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Subject **FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT** Page

Wednesday, 7 September 2011

J MICKEL
SPEAKER

N J LAURIE
CLERK OF THE PARLIAMENT

L J OSMOND
CHIEF HANSARD REPORTER

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WEDNESDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2011

The Legislative Assembly met at 2.00 pm.

Mr Speaker (Hon. John Mickel, Logan) read prayers and took the chair.

PETITIONS

The Clerk presented the following paper petition, lodged by the honourable member indicated—

Loganlea-Jimboomba Substations, Powerlines

Mr McLindon, from 481 petitioners, requesting the House to direct Energex to not proceed with current plans to construct an overhead high-voltage powerline from Loganlea to Jimboomba substations along the Logan River precinct and Camp Cable Road [5231].

The following paper petition, sponsored by the Clerk of the Parliament in accordance with Standing Order 119(3), is lodged and presented—

Alcohol and Drug Advisory Committee

21 petitioners, requesting the House to implement the Social Development Committee's recommendation to establish an Alcohol and Drug Advisory Committee to the Minister for Health consisting of representatives from relevant government agencies and community sector agencies [5232].

Petitions received.

TABLED PAPER

MEMBER'S PAPER TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following member's paper was tabled by the Clerk—

Member for Moggill (Dr Flegg)—

5233 Non-conforming petition, from 302 petitioners, regarding maintenance and safety hazards at the Chapel Hill State School

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

White Balloon Day, Child Protection Week

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Reconstruction) (2.02 pm): Today is White Balloon Day, a day to raise awareness and support victims of child sexual assault. The day was established in 1997 by Bravehearts, a national charity headed by Hetty Johnston, that lobbies to 'break the silence', provide healing and support, engender child sexual assault prevention and protection strategies, advocate for understanding, and promote increased education and research. I was shadow minister for families in 1997. I well remember the very first White Balloon Day. I think it is a great testament to Hetty Johnston and her leadership and to her organisation, Bravehearts, that this day has become so well recognised on the national calendar and is so well observed by so many people.

Hetty was last week recognised for her outstanding contribution to protecting our state's vulnerable children at the annual Child Protection Week awards. For more than 15 years, Hetty Johnston has promoted child protection issues in her capacity as a professional working in the child protection field. White Balloon Day is held during Child Protection Week which, as I have said, is this week. I join with others in wearing the white balloon badge.

Child Protection Week is an opportunity to not only raise awareness but to also educate our young people about how they can best protect themselves. As a parent, I can only imagine the heartbreak and the devastation that Bruce and Denise Morcombe have endured since Daniel's disappearance and, more recently, the developments in the police investigations. But from the despair they have taken to the streets and schools, dedicating their time to educate the community about child safety and protection.

Last week during the launch of Child Protection Week, the Morcombes were presented with an award for their education initiatives. This week, Bruce and Denise Morcombe are taking a road trip from Kangaroo Point to Cairns to promote child safety in Queensland schools. Before they left on their road trip on Sunday, I was pleased to join them to announce a new partnership between the Queensland government, particularly Education Queensland, and the Daniel Morcombe Foundation to introduce a child safety education package into Queensland schools and to appoint both Bruce and Denise as child safety ambassadors. This will be Daniel's legacy to the children of Queensland.

Today I would like to thank the dedicated and passionate members of our community like the Morcombes and Hetty Johnston who work tirelessly all year round to keep our children safe. I thank them for their involvement in Child Protection Week and I urge all members to get behind these initiatives.

RNA Showgrounds, Redevelopment

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Reconstruction) (2.04 pm): The transformation of Brisbane's historic RNA Showgrounds is now well and truly underway. This is the largest urban renewal project undertaken in Brisbane since Expo in 1988 and the redevelopment of South Bank. It marks a very exciting new chapter in Brisbane's future.

Today I joined with RNA Chief Executive Jonathan Tunney and Lend Lease Head of Development David Rolls to mark the start of the $2.9 billion residential, retail and business components of this redevelopment. Those who visited the Ekka this year will know that construction is already underway in the redevelopment of the industrial pavilion, but today marks the beginning of work on the residential and commercial elements of this redevelopment.

The announcement of the design for 'Showground Hill', as it will be known—the residential, commercial and retail component—coincides with the release of independent analysis on the impact of this development on the state's economy. The report by SGS Economics and Planning shows that over 13 years this project is expected to create economic activity worth close to $4 billion and to create more than 15,000 jobs, both direct and indirect. In 2012 almost 300 jobs will be created and that will rise to 1,000 by 2013 and peak at just over 1,800. Upon completion, it will be home to 3,000 people and 15,000 people will travel there to work every day. It is expected to contribute an average of $295 million to the local economy every single year for the next 18 years. This is a massive boost to the Queensland economy and it is fitting that it should be occurring in such a historic part of our city.

Queensland's economy is transforming to a new energy age that promises our state a very bright future, and this development is a fitting symbol of this new era. It could not have come at a better time for the construction, retail and commercial sectors in Queensland as we recover from the global financial crisis. This massive investment is solid evidence of the importance of a partnership approach, in this case between government, the RNA, Lend Lease and the Urban Land Development Authority. The government was able to provide a $65 million seed loan from Queensland Treasury Corporation for the Industrial Pavilion part of this development and that helped to get it over the line. Facilitation of the project by the ULDA was provided through the approval of the RNA's master plan within the context of the Bowen Hills Urban Development Area. This is exactly the type of project that would never get off the ground without the ULDA and it is an example of just how vitally important this authority is. The ULDA is a great Queensland success story. It is kicking goals on every single one of its projects.

The first stage of the development will include 'The Green', which comprises the first 300 residential apartments planned on the perimeter of the regenerated site. Today I was advised by Lend Lease that people will be able to buy off the plan by the end of October, so they will be eligible for the government's Building Boost. The Green, as it will be known, will be adjacent to the new main street for Showground Hill and close to the site of the first of the commercial buildings, which will offer up to 30,000 square metres of office space. The design ensures respect for the history and the heritage of this site while welcoming a new business and residential heart for this part of the city. This is a huge site for an inner-city area, encompassing 5.5 hectares of the RNA Showgrounds site. It will become a showpiece for urban redevelopment and world-class urban renewal design.

Infrastructure work will begin immediately, including upgrading the 130-year-old stormwater system, and construction of the apartments themselves will begin early in 2012. Construction is timed to minimise disruption for next year's Ekka. Over the life of the project, the public will notice new and improved facilities not only during the annual show but also at our other major events. This is a huge vote of confidence in Queensland and in the bright future that our state has to look forward to.

Queensland Economy

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade) (2.09 pm): The national accounts were released by the ABS a short time ago, and they show that Queensland is back and leading the way. Our economy is roaring back, with the state-level results showing Queensland at the front of the pack.

The measure of state economic activity in the accounts—state final demand—shows that growth in Queensland led the nation at 3.5 per cent for the quarter. This was a long way in front of every other state and territory. This result is nearly three times the overall growth performance for the nation's economy, with GDP growing by 1.2 per cent in the quarter. Domestic final demand for Australia was, in contrast, just 0.7 per cent. We led the nation in investment. Business investment surged 21 per cent in the quarter.

It is clear that as the economy fights back out of the effects of natural disasters we are seeing the investment surge take hold and deliver results. A new platform of growth is being bolted into our economy, and these results show that investment in action.

State final demand, as I have consistently said, is only a partial measure of economic activity and the headline result being quoted is of course a seasonally adjusted result. It is important to emphasise that our trend result was also strong. Growth of 1.8 per cent for the quarter placed us just behind WA at the top of the order. The results show that, while we got smashed in the first months of 2011, our economy has begun the power climb from the destruction caused by the natural disasters.

This government put in place a strong economic reform program. We have taken the difficult decisions, set up the state's economy for a new growth path, overhauled the state's balance sheet and set about driving jobs growth and creating new industries and delivering new infrastructure—just like we said we would.

Child Protection Week Awards

Hon. PG REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport) (2.11 pm): As the Premier said, this week is Child Protection Week. Last Thursday I was fortunate enough to attend the annual Child Protection Week awards. The awards, which are hosted by Queensland's Child Protection Week Committee, pay tribute to Queenslanders and organisations who work each and every day to prevent child abuse and neglect. Six recipients were honoured at a special ceremony right here at Parliament House.

This year's winners come from very different backgrounds, but they all share a common commitment to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Queensland's most vulnerable children and young people. As the Premier said, Bruce and Denise Morcombe received the Education Initiative Award for their tireless campaign to promote child safety. I commend the Morcombes for using their own personal tragedy to educate children and families on child protection.

Hetty Johnston from Bravehearts was honoured with the Professional (Non-Government) Award for her more than 15 years service in the child protection field. She founded Bravehearts and also created the national awareness program White Balloon Day, which, as everyone knows, is today.

The Professional (Government) Award was given to Corelle Davies, who has directed child safety at Queensland Health since the position was created in 2005. She was instrumental in achieving the development and successful implementation of a range of child protection policies, education and training for Queensland Health staff.

Jill Wesche, a child witness support volunteer with PACT, Protect All Children Today, received the Volunteer Award for her work in supporting child witnesses and victims through the criminal justice system. Awards were also given to Legal Aid Queensland and the Mount Isa Misuse Action Group for the valuable work they do with the community.

We are very lucky to have such exceptional and dedicated individuals and organisations in Queensland to help protect our children and young people. They embody this year's theme of Child Protection Week: 'Protecting children is everybody's business'. I encourage all members of the House to get involved in Child Protection Week and attend one of the many events happening around the state.

We want to raise awareness and bring the importance of child safety to the forefront of everyone's minds. This is a community responsibility whereby the Bligh government works side by side with our valued partners to provide accessible, local and responsive services to improve the lives of children and young people.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Child Protection Week Committee and the agencies with an interest in child protection for their continuous hard work and dedication to improving the lives of Queensland children.

Sex Offenders, Monitoring

Hon. NS ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (2.13 pm): Labor governments have a strong record of implementing initiatives aimed at protecting the community from dangerous sex offenders. In 2003, under Labor, Queensland was the first state in Australia to implement laws giving courts the power to keep dangerous sex offenders in jail beyond their sentence. These same laws also give courts the ability to make offenders subject to strict supervision and reporting if released into the community. Other states have followed our lead, but our laws remain some of the toughest in Australia.

