pairs; the Cannon Hill Family Support Centre, which provides crisis care in our local community and is always struggling itself for resources, donated over 150 pairs and counting; the Engage City Church donated around 25 pairs; Phil and Wendy Broxham and the TS Gayundah Cadets collected and dropped in 26 pairs of pyjamas the afternoon before they were leaving for Europe for the Villers-Bretonneux Anzac service; the Morningside Services Club donated 18 pairs; the National Servicemen’s RSL Sub-branch donated 17 pairs; John Crawford Marine at Tingalpa, whose owners live in the electorate, donated 12 pairs; the Norman Park Bowls Club, which itself had a mammoth effort to recover early this year after it was engulfed by the floods, donated $500 worth of pyjamas; and members of the Cannon Hill Ladies Bowls donated 12 pairs.

Our local area is simply amazing. They do not like to hear about children suffering. They like to be able to do practical things to help, like buying a pair of pyjamas. They are generous. They like to know that they live in a caring community. They are proud of it, in fact. I congratulate them on their magnificent efforts again this year to help vulnerable children and thank them for the honour of representing them.

Volunteers

Mr Gibson (Gympie—LNP) (11.41 pm): As part of National Volunteers Week I would like to recognise all the volunteers across our great state who give of their time, their efforts and their energies in whatever organisation they choose to volunteer for. I would especially like to recognise those in the electorate of Gympie who do such an outstanding job. Recently I had the opportunity to recognise those volunteers within my electorate at a series of three morning teas at different areas. I was impressed by the calibre of the people who were nominated by their own organisations to receive the certificates. We saw people from our Volunteer Coast Guard, people supporting the arts, our rural fire brigade, sporting groups and Surf Life Saving, to name just a few of those who took the time to nominate volunteers who had given to their organisations.

All of our volunteers are valued and all of our volunteers contribute in a major way, but one standout across all the three morning teas was Betty Shepherd, a lady who was recognised for giving 50 years of volunteer service to our local Red Cross. Betty has given more than most people give in a working life and she has done it without any expectation of pay or benefit. This is truly that great volunteer spirit that we see across all organisations.

I would also like to recognise two local organisations that recently celebrated significant milestones. Quota International of Gympie has just had its 50th birthday. I was privileged to attend a wonderful lunch organised by the Quota members. Over the 50 years that Quota International has been in Gympie it has done outstanding work and supported the community in many different ways. It was a privilege to be invited to that lunch.

I would also like to recognise Gympie Meals on Wheels, which celebrated its 40th anniversary. A big thankyou is needed for all the volunteers across the 40 years. Whether they have served as kitchenhands, drivers, delivery workers, administration staff or fundraisers, their efforts have contributed to the quality of life of people that they have provided meals to. I have been privileged to be able to work with Gympie Meals on Wheels and I look forward to opportunities to do that in the future.

Communities such as Gympie are often isolated and lack some services, but it is the efforts of our volunteers that add to the value and the scope of the quality of life that we enjoy. Indeed, if we were to put a dollar value on the work that is carried out by volunteers, not just within the electorate of Gympie but across the whole state, we would find that, indeed, volunteering is the No. 1 business within the state of Queensland. Our volunteers, wherever they serve and in whatever efforts, epitomise the can-do Queensland spirit that we see being offered every single day.

Anzac Day

Mr Watt (Everton—ALP) (11.44 pm): This week is the first sitting week since Anzac Day was recognised around our country. The date of 25 April is important on the Australian calendar. It obviously recognises the landing of Australian servicemen at Gallipoli in World War I at its most basic level, but more generally it recognises the sacrifice of servicemen and servicewomen defending our nation and fighting for our values.

Anzac Day is also an important day on the calendar in the area that I represent. I have mentioned before in this House that Enoggera Army Barracks is just outside the boundaries of the electorate that I represent and consequently there is a very large number of defence families who live throughout my electorate. We recognise it every day in the increasing amount of defence housing which is being constructed in the electorate of Everton. This defence presence will continue to increase with the expansion of Enoggera Barracks that is currently underway.
This year Anzac Day was particularly poignant. I think it has been well reported in the press that one division based at Enoggera Barracks, 6RAR, has suffered a number of casualties particularly with their troops fighting in Afghanistan. I want to recognise the efforts of the troops in that division as well as the many other regiments based at Enoggera Barracks who continue to fight overseas.

I had the privilege of attending a dawn service at Gaythorne RSL on Anzac Day. It was also attended by my colleagues the members for Ashgrove and Ferny Grove. I congratulate the president of Gaythorne RSL, Merve Brown, and his team, who once again organised a fantastic service on Anzac Day at Gaythorne RSL. The dawn services at Gaythorne RSL are always incredibly well attended. This year it is estimated that more than 2,000 people attended this service. I think that is quite an achievement given that this year Anzac Day clashed with the Easter holidays. It really is one of the biggest Anzac ceremonies that is held anywhere in Brisbane suburbs. Anyone who has attended a dawn service at Gaythorne RSL will never forget it. It is a tremendous community event that schools and community groups participate in.