There are currently 37 offenders detained on continuing detention orders under the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act, with a further 77 supervised within the community. In 2007 the then Labor government introduced electronic monitoring of dangerous sex offenders. In this year's budget the Bligh government announced that it will enhance the current electronic-monitoring regime by funding the implementation of GPS monitoring of dangerous sex offenders. The government will spend $13.7 million over four years to implement GPS monitoring, which provides another tool for Queensland Corrective Services personnel to monitor the movements of these offenders.

A limited operational trial of four different GPS devices was undertaken last month involving 20 volunteer QCS staff members in both metropolitan and regional Queensland. The trial has now been evaluated and the results used to inform the next stage of the procurement process—an invitation to offer for the supply of the GPS devices. Queensland Corrective Services is on track to have the first sex offenders fitted with their GPS device before the end of the year. The plan is to have all 67 offenders currently subject to electronic monitoring as part of their supervision order fitted with the device by early 2012.

GPS monitoring is not a silver bullet in the monitoring and supervision of dangerous sex offenders. It is an additional monitoring tool for Queensland Corrective Services officers. Like all forms of technology, GPS does have its limitations. However, the technology continues to improve and will provide QCS officers with an additional layer of monitoring to complement existing activities. It is important to note that nothing will replace the vigilance of Corrective Services personnel in the field, who will continue to proactively monitor the whereabouts of offenders and their movements.

Since the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act was introduced in 2003 Corrective Services officers have conducted more than 11,000 drug and alcohol tests; almost 20,000 home and office visits; more than 16,000 collateral checks to confirm offenders are complying with other order conditions; and more than 8,500 telephone checks. The government makes no apology for its tough approach to supervising dangerous sex offenders in the community and will continue to look for opportunities to enhance its regime wherever possible.

Queensland Health, Healthcare Improvement Awards

Hon. GJ WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Health) (2.16 pm): Last week I attended the Healthcare Improvement Awards, an annual event that recognises the great work of our Queensland Health staff. What we saw last week was innovation at its best—over 300 abstracts looking at new programs and procedures developed by some of Queensland Health's finest professionals.

We saw dedicated Queensland Health staff working to turn good ideas into excellent patient and community health outcomes, staff working to provide more services sooner and closer to home for Queenslanders, and innovation that is helping to not only save lives but also develop healthier communities and ensure maximum value for money for Queenslanders. This included the RBWH team, led by Dr Tim Donovan, who through innovation are working every day to help save the lives of our most vulnerable Queenslanders.

Dr Donovan and his neonatal team, in partnership with the Centre for Online Health at the University of Queensland, have developed a telemedicine technique to help save the lives of babies under stress. This technique provides a high-definition audiovisual link, allowing specialists in Brisbane to assess the colour and breathing of babies, examine X-rays and provide assistance to regional birth centres in the critical period before a retrieval team arrives to evacuate a baby—in essence, bringing these specialist services to ill babies as quickly as possible.

Before this technology was trialled, doctors could only make decisions and offer advice by phone without being able to see the baby or any diagnostic images. The retrieval of an ill baby can take up to five hours. In that time a baby's chances of recovery can be improved by early diagnosis and specialist assistance. Since the RBWH and UQ team began trials, new management techniques based on visual information were developed in 14 per cent of cases and five infant retrievals were avoided. Clearly this trial has proven that telemedicine is vital for providing remote advice and has the potential to improve infant care. Thanks to these efforts, peripheral nurseries and regional centres are being encouraged to develop new uses for telemedicine, and a telemedicine based nursing outreach education model has also been developed.

Another remarkable team recognised last week was the program High Schoolers Hooked on Health, led by the Sunshine Coast Health Service District. This program has been able to liaise directly with 300 students across 28 high schools on the Sunshine Coast to promote health care as a career choice, offering a two-day work experience program to give students a hands-on experience. The program has close links with the local Queensland Youth Industry Links initiative. The program ensures that local high school students can make career choices that will allow them to be part of the very significant growth of health services on the Sunshine Coast.

I would like to again take this opportunity to thank everyone who submitted an abstract for this year's awards and to thank all of our staff once more for their great contribution to Queensland Health and for bringing more health services closer to home for Queenslanders.

Natural Disasters, Wildlife

Hon. VE DARLING (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Environment) (2.20 pm): The fallout from our summer of floods and cyclones continues to pose unique challenges across a multitude of areas. Eight months after our disasters we are seeing the effects on our state's wildlife, with some species doing it tough while others show remarkable resilience. This week is Threatened Species Week and we will be highlighting the recovery of our wild animals such as the mahogany glider—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the chamber. The Minister for the Environment has the call.

Ms DARLING: This week is Threatened Species Week and we will be highlighting the recovery of our wild animals, such as the mahogany glider which has made an extraordinary comeback after its habitat was all but destroyed by Tropical Cyclone Yasi. What is remarkable in the story of this animal is that the people of the region—despite facing almost insurmountable struggles of their own—have been selfless in giving generous donations toward this species' recovery. Donations from across the state provided nearly $9,000 worth of feed supplement, 300 feed stations and 200 den boxes to help the glider population.

Surveys across some of the most heavily damaged open lowland forests have revealed the extent of the glider's adaptability. A female was recently found carrying young at Corduroy Creek, a narrow fragment of habitat and one of the most heavily damaged during Tropical Cyclone Yasi. Male gliders have also been found within the top weight range recorded within the past decade.

Meanwhile, in Western Queensland Mother Nature is showing her bounty with animal populations and plant life booming after years of drought. After an enforced closure of seven months because of the floods, the Simpson Desert National Park is bursting with life. The conditions mean populations of emus, grass wrens, finches and other wildlife are abundant. There has never been a better time to celebrate the diversity of our unique wildlife.

It is particularly apt that we do that today, 7 September, as it marks the day in 1936 when Australia tragically lost its last remaining Tasmanian tiger. The point of staging Threatened Species Week is to remind us all that extinction is forever and there is no turning back, which is why we need to ensure our precious wildlife is around for future generations to enjoy.

Education, Infrastructure Projects

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Minister for Education and Industrial Relations) (2.22 pm): The Bligh government has a very clear position and vision for the future of Queensland's education system. We are determined to provide the educational framework and facilities that will allow our children to be the best they can be. We are building a brighter future for Queensland children. That is because education is, has always been and will continue to be a key priority for Labor.

Part of this priority is our infrastructure program within the Education portfolio, which is delivering modern, world-class learning areas for our students. This financial year alone, we are spending $487 million on new and refurbished schools and kindergartens across Queensland. Already this year we have opened the school doors to new students at Springfield Central State High School and state schools at Coomera Rivers, Springfield Central, Augusta, Woodlinks and a relocated state school at Federal.

We have also opened the new Bremer State High School, providing Ipswich with one of the most modern schools in Australia. Our work has been recognised by the Green Building Council of Australia, which has assessed the five new schools built as part of the schools PPP. Four have been allocated four-star environmental ratings, while I am advised that the fifth—Coomera Rivers State School—has been named as the first school in Australia to achieve a five-star environmental rating.

We have completed major refurbishments to many schools, such as Richlands East State School and Serviceton South State School. We have also opened numerous kindergartens and allocated a record $134 million for school maintenance in 2011-12. The work continues—with a new school to open next year at Murrumba Downs and a new campus of Tagai State College to be built on Mer in the Torres Strait. We have also allocated $328.2 million for new and refurbished infrastructure in state schools over the next four years as part of our Flying Start initiative, and we will provide $81 million to the non-state sector for capital improvements to join year 7 with high school in 2015.

All this work comes on the back of the just completed $850 million State Schools of Tomorrow program, which represented the single largest investment in our schools in the history of our state. As a result of this program, Queensland children have benefited from more than 1,620 classroom refurbishments, about 150 science lab refurbishments and new school facilities around the state. The substantial funding that the Bligh government has allocated towards schools funding and infrastructure is providing our students with high-quality facilities. We are delivering a first-class education system and facilities that will benefit students and help build a brighter Queensland both now and well into the future.

I would like to conclude by expressing my condolences to the family and friends of an officer of the Department of Education and Training. Mr Luke Allen, who very sadly and tragically passed away on the weekend, was a loyal, talented and hard-working officer in the department, as is his father, Mr Craig Allen. Luke will be greatly missed.

Rural Resilience Fund

Hon. TS MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies) (2.25 pm): Today I am pleased to announce more than $1.6 million in grants for a range of industries to help in the ongoing recovery from Cyclone Yasi. The rural resilience industry grants are part of the

Australian and Queensland governments' $20 million rural resilience package for areas worst affected by Cyclone Yasi. The grants will boost economic recovery and help industry to better prepare for future severe weather events. They will also complement the assistance aimed at individual business recovery.

Under the scheme, industry and natural resource management groups were able to apply for up to $100,000 to conduct activities that help cyclone affected communities get back in business. Industry recovery has a significant flow-on effect for local communities as many jobs rely on these industries. The industry grants will provide significant support to local groups offering practical solutions, with funding to be provided over the rest of this financial year.

The successful grant projects cover a wide cross-section of major industry groups including aquaculture, sugar cane, dairy, horticulture, tourism, timber, food, grazing and resource management. Some of the recipients include the Australian Prawn Farmers Association, Growcom, Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation, Canegrowers, Tropical Exotic Fruit Association, the Queensland Farmers Federation and the Australian Banana Growers Council.

The grants will go towards training, equipment or materials, marketing campaigns, investment in new technologies for long-term sustainability and business recovery activities. The projects promote industry recovery and climate risk management. They will start rolling out in the near future and will further boost the pace of recovery in North Queensland. This is another example of the Bligh government providing on-the-ground service delivery strengthening the future of industry in Queensland.

MOTIONS

Amendments to Standing Orders

Hon. JC SPENCE (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (2.27 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly be amended in accordance with the amendments circulated in my name.

Amendments to Standing Orders

1. PART 5 of Standing Orders (The Legislative Process)—

Insert—

'135A. Role of the Committee of the Legislative Assembly

The Committee of the Legislative Assembly shall:

(a) monitor and review the business of the Legislative Assembly to aim for the effective and efficient discharge of business;

(b) monitor and review the operation of committees, particularly the referral of Bills to committees, and where appropriate vary the time for committees to report on Bills or vary the committee responsible for a Bill.'

2. PART 5 of Standing Orders (The Legislative Process)—

136. Portfolio committee reports—

Omit, Insert—

'136. Portfolio committee reports

(1) A portfolio committee must finally report to the House on a Bill within six calendar months of the Bill being referred to it or by such other time as fixed by the House or the Committee of the Legislative Assembly.

(2) The Committee of the Legislative Assembly may vary the time for report for any Bill, or vary the committee responsible for a Bill (notwithstanding the nomination of the member who introduced the Bill in accordance with SO 129(3)(c)), but must report such decision to the House at the earliest opportunity.

(3) If a portfolio committee has not reported within the time for report and no extension has been given, the Bill is discharged from further consideration by the committee and is set down for its second reading stage.

(4) Following the tabling of a portfolio committee report on a Bill the Bill is set down on the notice paper for its second reading stage in the House.

(5) When a Government Bill has been set down on the notice paper pursuant to (4), at least seven days shall elapse until the commencement of the second reading debate, unless the Bill is declared urgent.

(6) When a Private Members' Bill has been set down on the notice paper pursuant to (4), at least three calendar months shall elapse until the commencement of the second reading debate, unless the Bill is declared urgent.'

These amendments clarify that the Committee of the Legislative Assembly is performing the functions of a House committee. Therefore, we affirm its capacity to vary the committee responsible for the bill, vary the times for committees to report on a bill and change the time frame for a bill to be set down on the *Notice Paper* from three sitting days to seven calendar days before the second reading debate, unless the bill is declared urgent. This amendment is intended to give committees more time to report and sufficient time for all members to consider these reports before debate on a bill is before the House.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Portfolio Committees, Discharge and Referral of Bills

Hon. JC SPENCE (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (2.28 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

1. That the Mt. Gravatt Showgrounds Amendment Bill 2011 be discharged from consideration by the Community Affairs Committee and be referred to the Transport, Local Government and Infrastructure Committee.
2. That the One Funding System for Better Services Bill be discharged from consideration by the Community Affairs Committee and be referred to the Health and Disabilities Committee.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Portfolio Committees, Reporting Dates

Hon. JC SPENCE (Sunnybank—ALP) (Leader of the House) (2.29 pm): I advise the House that, in accordance with standing order 136(1), the Committee of the Legislative Assembly has fixed reporting dates for bills currently before committees in accordance with the schedule circulated in my name. I now table that schedule for the records of the House.

Portfolio Committees—Reporting dates on Bills as resolved by the Committee of the Legislative Assembly on 7 September 2011		
Portfolio Committee	Bill(s)	Report date
Legal Affairs, Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services Committee	*Property Agents Bill* *Motor Dealers and Chattel Auctioneers Bill* *Commercial Agents Bill* *Agents Financial Administration Bill*	3 October 2011
	Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill	11 November 2011
	Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill	4 October 2011
	Civil Proceedings Bill	19 December 2011
Health and Disabilities Committee	*Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2011*	4 November 2011
	One Funding System for Better Services Bill	19 December 2011
Transport, Local Government and Infrastructure Committee	*Mt. Gravatt Showgrounds Amendment Bill 2011*	22 November 2011
Community Affairs Committee	*Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Amendment Bill 2011*	19 December 2011
	Family Responsibilities Commission and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2011	18 October 2011
	Domestic and Family Violence Protection Bill 2011	22 November 2011
Environment, Agriculture, Resources and Energy Committee	*Water and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011*	8 November 2011
	Waste Reduction and Recycling Bill 2011	23 September 2011
Industry, Education, Training and Industrial Relations Committee	*Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill*	7 November 2011
	Education and Care Services National Law (Queensland) Bill 2011	31 October 2011

Tabled paper: Schedule of Portfolio Committees—reporting dates on bills as resolved by the Committee of the Legislative Assembly on 7 September 2011 [5234].

The Committee of the Legislative Assembly has considered this matter in some detail. It is imperative for the government of the day to have certainty about when committees report and when bills will be available for debate in the House. In consultation with the chairs and deputy chairs of the committees, the CLA will be clarifying the time frames for committee reports.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

School Group Tours

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before I call question time, I inform the House that today we will be visited by the Millchester State School in the electorate of Dalrymple.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Queensland Health, Information and Communication Technology

Mr SEENEY (2.30 pm): My question without notice is to the Premier. I refer to reports today that the IT crisis in Queensland Health has now spread from affecting payrolls to affecting cancer patients. Does the Premier still have confidence in her minister's ability to deliver ICT services necessary to provide a quality health system for Queenslanders? Why does the Premier refuse to hold any minister accountable for these repeated failures to deliver acceptable outcomes?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for the question because it gives me an opportunity to correct inaccuracies in reports today in relation to data relating to cancer patients. First of all, can I say that this is about the collection of data about treatment that patients have received. It has nothing to do with patient care; it is about how we collect information that is then provided to federal authorities and crosschecked with the Cancer Council. I understand from Queensland Health that the data that was required to be submitted to COAG and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare was supplied some six or seven weeks ago. So there has not been any delay in that data transfer as required, and I am very pleased to have the opportunity to reassure the member that that was an inaccurate report.

The second matter relates to information transferred between Queensland Health and the Queensland Cancer Council. Queensland Health entered into a new arrangement with the Cancer Council whereby the Cancer Council would collect and crossmatch with their own data. That required funding to the Cancer Council, which they have received, and the transfer of actual physical computer equipment. In the transfer of that equipment there has been some data loss, not only of Queensland Health material but potentially from the Queensland Cancer Council. Queensland Health provided extra funding. I understand that that data will be finalised—that matching between the two organisations—today, tomorrow or by the end of the week. This is a one-off and is nothing to do with the care of cancer patients. It has absolutely nothing to do with the care of cancer patients.

Mr McArdle: It is absolutely critical.

Ms BLIGH: I take the interjection from the shadow minister for health. The information is critical; that is why it was provided when it was required to be provided—more than six weeks ago.

What I do want to say is that in the last decade we have seen death rates from cancer decline. That is a good thing and is a tribute to our good doctors, nurses and health professionals but is also a result of the funding that this government is putting into cancer care. We have put in $2.5 billion in the last five years. That means new cancer services closer to home for people in regional Queensland—cancer care in Cairns, cancer care in Townsville, cancer services in Rockhampton. This is something that this government has delivered to the people of regional Queensland. It is making a difference to their survival rates and it is something we intend to keep doing.

Queensland Health, Information and Communication Technology

Mr SEENEY: My second question without notice is to the Minister for Health. I table an extract from a leaked Queensland Health ICT risk report card.

Tabled paper: Extract from ICT Portfolio Plan 2011-15 Part A July 2011, pages 22, 23 and 51 [5235].

That risk report card states, in the report card's own words, that there is an 'extreme' risk of a 'major' consequence to the current Queensland Health patient administration system that will 'compromise ... services resulting in the inability to register, admit, transfer and discharge patients'. Why has the minister allowed yet another important Health IT system to deteriorate to the point where it will potentially put lives at risk and will, according to this leaked document, cost $438.8 million to upgrade or replace?

Mr WILSON: I thank the honourable member for the question. It is incumbent on me to say that I do not accept anything—any implications, any assertions—that is embedded in the form in which this question has been asked. I will study the document and I will take some advice on the document.

I will tell you what we are doing: we have one of the most significant reform programs across Queensland Health in a whole facet of the services being delivered and in a whole facet of the backup services being provided. It is good business practice, members of parliament—and the opposition might not know about this—to ensure that when you are rolling out major programs there is a careful assessment of the risks associated with taking the various steps that are being proposed. I would require any good agency to do that: to make sure that they carefully analyse all of what is being provided and all of the initiatives that they intend advising on. I would expect them to do that, and that is what this document is about.

Members should ask: where is the probity from the opposition? Their alternative for Queensland is to publish a document that they say is a blueprint for infrastructure in Queensland but there is not one new hospital, there is not one new ward, there is not one new community health centre and there is not one multihealth service facility anywhere in that document for anywhere in Queensland for Queenslanders. That is the vision this opposition has for Queensland Health.

At the same time, their big vision for Queensland Health—and do not think they do not have a view about the funding for Queensland Health—is that they are going to rip $400 million out of the Sunshine Coast University Hospital. That is what they think about Health. I expect them to come clean with the Sunshine Coast. Instead of Campbell Newman saying one thing here in Brisbane and another thing on the Sunshine Coast, they need to come clean with Queenslanders about what they are going to do to pull $400 million out of Health.

(Time expired)

Investment

Mrs KIERNAN: My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier inform the House what the government is doing to ensure Queensland is the No. 1 place in Australia to invest—and my electorate is not too shabby?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the member for Mount Isa for her question. The member for Mount Isa knows only too well that there are many companies looking to invest in Queensland and a lot of them are looking in her electorate.

What the national accounts data released today shows beyond any doubt is that Queensland is bouncing back and Queensland is back in business. What it says is that Queensland led the nation with growth in demand at 3.5 per cent seasonally adjusted for the June quarter. Where does that put us? No. 1—ahead of every other state and territory in Australia and almost three times the national rate. What that means is that investment in our state is driving growth and our economy is recovering after the disasters, and there is more to come.

Investment in Queensland is not happening by mere chance or accident. It is happening because it was this Labor government that put in place a strong economic reform program, it was this Labor government that chose jobs over cuts, and it was this Labor government that actively went out to recruit and incentivise people to bring their business to Queensland. Last week the Treasurer and I announced a major coup with leading smallgoods manufacturer Primo set to build Australia's largest smallgoods facility at Wacol, creating 600 new jobs. This will be its largest facility and it is bringing it to Queensland.