Before and after Anzac Day, I also had the privilege of attending a number of ceremonies at schools in the electorate of Everton. These included ceremonies at Everton Park State School, Albany Hills State School, Albany Creek State School and Albany Creek State High School. When I had the opportunity to speak at these ceremonies I focused on the sacrifice made by defence families in the service of our nation. I have spoken before about the fact that this sacrifice is one of the things I have most learned since being elected to represent the great electorate of Everton. I want to recognise tonight the pain and sacrifice made by defence families, particularly focused around the deployments of family members, especially dads, overseas and the regular moves that happen between states. Again, as we look back on Anzac Day this year I say thank you to all those who signed up to serve our country, past and present. We thank you for your sacrifice.

Tallebudgera Valley and Reedy Creek, Proposed Quarry

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—LNP) (11.47 pm): This week I tabled petitions from residents in my electorate of Currumbin and neighbouring electorates of Mudgeeraba and Burleigh and beyond to oppose a quarry proposed for a 219-hectare area of natural bushland surrounding Tallebudgera Valley and Reedy Creek. Over 9,000 local residents signed these petitions, which is an enormous show of support for such a localised issue. Compared to other petitions tabled in this House during the past four years, it rates in the top 10, following controversial state-wide issues.

What this level of protest highlights is the staunch opposition felt by people to having their personal lifestyles and private environment destroyed by a quarry operating 12 hours a day, six days a week for 40 years. The announcement of this proposed quarry was thrust upon unsuspecting residents only last November, and the passion to fight this cause has over the past six months turned many of their lives upside down. Stop the Gold Coast Quarry Action Group was formed and has run a tooth-and-nail campaign engaging the media, utilising social-networking sites, holding public rallies and harnessing the power of good old-fashioned word of mouth amongst residents.

Dirt, dust, noise, damage to homes—these are the very real fears of distraught residents who choose to live in this beautiful and peaceful part of the world. They want this natural bushland protected and preserved for future generations to enjoy. There are also grave concerns for the negative effects on local wildlife corridors and loss of habitat for our beloved koalas and native birds, including the vulnerable glossy black cockatoo.

The proposal has been granted significant project status by the state government, essentially to fast-track the decision given the impending winding down of Boral’s nearby West Burleigh Quarry, which has only eight to 11 years of production left. As a significant project it is subject to an environmental impact statement, the process of which is open to public comment at specified times. Draft terms of reference for this EIS closed last month, on 1 April.

In what can best be described as yet another sign of the arrogance that pervades this toxic Bligh Labor government, two senior government ministers, the Treasurer and the environment minister, both replied in writing to concerned residents who met with them at February’s Burleigh community cabinet advising them to submit to the draft TOR. I say ‘arrogance’ because their replies were written days after submissions had closed. This incorrect advice was a slap in the face to residents who felt their concerns were merely given lip-service by Labor ministers who did not care enough to even check the facts. Throughout this campaign the member for Mudgeeraba and I have given our unwavering support to affected residents in our electorates, as has the federal member for McPherson. Now it is up to the member for Burleigh to stand up and fight for her residents and for this government to consider the impact this quarry would have on the quality of lifestyle of innocent residents should it allow it to go ahead.
Ms O’NEILL (Kallangur—ALP) (11.50 pm): Tonight I rise to inform the House that something I have been waiting for for a long time has finally happened. I have been made an honorary bloke. That is a singular honour as it comes in the form of honorary membership of the Pine Rivers Men’s Shed in Petrie. Already it has made me co-patron, along with Councillor David Dwyer, and recently it made the decision to bestow this extremely rare and honorary membership upon me. Previously I have spoken proudly of the Men’s Shed and the great work it does to give men access to friendly networks and to combat depression and alienation amongst men. I want to take a moment to report how well the Pine Rivers shed is doing. It has only been going a couple of years and has achieved so much. It now has 80 members.

The shed meets three days a week in a great house in Old Petrie Town that it sourced, moved and installed with the assistance of the Moreton Bay Regional Council, the YMCA, myself and the member for Morayfield. Since then its members have closed in the underneath of the house, which is now ready to be used as their workshop with all manner of lathes and machines. On every fourth Sunday they hold social days for the whole family to take part.

As well as renovating and working on their shed premises, the team undertakes all kinds of community projects. They have rebuilt the toilet block at the local pony club which was affected by the devastation of the recent floods. They have planted more than 300 trees to assist with the restoration of the riparian forest along the banks of the North Pine River in Old Petrie Town. On Clean Up Australia Day the team did excellent work assisting Multicap clean its huge garden. They have taken part in the Rotary festival and have proudly built a mobile toy box for the Petrie police juvenile protection unit. One of the team is taking on training to enable them to have a competency based training program to use the various pieces of equipment in the shed. When that is completed, they will move to a five days a week operation. Some of the skill sets available come from woodworkers, glaziers, panel beaters, engineers and electricians. They have recently launched their website, www.pineriversmensshed.org.au.

The club is a happy place to be, with lots of story telling, jokes and evident camaraderie. They have made sure that all members have a role, part of a project or a way to share their skills. They have their successes with younger blokes as well. A young man, a single dad, came along to work through depression and be in a safe place with other blokes. After six months, he is now fit and well and working full-time again.