Those opposite take every opportunity to talk Queensland down. You will never find Labor talking this state down. We know that this is the best state to do business. We know that Queensland is the best place in Australia to do business, and there will be more. Last week we met with businesses in Sydney and Melbourne that are keen to come across the border and do business in Queensland. Why? They say, 'You have the best business arrangements. You have the lowest payroll tax. You have the best workers compensation arrangements. You are the government that facilitates us moving there. You are the most proactive government in Australia at recruiting new businesses.' Watch this space! You will see growth in investment leading the nation. Where? In Queensland. You will see growth leading the nation. Where? In Queensland. Our government knows how to back a winner, and we are backing Queensland.

Queensland Health, Information and Communication Technology

Mr McARDLE: My question is to the Minister for Health. Why after four years and $300 million spent on eHealth has his department's secret IT risk report card found that it is almost certain and at an extreme risk of failing to provide critical information to support quality care in our hospitals and obtain federal funding for health services?

Mr WILSON: I thank the honourable member for the question. It is regrettable that when the Leader of the Opposition asked his question and tabled a document that he did not help the parliament by going on and pointing out when he was referring to a section of the report that it identifies an assessment being made for a time beyond 2015 on the basis were nothing happening now. It is a very

substantial basis upon which he is making the allegation, but of course it does impair his position and so therefore we would not want full disclosure from the Leader of the Opposition. It is in that respect that I say in response to the member—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr WILSON: It is in that respect that I say to the member for Caloundra the electronic medical records program within Queensland Health has one of the widest cross-sections of support from clinicians and others within the health system who see—

Mr McArdle interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Caloundra!

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Both sides will cease interjecting. The minister was asked in part in the question about eHealth. As I am listening to it, he is referring to eHealth. I want to listen to the minister.

Mr WILSON: The electronic medical records program for introduction throughout Queensland Health, as I am advised, has the widest possible consensus based support amongst clinicians and other health workers in Queensland Health that one could ever hope to get. Indeed, I have had senior clinicians from a number of hospitals speak to me—lobbying in effect—for the need for government to continue with this initiative. On the basis of that advice, the government is in fact proceeding with the initiative—the EMR—because there is such a wide level of support for the efficiencies that that will introduce into the hospital system throughout Queensland. As I am advised, the approach that has been taken by Queensland Health to putting the electronic medical records program together has taken account of all of the appropriate advice from external agencies that would be reasonably expected of a prudent administration and agency in that it has been crosschecked against independent agencies from Queensland Health to ensure that from a governance point of view, from a point of view of probity and from the point of view of value for money the EMR program has ticked all of the right boxes. It is about time that those opposite stopped attacking—

(Time expired)

Airport Link

Mrs ATTWOOD: My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier update the House on Australia's largest road tunnel infrastructure project?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. The member for Mount Ommaney knows, like any other Brisbane based member, just how important the Airport Link project is to effective traffic movement around the city and particularly for anybody who is going to the airport, whether for work or for travel. Airport Link is Australia's largest road tunnel project and yesterday it achieved another significant milestone, with all 12 of the new bridge structures now complete in the area of Bowen Hills. With only 10 months until project completion, the final bridge beam has been installed. This final bridge beam will connect Airport Link to the Inner City Bypass. It is exciting to see another stage of construction finished in preparation for the completion of this project by mid next year. Some 570 beams have been installed which have constructed 12 bridges and the beams are up to 40 metres in length and weighing between 40 and 90 tonnes.

This has been an incredible engineering accomplishment. I think it is important to recognise the great work that the workers on this project are doing and the great engineering and design work that is occurring on this massive project. The projects are now more than 80 per cent complete, with nearly 15 kilometres of tunnels and ramps excavated between Bowen Hills and Toombul. In excess of 20 million hours have been worked to date and right now there are 4,300 workers on this job. This was one of the projects particularly in relation to the Northern Busway that was important for our government to keep moving through the GFC. This project will change the face of our city for the better. It will change the way that people who live in our city move around it. It will change the way that visitors to our city arriving at the airport first see our city. It will take 18 sets of traffic lights out of the trip from the airport to the city. It will mean that you can drive from the airport to almost Byron Bay without a single traffic light. More than anything else, this tunnel—unlike Clem7—is a tunnel that will be built in the right place and—unlike Clem7—this tunnel will take traffic where it wants to go. Unlike Clem7—

Honourable members interjected.

Ms BLIGH: Unlike Clem7, this tunnel—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Honourable members interjected.

Ms BLIGH: Unlike Clem7—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Stop the clock. I would like to hear the answer thanks.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Both sides will cease interjecting. The member for Clayfield and the minister for mining will cease interjecting. The Premier has the call. I would like to hear the answer.

Ms BLIGH: It is a simple proposition: the tunnel built by the Labor government will have cars in it—unlike Clem7—because we know how to get on and do what needs to be done.

Queensland Health, Payroll System

Ms BATES: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. I refer to the minister's claims at estimates on 13 July that the payroll system had stabilised. Why did the minister say this to a committee of the parliament when his own department's secret IT risk report card dated the same month reports that the Health payroll system is at an extreme risk of failing due to lack of additional resources?

Mr WILSON: The position on this is that we, through Queensland Health, have been implementing the blueprint on improving the payroll system, a blueprint that has been advised to us by a combination of external agencies—the Auditor-General, KPMG, Ernst & Young and a number of others. That is the blueprint that is being implemented.

The assessment that is being relied upon by those opposite is an assessment were we not to be doing anything to change the system as it is right now. Likewise with the questions asked previously. What we are doing is implementing the changes in relation to payroll that have been advised to us by external agencies who put together the blueprint. The government has adopted the blueprint and that is being rolled out. That will continue to be rolled out. It has made significant improvements in the interim in the way in which the payroll system has operated.

The members opposite are misleading the parliament and the people of Queensland by relying upon documents that are focused on what would be the outcome were we doing nothing different from what we are doing right now. That is what they are relying upon. The fact is that there is a whole package of reform and improvements being undertaken to the payroll system that have been well advised to this parliament prior to now and will continue to be rolled out.

Urban Land Development Authority

Mr RYAN: My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State. Can the Deputy Premier please inform the House of any recent Urban Land Development Authority approvals and any alternative policies for affordable housing?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for his question. I notice that the honourable member is wearing his Caboolture Snakes rugby union tie. I was pleased to join the honourable member in his electorate the other day and yesterday I had my Caboolture Snakes rugby union tie on. I support all the wonderful sporting organisations in our community, no matter what the code, no matter what the gender, that do such a wonderful job. I join the honourable member in supporting them.

The mining and resources industry brings enormous opportunities for Queensland. We understand the pressure that it is putting on some communities. Local councils have significant issues in terms of recruiting numbers of town planners and experts and that is why the Urban Land Development Authority is delivering affordable housing to 14 communities across the state through the provision of more than 38,000 dwellings ultimately. We expect to see almost 619 of these dwellings delivered in the current financial year in communities like Fitzgibbon, Clinton, Oonoonba, Blackwater, Moranbah and Andergrove. I am pleased to announce today that a new 12 townhouse development has been approved in Blackwater—a mixture of double and single storey houses offering one, two and three bedroom homes. Work will be underway before the end of the year so by mid next year they will be there in Blackwater. I am also pleased to hear that we are announcing ULDA approval for Bellvista 2 as part of the Caloundra South UDA: 700 residential lots across 90 hectares with works to start this month. That is about delivering housing affordability.

It is interesting when one looks at what the view is of the ULDA on the other side. VicUrban, Landcom and other organisations in other states have a similar role in terms of dealing with these issues. On 29 March this year Campbell Newman told the *Brisbane Times* that he wanted to scrap the ULDA. He said,

If I was elected premier, we will curtail this organisation that is unaccountable and unelected.

That is what the 'man of La Mancha' said on that occasion. What do we see more recently? In the last couple of days we saw the wonderful LNP cut and paste, staple on the back of infrastructure plan. What do they say in that document? The LNP will—

Urgently review the role of the ULDA to ensure the severe housing shortage can be addressed in the shortest possible time

In other words, it is going to review an organisation that it wants to abolish and use it to deliver housing. That will be a very, very interesting task that it will do when it does not exist. Again, it is just another example. Every day of the week, every turn of the page, in every document you see from the

LNP, in every utterance you hear from Campbell Newman in the media and from his shadow minister you have a conflict and a contradiction. What he said in relation to the Wardell Street interchange was that if he got in he would do it without resuming properties and do it for less, just like he did with the bikes, just like he did with Clem7. They say one thing; they do the other.

Minister for Health

Mr NICHOLLS: My question is to the Premier. In the Minister for Health's charter of goals letter the Premier wrote she would meet regularly with him to discuss performance in his portfolio. When she last met with him did he not report the failings identified in his department's secret IT risk report card? If so, why did she not sack him for those failures and if not should she not sack him now for failure to keep her informed as the charter requires?

Ms BLIGH: I know that the opposition gets very titillated when it gets a document, but those opposite have an obligation to read the document accurately and represent it accurately. What every government agency, business and organisation undertakes from time to time is a risk assessment that goes through a theoretical exercise that says if we did not continue with this or if this was to slow down what would the risk to the organisation be. What the document that was tabled by those opposite does—

Mr Seeney interjected.

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

Ms BLIGH: What the document does is contemplate—in relation, for example, to the patient medical records system—if current work on that did not continue beyond 2015 then it would be an extreme risk to the organisation. There is no slowdown of that project.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Those on my left will cease interjecting. If they believe that the Premier is misleading the House there is a remedy for that. The chair is in no position, because I do not have the document, to know whether the accusations by the Leader of the Opposition are right or wrong. There is another remedy for that. The honourable the Premier has the call and, as I understand it, the honourable the Premier is referring to a document.

Ms BLIGH: I am referring to the document that was referred to in the question. What the document says is, for example, what is one of the risks if the agency was, 'unable to maintain and support Queensland's patient administration system beyond 2015'. You do not have to be a rocket scientist to realise that if beyond 2015 a health organisation could not maintain its health records that would be an extreme risk. That is why Queensland Health is putting in place a multimillion dollar new patient record system, one that has been recognised nationally as one of the best, one that is being endorsed by clinicians. What it means is you have to buy a new system. That is what we are doing. That is what is funded and that is what this government will deliver.

National Accounts

Mr WENDT: My question is to the Treasurer and Minister for State Development and Trade. Can the Treasurer update the House on the national accounts data released today?

Mr FRASER: I thank the member for Ipswich for his question and for his commitment to generating jobs and growth in the Ipswich West community. He is a man who represents the economic interests of his electorate in this parliament forthrightly, as do the other members of this government who have been part of a project to reform the Queensland economy and to drive growth and investment back into the Queensland economy.

Underneath that headline figure that I have already detailed to the parliament there are a number of other pretty newsworthy stories, I have to say. What we saw is that business investment in the Queensland economy across the quarter grew by 21 per cent to be 41 per cent higher for the year. Underneath that, machinery and equipment investment was up by 19 per cent for the year, but engineering construction was up by 90.1 per cent across the last 12 months. That sounds like a jobs pipeline to me. What you see underneath these results are a whole series of stories that tell you that the economy is moving into the investment phase that we have been charting a course for. What you see is that household consumption is also positive: 3.3 per cent for the year and .7 of a per cent for the quarter. What you see is that exports are coming back: 6.9 per cent for the quarter but still below where they were a year ago. It has still room to improve as the exports come back from natural disasters. That is because this government's economic policies have put in place a program to drive investment, to create new industries and to bring that private sector growth. We see the capital program funded off the balance sheet now making room for that private investment growth as the economy goes through a step change. That has been the great economic project of this government during this term in office and today the results show that it is now delivering dividends to the Queensland economy.

I challenge the economic Henny Pennies and the hand-wringers opposite, who are out there lip-quivering about where the Queensland economy is, to nitpick this apart, because it tells us that the economy is growing, that demand is returning and that investment is surging through the Queensland economy. They will not be able to do it because they cannot offer anything in the alternative. But what would we expect from a side of politics that is being led by a bloke who described a $2 billion project blow-out on the Clem7 tunnel as a 'plus plus blow-out'? What would we expect from a side of politics that is led by someone who had a 100 per cent cost blow-out on the boiler plate that is King George Square? What would we expect from a side of politics that is led by someone who created those poor forlorn unwanted town bikes, some of which are just across the road, that are nothing more than a static monument to ineffective policy planning? When it comes down it, ultimately Campbell Newman is all risk and ego. I say to the people of Queensland, watch out for your money because he is the ultimate financial risk.

Racing Queensland; Ludwig, Mr W

Mr STEVENS: My question is to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies. As the minister responsible for the integrity of Racing Queensland, can the minister explain why the Australian Workers Union should fund the $45,000 in private legal expenses of Racing Queensland director Bill Ludwig in starting a defamation case over racing matters?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I want to make sure that that is within the minister's administration. Please repeat the question. I am struggling to see how this is within the administration of the minister. Let us hear the question again.

Mr STEVENS: As the minister responsible for the integrity of Racing Queensland, can the minister explain why the Australian Workers Union should fund the $45,000 in private legal expenses of Racing Queensland director Bill Ludwig in starting a defamation case over racing matters?

Mr SPEAKER: The minister.

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the honourable member for Mermaid Beach for the question. This bloke was a member of the Gold Coast Turf Club and they had such confidence in him that they tossed him off. The question from the member really shows his lack of understanding about how the Racing Queensland board has been set up and how it operates. The matter in question is not relevant to the operation of Racing Queensland or the integrity of the Racing Queensland board. It is a matter between Mr Ludwig and the AWU. As minister, I have no powers to appoint or dismiss people from the board of Racing Queensland. Racing Queensland has been set up under the Corporations Act. It is under the provisions of that act that a director can be removed. All you are trying to do—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Direct your comments through the chair.

Mr MULHERIN:—is tarnish the Racing Queensland board and the union. It is an ongoing attack that you have on trade unions and also on Racing Queensland.

Education System

Ms JOHNSTONE: My question is to the Minister for Education and Industrial Relations. Is the minister aware of any recent information that demonstrates the success of Queensland's education system?

Ms Jones interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, the member for Ashgrove will cease interjecting.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Those on my left with now cease interjecting.

Mr DICK: The member for Ashgrove is a great champion of public education in Queensland. Last week I was delighted to be in Townsville with the member for Townsville at one of our Flying Start forums. We went to the community at the great Northern Beaches State High School—

Mr Wallace: Great school.

Mr DICK: It is a fantastic school. I take the interjection from the member for Thuringowa and Minister for Main Roads. We talked to the community about the next stage of reform in education. It was a great evening, hosted by the member for Townsville. At the end of the night we opened the forum up to questions. There were some very thoughtful and well-considered questions about our suite of Flying Start reforms including the next building block for education, which is joining year 7 with high school from 2015.

I must say that one question floored me. A woman in the audience asked, 'What would the LNP do if they were elected? Does the LNP support these reforms?' We do not know that answer. I do not know the answer. The members on this side do not know the answer to the question and, frankly, members on the other side do not know the answer. We do not know the answer and the people of Queensland do not know the answer.

It is now 156 days since Campbell Newman became the de facto Leader of the Opposition and he is yet to say anything substantive about education. Campbell Newman is a myth based on a slogan wrapped in a ringtone. That is all Campbell Newman is. Let us look at the myth. This man says that he is a builder, but all he built was a white-elephant tunnel and a white-hot King George Square. This man says that he has answers, but he used a mobile phone to cheat at a suburban school trivia night. This man says that he is a man of honour, but he reneged on his promise to resign if rates went up above inflation. Rates did not just go above inflation; they went up twice the rate of inflation. He is not a man of honour.

Soon Campbell Newman will be on a TV show. I am interested to see what Jamie and Adam from *MythBusters* will say. They will not say that the myth is inconclusive. They will not say that the myth is implausible. When it comes to Campbell Newman, they will say, 'Myth-Busted!' Campbell Newman is a man who promises a lot but does not perform. He was bad for the City of Brisbane and he will be bad for Queensland. This man does not match the myth.

Community Services

Ms SIMPSON: My question is to the Minister for Community Services. I refer to the buck-passing between the state and federal Labor governments over looming hardship for hundreds of Queensland community services providing help to the state's most vulnerable and who will pay retrospective pay increases, regardless of whether or not they have received help or were already under federal awards. I table a document.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 17 February 2010, from Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations to Mr Gil Muir, Director, Employment Services, relating to pay equity increases for social and community services workers [5236].

We all believe that staff must be paid fairly. I ask the minister: did this government mislead federal Labor by providing a list of community organisations to be included in a retrospective regulation by claiming they were fully funded for the wage rise by the state and were only state groups transitioning to the federal system?

Ms STRUTHERS: I thank the member for the question. I do love to get a question. I do love the opportunity to talk about the good work of our funded community organisations right around this state. I do love to talk about the commitment of this Labor government to community services. In 2009, who stumped up $414 million to pay for pay equity in the community services sector? This government! Who led the charge on that? Premier Anna Bligh! I was minister for about a month when she said to me, 'This decision of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission is a landmark decision. We have supported it, we back it now and we will stump up $414 million, backed by the Treasurer. Not only that, we will continue that funding into the future.'

So what is our recurrent commitment? It is $125 million for community services right around the state to fund pay equity. Do members opposite even know what pay equity is? Have they stumped up a dollar? Is the shadow minister going around the state saying to services that she or the LNP will stump up money for the pay equity decision? No! This government has a solid commitment in relation to funding community service organisations in this state.

Mr Speaker, allow me to give the members a quick quiz. What has been the increased investment in community services in Queensland since, say, 2003-04? Is it A, 100 per cent, B, 20 per cent or, C, 160 per cent? Has there been a 160 per cent increase in community services funding under the Labor government since 2003-04?

Government members: Yes!

Ms STRUTHERS: Yes! The answer is C.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms STRUTHERS: They are silent.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The House will come to order.

Mr Springborg interjected.

Ms Jones interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Southern Downs and the member for Ashgrove!

Ms STRUTHERS: What did Barry O'Farrell do in New South Wales? He went to the election promising the world to the community services workers. He said, 'Yes, we will fix the pay equity.' What has he done? What did he do in his budget handed down yesterday? Zip! He has reneged on his commitment to community services workers, and that is what members opposite will do. That is exactly what they will do. They are a risk to community services in Queensland.

What about Ted in Victoria? What did Ted do? Ted has not stumped up one dollar. But he went to the people and he and his shadow minister in opposition went to the workers and said, 'We will pay this pay equity case.' What have they done? Zip! And that is their form. That is their absolute form. They are a risk, a total risk to community services in this state.

Bruce Highway

Mr HOOLIHAN: Mr Speaker, if I might seek your indulgence, the tie I wear is a Suncorp tie as the official sponsor of the Wallabies.

Mr SPEAKER: Please get on with the question.

Mr HOOLIHAN: My question without notice is to the Minister for Main Roads, Fisheries and Marine Infrastructure. Could the minister please outline the Bligh government's plans to deliver for Queensland on the Bruce Highway?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the member for Keppel for his question. He knows the vital importance of the Bruce Highway, which runs through his electorate and certainly needs upgrading along with that Yeppen flood plain. Those on this side of the House are committed to fixing up the Bruce. That is why I am proud that the Bligh government has a plan for the Bruce Highway. We have a plan and we have put our plan on the table. Our plan includes 60 major projects covering safety, capacity and flood protection on the Bruce Highway. Our focus will be on the six key regional centres of Queensland: the hubs of Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Gympie and the south-east. Our vision is clear: 10 proposed ring-roads, bypasses and deviations along the entire length of the highway.

That is in stark contrast to those opposite, the 'let's do nothing party', the 'let's plan nothing party'. Campbell Newman admits he has not got a plan for the Bruce Highway. Indeed, he thinks that highway is named after the member for Moggill, but he is incorrect. Let us be fair dinkum. This Newman character has no intention of doing anything on the Bruce Highway. He is all talk and no action and will do and say whatever it takes to score political points. He even admitted in Townsville earlier this year that he has not driven the Bruce Highway in a quarter of a century. What a rort! What a shame!