Congratulations go to secretary Sal Barbagallo, president Darryl Neild and shed manager Ray Gunson for providing and managing a great shed and for their uniring work not only on this community project but all of the other great things they do. Not least of these is to help me and my office out with all sorts of things, like urgent letterbox deliveries and building me two beautiful wall mounted timber display units for all of the information I need to display in my electorate office. As I said, I am very proud to have been made an honorary bloke, especially by the terrific team at the Pine Rivers Men’s Shed in Old Petrie Town. I thank them very much. They are a great asset to my electorate.

Mr DICKSON (Buderim—LNP) (11.53 pm): I rise to speak on the ongoing debacle that is Labor’s carbon tax. Yes, even the unions are getting very hot under the collar regarding the implications of this carbon tax. It took a lot of jeering on the shop floor to finally flush out Australian Worker’s Union boss, Paul Howes, on the carbon tax. Just recently Paul Howes said to the media, ‘If one job is gone, our support is gone.’ In 10 days Paul Howes attended six mass meetings of workers, facing a very hostile audience. He asked a fairly simple and direct question. The question asked of the membership was, ‘Would you support a carbon tax on big polluters that was used to compensate households for increased costs?’ Not surprisingly, the progressive poll was travelling at only 22 per cent in favour of the carbon tax and 78 per cent against the carbon tax. Let us not forget that we are not dealing with some right-wing organisation; we are talking about the membership of the CFMEU, which is one of the largest trade unions in the country. The membership is clearly concerned about the carbon tax. The membership might be concerned, but apparently the CFMEU heavyweights are not. In the face of such an overwhelming poll result against the carbon tax, can members guess what the union leadership decided to do? It removed the poll and its results from the CFMEU website. In an effort to hide the truth from the membership and the public, they got rid of the poll!

Recently former ALP power broker Gary Johns wrote a newspaper article in which he likened Julia Gillard’s climate change response to Goldilocks and the three bears. Gary Johns wrote—

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Carbon Tax

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They think their carbon tax and subsequent ETS will ultimately result in Australia’s climate change temperature changes not being too hot, not being too cold, Labor thinks they will make the temperature ‘juuust’ about right.
I am concerned about the people of Queensland. Under this Labor government they are coping bills that are continuing to increase. The price of power is going through the roof and the price of water is increasing on a daily basis. Labor continues to rob the wallets of Queenslanders. I look forward to the day when the can-do LNP government will look after the people of Queensland.

Logan Filipino-Australian Community

Mr MOORHEAD (Waterford—ALP) (11.56 pm): Tonight I rise to inform the House of the great contribution that is made to the Logan community by the Logan Filipino-Australian Community Association. Logan is a community built upon the contribution of people from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds. Logan City has the benefit of the contribution of people who have come to Australia from over 170 countries around the world.

Mrs Scott: 180.

Mr MOORHEAD: I take the interjection from the member for Woodridge. I must keep track. The Filipino-Australian community of Logan is one of those many strong and vibrant communities that makes me proud to represent the Logan community. I have worked closely with the executive of LFACA on many of the local issues facing the Filipino-Australian community. I am particularly grateful for the chance to work with president Edita Cavanagh, secretary Elizabeth Welldon, committee members Roland Manoy, Zeny Flores, Dahlia Vargas, Evangeline Carpio, James Tindall, Jefferlyn Dragot, Susan Bliss and Emily Buttenshaw and adviser Orly Vargas. The Logan Filipino-Australian Community Association is a caring and hardworking community association that provides personal support, community leadership and a very strong social network.

On 30 April 2011 I was delighted to join president Edita Cavanagh and her committee for the Best of the Best 2011 fundraiser. Previously I have been to the Ms Mutya Ng contest—a celebration of Filipino culture, heritage, dance and national dress. After about 15 years of the Ms Mutya Ng contest, 2011 was the opportunity for previous winners to come together for the Best of the Best 2011. While it is an important celebration, it is a fundraiser for an even more important cause. The Best of the Best 2011 raises funds for the Australian community to support education scholarships for struggling young people growing up in the Philippines. Many Filipino-Australians have come to Australia for the economic opportunity and the chance to work hard and make a difference. These scholarships are an important way of contributing to young people in the Philippines who are looking for an education and need help in a country that finds itself in very difficult economic circumstances.

It is such a worthy cause and it was such a great night. Congratulations to the entrants, Gurlie Regoso, Ruth Zwolak, Amelita Manangquil, Roxanne Paton-og and Laarni White. Their performance was amazing and provided a great display of the diversity across the Philippine archipelago. I also want to thank the guest judges: Karma Elms from Queensland Health and Kylie Duller and Karl Buckman from Hans Smallgoods. They definitely had a difficult job on the evening. After the awards were announced, the association members did what they do best—they celebrated by dancing the night away. The Logan Filipino-Australian Community Association is one of the important building blocks of our community. It is an important part of building a stronger and more diverse Logan City.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 11.59 pm.