The tories cannot help themselves when it comes to the Bruce. They have a record for the Bruce and it is a record that they want to hide. I read with interest an article in the Ayr *Advocate* a couple of weeks ago. It turns out that at a meeting to discuss the federal government's proposed Burdekin bypass it was revealed that that vital project was previously canned by the Howard government, the dead hand of the Liberal and National parties. And guess what? They are at it again. I have not heard a commitment from the member for Burdekin to back us in getting a bypass through the Burdekin. The dead hand of the Liberals and the Nats are back at it again.

Campbell Newman's empty foolish promises—those projects that do not stack up—include the human frying pan aka King George Square, the tunnel that has gone broke and the Kingsford-Smith Drive duplication that he promised and never delivered, and the Bruce is the next in line. He does not care about the people of regional Queensland. The dead hand of the Liberal National Party is back at it again and they want to destroy our chances for a Burdekin bypass, but we on this side of the House will fight them when it comes to the Bruce. We have a plan and we will deliver it.

Mr Johnson: Have you read the report? You'd blow more hot air than a hand dryer in an outhouse.

Mr Wallace: Have you got a plan, Vaughan? Unlike the other side, we have record planning in your electorate.

Mr SPEAKER: Both sides will cease interjecting.

Mr Johnson: We have a plan alright. Come and talk to us about it.

(Time expired)

Speeding Penalties

Mr FOLEY: My question without notice is to the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. In light of the *Fraser Coast Chronicle* article on Monday, 5 September which outlines the case of a driver who was caught speeding at 117 kilometres an hour in a 50-kilometre an hour zone, will the minister consider imposing much higher fines and longer suspensions on drivers' licences as a hopeful deterrent to stupid drivers?

Mr ROBERTS: I thank the member for the question and for his interest in road safety. Driving at that speed or in excess of any speed limit is unacceptable. The penalties within the act are quite severe as they are. From time to time government will review them. There are, in fact, some penalties where automatic expulsion or loss of licence occurs.

Mr Lucas: Thirty kilometres over the speed limit is automatic loss of licence.

Mr ROBERTS: Driving 30 kilometres over the speed limit results in an automatic loss of licence.

While I am on my feet responding to that question, I might take the opportunity to talk about the important focus that the Queensland Police Service places on speeding in particular. Speeding is a factor in around a quarter of road deaths. For that reason, there is a comprehensive strategy of enforcement, which includes additional officers out in the field—in fact, over the last couple of years 106 additional traffic officers have taken to the streets to deal with policing traffic matters—and the installation of additional speed cameras. The evidence clearly shows that speed cameras do reduce the level of speeding in the community. There is clear evidence that people slow down. The service is also putting in place a whole range of other initiatives.

To answer the member's question, reviews are undertaken from time to time about appropriate penalties. At this stage I believe the penalties are appropriate. Obviously that level of speeding is unacceptable in that community and unacceptable in any part of Queensland.

Moreton Bay Rail Link

Mr WELLS: This question is to the honourable Minister for Transport. I ask the honourable lady: what is the status of the Moreton Bay rail link? Are there any risks to its completion?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the honourable gentleman very much for his question here today about the Moreton Bay rail link. On this side of the House we know how important this vital piece of infrastructure is for South-East Queensland. I know the member for Murrumba supports it; I know the member for Kallangur is in strong support of it as well as the member for Redcliffe. They know that with the growing population in their region, which is predicted to reach about 500,000 by 2031, we definitely need this piece of infrastructure. We know the state government is supporting it, we know the federal government is supporting it and of course we know that the local council, the Moreton Bay Regional Council, is also supporting it. In terms of transport infrastructure we also know that it is going to be vital for saving significant travel time to Brisbane. It will result in a 45-minute journey from Kippa-Ring to the city. That is a great outcome from a great piece of infrastructure that is going to benefit the local region as well as providing in excess of 8,000 jobs.

However, I can advise the House that the Moreton Bay Rail Link's future is in jeopardy if Campbell Newman gets his way. Why do I say that? When Campbell Newman released his infrastructure plan last week—we know most of it was copied from the South-East Queensland Council of Mayors—he neglected to mention in detail anything to do with the Moreton Bay Rail Link as a priority. In fact, I went searching for a mention of the Moreton Bay Rail Link. Here it is in appendix A—one line, 'Moreton Bay Rail Link'. In fact they say it is not even funded.

If this lazy opposition had bothered to have a look at the budget papers, they would know that $47 million has been allocated in this budget so we can begin construction work out there. Already there is geotechnical work happening out there. We know that this is a vital piece of infrastructure. Where do they stand in relation to this piece of infrastructure? They have said nothing about it in—

Mr Seeney interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: You released the infrastructure plan. You went on your road tour of Queensland. Did you go to Moreton Bay? Did you go to Moreton Bay and have a look?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The minister will direct her comments through the chair.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, you did not. You did not even go and have a look at it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The minister will direct her comments through the chair.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Mr Speaker, we know that Campbell Newman is a risk to this state. We know that he does not understand state politics. We know that when he was Lord Mayor he could not even get his projects right. He could not even get the projects right for the city. How can we trust this man with this great state? How can we? We cannot risk him. You cannot even get your facts right. You cannot even read a budget paper. It is a disgrace.

Flying Foxes

Mr MESSENGER: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. I refer the minister to the plight of Mr Alan White, a resident of Childers in the Burnett. Mr White is almost 90 years of age and has, apart from serving in the military in World War II and surviving the bombing of Darwin, lived in his home peacefully for 76 years until a large colony of flying foxes roosted in trees just metres from his home. The flying foxes now bomb Mr White. Daily they deposit urine, faeces and on occasions afterbirth on his roof and—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is too much preamble in this question. Please come to the question.

Mr MESSENGER:—thus contaminating his drinking water supply with secretions possibly containing deadly viruses. I ask: can the minister give a guarantee that Mr White will not suffer a sickness or injury after drinking water from the same source he has enjoyed for 76 years or coming into contact with flying fox secretions? I table a picture of Mr White and a copy of the video of the flying foxes.

Tabled paper: Photograph of Mr Rob Messenger MP and Mr Alan White [5237].

Tabled paper: USB stick containing a 38-second video file 'flying fox 1', a 33-second video file 'flying fox 2' and a jpeg image 'Alan White Pic 1' [5259] [5260] [5237].

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will resume his seat. The minister can answer the question.

Ms Spence: It asks for an opinion, doesn't it? It is out of order.

Mr SPEAKER: It was hard to follow the question. In fairness, the member gets a question every now and again.

Mr WILSON: I thank the member for the question. Firstly, I want to say that any reasonable person would express concern about the health and welfare of an elderly man such as was described by the member in the question, assuming the content of the question is factually accurate. I do share the concern of all members about the health and safety of a man of such senior years, let alone anyone in general.

I do not believe it is appropriate for me, nor am I in a position, to provide medical advice to the member in relation to—

Mr SPEAKER: The part of the question that asks for an opinion you can ignore. It would be out of order. The reason I am allowing it is that it asks for a guarantee.

Mr WILSON: What I will do—

Mr Messenger interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Burnett, you have asked your question. The minister is answering it.

Mr WILSON: What I will do is, because I put the interests of this gentleman before anything, I will ask my director-general to arrange for an appropriate health professional at the nearest health facility to visit this gentleman—

Mr Messenger interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Burnett, you have asked your question. The minister is answering your question.

Mr WILSON:—to give this gentleman, should he seek it, the appropriate advice from a clinically qualified person about his health and welfare.

Bigsound

Ms GRACE: My question is to the Minister for Finance, Natural Resources and the Arts. This week Fortitude Valley will be buzzing with musicians and industry leaders attending Bigsound, the annual contemporary music conference at the Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts in Fortitude Valley. Could the minister update the House on some of the activities we would expect to see at Bigsound?

Mr Seeney interjected.

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

Ms NOLAN: It may come as a surprise to the country party that Fortitude Valley is a cultural hub. Last night I had the privilege of opening the Bigsound conference—Australia's largest music marketplace and conference specialising in contemporary music which is held every year in the arts hub that is Fortitude Valley. Bigsound is run by an organisation called QMusic.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Those on my left will cease interjecting.

Ms NOLAN: Bigsound is now in its 10th year, and this year it has attracted 650 delegates from around the country and around the world to find out what is happening in the world of contemporary music and what is being led right here in Queensland. There will be 80 bands playing over the next couple of nights in the Valley and they will be looking, frankly, to be discovered and to get hooked into what is a huge international market for contemporary music.

We as a government back Bigsound, and we do it for a couple of reasons. We back Bigsound partly because contemporary music—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Those on my left will cease interjecting.

Ms NOLAN: Contemporary music provides a soundtrack for our lives but it is also a huge creative industry opportunity. For this opposition to show so little interest in it, both as the arts and as a matter of economic growth, I think is remarkable in itself. But I guess that such rudeness and disinterest when it comes to the arts is hardly even remotely surprising—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Again, those on my left will cease interjecting. The minister will round off her answer.

Ms NOLAN:—because they come from a party with a record of slashing funding to the arts. When Campbell Newman was mayor down at City Hall, that city council took three-quarters of a million dollars out of the emerging artists program. They cut funding to the Powerhouse year on year over the course of Campbell Newman's lord mayoralty in accordance with its own annual reports. The LNP in office down at City Hall even cut funding to library books.

The arts give us a sense of self and the arts generate creative industry. They are a sign of a civilised and progressive economy, and it is no wonder that the LNP's record and their interest today is quite simply of cuts.

Apprenticeships and Traineeships

Mr MALONE: My question is to the Minister for Employment, Skills and Mining. I refer to the government's 2006 Skills Plan and its goal for an extra 17,000 apprenticeship training places by 2010. This has not been achieved. In 2006 there were 43,202 trade apprentices in training; in 2010 there were just 43,140—a net decrease of 62 in the four years. I ask: why has this government failed to meet its own apprenticeship training targets, leaving the state desperately short of skilled workers?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Clearly, the honourable member is aware of the impacts on the Queensland economy even given the significant opportunities that we are seeing now with the growth in a whole range of sectors, particularly the resources sector. In relation to the construction industry and other sectors, we have seen a downturn. Inevitably, that has impacted upon the recruitment and retention of apprentices and trainees. That is why we are keen to continue to work with industry in this state to respond to the requirements of industry and to ensure that the way we deliver vocational education and training and support apprenticeships and traineeships is responsive to industry needs.

That is why we continue to commit significant funds to supporting these sectors. In this year's budget there is an allocation of $9.9 million for Skills Queensland and expenditure of $732 million for the vocational education and training sector. We will continue to support apprenticeships and traineeships in this state while in the context of a national reform agenda look at how those apprenticeships and traineeships should be reformed to reflect the needs of a modern economy and modern workforces.

We need to understand what we need to reform in the space where apprenticeships and traineeships have changed dramatically. That is what this government will continue to do in concert and cooperation with industry and other important partners, including the federal government.

(Time expired)

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time for question time has ended.

CHARITABLE AND NON-PROFIT GAMING (TWO-UP) AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction and Referral to the Finance and Administration Committee

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State) (3.31 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act 1999 for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Finance and Administration Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming (Two-up) Amendment Bill [5238].

Tabled paper: Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming (Two-up) Amendment Bill, explanatory notes [5239].

Countries are defined by the institutions and milestones which they mark and achieve along the way. Australia is a country that fortunately has never suffered the horrors of civil war but our freedom nonetheless has come at a price. It has come at a price from those who have been prepared over the past 100 years to defend us and other nations of the world from fascism and totalitarianism and against those who seek to take away freedom and deny democracy to us. This was not achieved easily. It was achieved at a price, that price being the blood of Australian servicemen and servicewomen who have been prepared to defend us and fight for Australia in these conflicts.

Australians are not particularly religious in Western terms, but, of course, for some of us religious days have significance. For all of us, the most hallowed day in the calendar we all agree upon is Anzac Day. That is because we remember our ex-service men and women. But for all the seriousness and horror of war, it would be wrong to think that the Australian character did not shine through in our activities and undertakings overseas: larrikinism, mateship, having a bet. That tradition of two-up conceived in the goldfields and forged during conflicts is still an essential part of Anzac Day for many parts of Queensland.

Our police are fully aware of these traditions and of course have appropriately, if you like, overlooked someone playing a bit of two-up on Anzac Day at the local RSL. As far I am able to ascertain, there has not been one prosecution in the last 20 or so years for playing two-up and I am not aware of any prior to that time. However, this year the issue was raised in the context of a hotel in Cairns seeking to play two-up and the Premier undertook to examine the issue.

Perhaps it would make no difference to continue on as we have for the past 100 years and rely on the good sense and good judgement of individuals when it comes to playing two-up on Anzac Day. Alas, that is not the modern world. It is on that basis that I introduce the bill to the House. The Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming (Two-up) Amendment Bill legalises the playing of two-up on Anzac Day, Remembrance Day and related days prescribed in a regulation, if conducted by or for a Returned & Services League club or RSL sub-branch in Queensland or at a function at another liquor licensed premises if approved in writing by an RSL club or RSL sub-branch.

Currently, casinos have an exclusive right to conduct two-up games in Queensland. This exclusivity was initially granted to casinos by the conservative government during the 1980s, when casinos were first established in Queensland. The playing of two-up is authorised by the respective casino agreements, which are commercial agreements between the state and the relevant operators authorised by the Casino Control Act 1982 and the relevant casino agreement acts. However, no casino in Queensland currently operates two-up games. At present, two-up is an unlawful game if played in Queensland in a public place outside of a casino under sections 234 and 230A of the Criminal Code.

Before I discuss the amendments in the bill, I will give a brief history of two-up in Australia. The game is believed to have been adapted from the game of pitch and toss and is thought to have been first played by transported Australian convicts. Requiring only two coins and a level patch of ground, its essential simplicity and portability appealed to early convicts, emancipists and military officers who were excluded from the card games of the colony's respectable elite.

However, during the 19th century, two-up was condemned by some churches, the press and various antigambling lobby groups. As well as the moral and class arguments against two-up, there was strong opposition to profiteering from gambling. The various colonial governments were concerned with matters of taxation and control, and two-up's mobility and informal betting structures created particular difficulties for regulatory authorities.

As a result, the game was made illegal in Australian jurisdictions during the second half of the 19th century. Queensland's Suppression of Gambling Act 1895 and the later Vagrants, Gaming and Other Offences Act 1931, both now repealed, both explicitly identify two-up as an unlawful game. Its illegality also did not prevent two-up from being celebrated as Australia's national game during the First World War, when it became identified with the newly acquired sense of national identity, personified by the digger. In the post First World War period, despite continued illegality, two-up thrived as ex-soldiers shared again the comradeship of their war days. The two-up tradition was carried on by a new generation of Australian soldiers in Africa and New Guinea during the Second World War.

Significantly, the association between Australian diggers and two-up was institutionalised in ritualistic games of two-up held after the memorial service every Anzac Day. The annual Anzac Day two-up game became an important link which united and revitalised two generations of war veterans. Because of this link with military tradition it has been commonly accepted in the Queensland community that two-up is played on Anzac Day, and similar days such as Remembrance Day, as a mark of respect to those who have served their nation in wartime, despite its technical illegality. In line with community expectation, the amendments in the bill seek to make the conduct of the game legal if conducted by an RSL club and sub-branch on Anzac Day, Remembrance Day and related days prescribed in a regulation.

In addition, the bill provides for two-up games to be played at functions on Anzac Day, Remembrance Day and related days prescribed in a regulation in other liquor licensed premises if the person who conducts the game is approved in writing by an RSL sub-branch. This would allow relevant RSL sub-branches to approve two-up on these special days in areas where there is community demand but for which no RSL is located nearby. This aims to ensure that, if there is demand, people in rural or regional areas will be able to participate in two-up games on days which are significant to the remembrance of the sacrifice of service personnel.

The bill is not designed to remove the casinos' rights to exclusive conduct of two-up except for particular days of the year when Australians commemorate those who have served their country and those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice. The bill provides for the conduct of two-up on these days in RSL clubs and RSL sub-branches. The Returned & Services League was established for the principal purpose of promoting the interests and welfare of former and serving members of the Australian Defence Force and their dependants. The RSL exists to assist and care for the sick, elderly and needy whilst preserving the memory and records of those who served, suffered and died for our country as well as encouraging youth to serve the nation with the spirit of self-sacrifice and loyalty.

To ensure two-up is not used for profit making, provisions within the bill prohibit commissions on wagers by participants. However, the bill will allow an entry fee, if all money raised is donated to RSL clubs and RSL sub-branches and is used for purposes to support ex-service men and women and their families. It is the intent of the bill that all money raised will be used for this purpose and not be used for club operating expenses or other administrative purposes. Provisions in the bill also prohibit minors from participating.

I note the Criminal Code (Anzac Day Betting) Amendment Bill 2011, which was introduced in the Legislative Assembly as a private member's bill on 11 May 2011 by the honourable member for Kawana. That bill seeks to amend the Criminal Code so that a two-up game held in a licensed hotel and club in conjunction with an Anzac Day celebration will not be an unlawful game.

There are a number of issues with the amendments proposed in that bill. They are: in exempting two-up from the definition of unlawful games in the Criminal Code, it would create an inconsistency in the legislative framework for legalised gaming, as all legalised gaming is authorised under a gaming act;

while two-up is part of Australia's military tradition, the private member's bill does not restrict its play to RSL entities but extends it to all licensed hotels and clubs, including those which have no connection with any returned services group—

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

Mr Ryan interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Morayfield! I am hearing the point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: The Attorney-General is referring to a bill that I have introduced in the House. I understand his is nearly a copy of our bill but he cannot now debate the bill that is yet to be debated. It is second on the *Notice Paper* with the private members' bills.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! In the context of introducing his bill, the Attorney-General is in order in referring to the other bill. Therefore, notwithstanding the feelings of the honourable member for Kawana, the honourable the Attorney-General is in order.

Mr LUCAS: It is a matter of regret that the honourable member, firstly, does not check his standing orders and, secondly, seeks to expose his ignorance on an important matter such as this. In fact, he refers to a bill that is different in its import. The honourable member would be aware that of course I am now highlighting the differences between our bill and what was sought to be introduced by him that would allow private individuals to profit without any connection to the RSL.

The other issues with the private member's bill are that the extension of two-up gaming to all licensed clubs and hotels is inconsistent with current exclusivity agreements with casinos and potentially would leave the state open to compensation claims; the private member's bill does not prevent minors from playing two-up games; and the private member's bill makes no provision for where potential revenue derived from the playing of two-up games would be directed, therefore potentially allowing businesses to conduct the game as a profit-making activity.

The Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming (Two-up) Amendment Bill 2011 addresses these issues. The authority to conduct two-up games will be restricted to significant days of the year when Australians commemorate the sacrifice of service personnel at RSL clubs, sub-branches and services clubs, or at other licensed premises if the person who conducts the game is approved in writing by an RSL sub-branch. Minors are prohibited from participating. The organiser cannot take a commission on money wagered and any entry fees must go to supporting ex-service men and women and their families.

Furthermore, the authority to conduct two-up games is provided for in a gaming act, the Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act 1999, consistent with the current legislative framework for gaming. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State) (3.43 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Mr SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Finance and Administration Committee.

STOCK ROUTE NETWORK MANAGEMENT BILL

Introduction and Referral to the Transport, Local Government and Infrastructure Committee

Hon. RG NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (Minister for Finance, Natural Resources and the Arts) (3.43 pm): I present a bill for an act about the management of the stock route network and associated land and to make consequential amendments to the Aboriginal Land Act 1991, the Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007, the Fisheries Act 1994, the Forestry Act 1959, the Land Act 1994, the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002, the Stock Act 1915, the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994, the Transport Infrastructure (State-controlled Roads) Regulation 2006, the Vegetation Management Act 1999, the Water Act 2000 and the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Transport, Local Government and Infrastructure Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Stock Route Network Management Bill [5240].

Tabled paper: Stock Route Network Management Bill, explanatory notes [5241].

I am pleased to introduce the first stand-alone Stock Route Network Management Bill 2011 into parliament today. Members are no doubt familiar with the many droving tales that are integral to Queensland's folklore. They may not, however, be aware of the extent to which this public asset network of routes, roads and reserves for travelling stock, which crisscrosses the state, continues to be used today both by drovers to drive stock 'on the hoof', and its secondary benefits to graziers for grazing of stock and as biodiversity corridors.

The bill recognises that while the primary purpose of the network is to provide for the movement of travelling stock now and into the future, other important attributes associated with these lands such as biodiversity and cultural heritage also warrant preservation. Accordingly, the new legislation introduces changes to the way in which the stock route network and related local government public lands are managed and used.

The network includes roads declared as stock routes, state controlled roads and reserves for travelling stock, and related other local government controlled roads and lands connected to the stock route network. The stock route network is 72,000 kilometres in length and covers over 2.6 million hectares of Queensland. As well as supporting the pastoral industry, it supports a diverse range of flora and fauna from the springs of the Great Artesian Basin to the brigalow woodlands and to the tropical rivers of the gulf country. The stock route network traverses a number of national parks, conservation reserves and state forests as well as leasehold and freehold land, so its corridors have a critical role to play in climate change adaptation.

The cost of maintaining the network is significant and is primarily the responsibility of local governments, who are the day-to-day managers. Under the existing arrangements, an independent assessment for LGAQ showed that only four per cent of the costs of operating and maintaining the stock route network are recovered from the fees paid by users. What this means is that general ratepayers subsidise the use of the stock route by drovers who move stock around and many adjoining landholders who graze stock on the network. Agriculture is a business, like any other, and a 96 per cent subsidy is not fair or sustainable in the longer term. It is important to note that under the arrangements proposed in this bill 65 per cent of the revenue received from grazing stock routes and 90 per cent of the revenue from grazing roads together with 75 per cent of droving fees will go to councils.

The bill replaces the legislative framework for stock route management established under chapter 3 of the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002—the Land Protection Act—separating it from the pest management provisions in that act. The new bill provides the legislative basis for implementing a new grazing management framework that integrates provisions previously dealt with separately under the Land Protection Act, the Land Act 1994 and the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994.

Operational responsibility for the network and related local government public lands in their respective management areas remains with local governments. This bill provides that the network and its operational responsibility will include the issuing of all permits and authorities for travelling stock and grazing over stock routes, reserves for travelling stock, local roads and state controlled roads—the latter subject to approval by the Department of Transport and Main Roads. Local governments will also retain most of the associated revenue. Much of the stock route network is currently grazed without authorisation. The new grazing authority framework introduced under this bill will regulate all uses, ensuring that appropriate fees are paid by those benefiting from using these public lands.

The legislation introduces several other key reforms, such as a revised classification system. The network will be classified according to recorded patterns of usage and appropriate management conditions will then apply for each classification. Routes and associated reserves used more regularly by travelling stock will be classed as either 'Primary A' or 'Primary B'. Those used minimally or not at all by travelling stock will be classified 'secondary'.

There is a greater emphasis on the need to retain adequate residual pasture levels on more travelled roads for use by travelling stock and reducing the risk of overgrazing and subsequent degradation of this public asset. While emergency and short-term grazing will be available in times of drought, it is recognised that the stock route network cannot sustain prolonged use for this purpose. Longer-term grazing will only be allowed on routes and roads that can support both grazing and travelling stock.

As grazing permits will only be issued for short-term use, they are to be charged on a weekly agistment rate. The rental fee for a grazing authority is to be calculated as a percentage of the unimproved value for the authority area, based on the pro rata value of adjoining land. This fee is similar to that charged for existing state grazing leases and permits to occupy. The initial proposal was for councils to be allowed to charge grazing permit fees of between 1.5 and five per cent of unimproved value; however, through consultation with stakeholders it was established that this should be reduced to between 1.5 and three per cent of unimproved value.

The user-pays fee model is another key reform. Fees and payments will better reflect the benefits derived by network users and allow the costs of management to be recovered so that the network and ancillary facilities can be adequately maintained. Cost efficiencies will be achieved by focusing maintenance efforts on the primary network to ensure that residual pasture levels and stock facilities are adequate for the needs of travelling stock. Several legislative initiatives introduced under this bill will

help to ensure that the stock route network is sustainably managed. Land and pasture condition are to be regularly assessed, standard management conditions are to be imposed for droving and grazing uses, and monitoring of compliance with the imposed conditions will be improved. Provision has also been made for the declaration of areas requiring special management. Biodiversity and cultural heritage values will be protected by recording sites on the special management area register and establishing special management conditions for the use of those declared sites. These legislative changes will all play a significant part in ensuring that Queensland's stock route network is managed sustainably for the benefit of all Queenslanders now and into the future. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Hon. RG NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (Minister for Finance, Natural Resources and the Arts) (3.50 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Transport, Local Government and Infrastructure Committee.

ELECTRICITY PRICE REFORM AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 6 September (see p. 2830), on motion of Mr Robertson—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Ms FARMER (Bulimba—ALP) (3.51 pm), continuing: Professor Ray Wills also said that other Australian governments would do well to look to the Queensland approach to policy for renewable energy. Queenslanders, including residents of the Bulimba electorate, have picked up the government's solar initiatives in droves, reaching our solar energy targets more than three years ahead of schedule. In April 2010 we set a challenge to double Queensland's use of solar energy in five years. At that time Queensland had an estimated 250 megawatts of installed solar capacity, representing approximately 180,000 household solar hot-water systems and the equivalent of 23,000 small scale solar panel systems. By July this year Queensland had a total of 500 megawatts of installed solar capacity, representing more than 230,000 household solar hot-water systems and the equivalent of around 141,000 small scale solar panel systems. It is important that we are responsive to such an important scheme both now and in the future. These amendments are required now and our regulatory framework should continue to look to be responsive in the future on issues like any proposed changes to Commonwealth solar initiatives and incentives, any national carbon scheme, geographic concentration trends and related supply issues, and the state of technology and the market for PV arrays and storage solutions. This is what responsible government should be doing.

While we are talking about responsible governments, let us have a look at what the LNP says—the party that sees itself as the alternative government in this state. What has it said about any aspect of energy? We know it voted against the abolition of the $113 ambulance levy from electricity bills. We know it proposed a half-baked scheme to freeze the variable component of tariff 11 which, while likely to grab votes, was a promise for 12 months only and did not address the long-term issues associated with energy supply in this state and in fact will result in underinvestment of the electricity network and take us back to the bad old days of blackouts and brownouts. We know that Campbell Newman said that he wants to introduce smart meters, which in a Victorian trial program saw cost blow-outs to $2 billion with little actual benefit to users and the program has now been suspended. So that is all pretty scary.

But the real issue that is of concern to Queenslanders is how anyone could trust Campbell Newman on anything he says about cost savings anyway. I note that the member for Buderim, the shadow minister, in his speech on this bill beseeched us all to think of the mums and dads when making our decisions about it. Well, it is a shame Campbell Newman did not think about mums and dads when he was the former lord mayor of Brisbane—that is, before he ran out on those same mums and dads to seek greener pastures. It is a shame for those mums and dads that he increased rates by up to 42 per cent—in fact, up to 700 per cent for inner-city apartments—despite promising that he would resign if they went up by more than the price of inflation. It is a shame for the mums and dads that he made so many bad financial decisions leading to the bankrupting of the Clem Jones tunnel; the cost blow-outs on King George Square, going from $12 million to $28 million on a project that is so spectacularly unsuccessful that the temperatures are 56 degrees in January; and the failed bike hire scheme that Campbell Newman negotiated the contract on so badly that the current LNP council administration is stuck with having to go to the second stage of the scheme despite knowing how disastrous it is. It is

these same financial decisions that have left the Brisbane City Council so destitute that it cannot even afford to give the mums and dads that the member for Buderim says he is so passionate about the basic things they should expect a council to give them, the basic amenities in life—the footpaths, the lighting, fixing potholes in local roads, the grants for community clubs. This is what mums and dads will really be thinking about when they look at the blithe promises made by the LNP, and do not think for a minute that we will not all be making sure that the mums and dads in our own electorates know what they are in for if they try to elect Campbell Newman as Premier of this state.

But back to this bill. I support it most strenuously and congratulate the minister for his dedication to trying to find a solution to this complex issue. The LNP does not have a vision for future energy needs in Queensland nor any real policies to reduce the electricity prices above and beyond the Bligh Labor government. It does not have a vision for Queensland full stop. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (3.55 pm): I rise in support of the Electricity Price Reform Amendment Bill 2011 which allows for the introduction of a new methodology for determining regulated retail electricity prices in Queensland, and I commend the minister for bringing this legislation to the House. This government's reforms deliver a fairer and more flexible electricity pricing system for Queenslanders. These reforms will remove the outdated benchmark retail cost index—BRCI—methodology that the Queensland Competition Authority currently uses to set notified electricity prices and replace it with a more transparent system based on the underlying cost of supply. We are committed to delivering a pricing system that is fairer to Queenslanders. We also need a flexible pricing framework based on tariff structures that more accurately reflect the underlying cost to supply electricity to consumers in Queensland.

It would not be possible to maintain a reliable and secure electricity network for all Queenslanders unless retail electricity prices are based on genuine increases in supply costs. This bill will scrap the BRCI methodology. The QCA will conduct extensive community and stakeholder consultation about the components it should consider when determining regulated prices using a cost-reflective methodology. It will then use the cost-reflective methodology to calculate future Queensland electricity prices that apply from 1 July 2012. Essentially, the amendments will provide a more enabling legislative framework which will allow for greater flexibility and responsiveness in calculating notified prices and ensure prices more accurately reflect the underlying costs of supplying electricity to consumers in Queensland. Consistent with the current legislation, the pricing entity, QCA, will be required to announce its final price determination and publish the notified prices by gazette notice at least one month before the relevant price determination period starts.

This bill also includes amendments to ensure the continuing cost-effectiveness of the Queensland Solar Bonus Scheme. The scheme has exceeded all expectations in delivering affordable solar energy and jobs for Queenslanders. It pays participating households 44c per kilowatt hour for all surplus energy generated by their rooftop solar PV panel systems that is exported back into the electricity grid. The current 44c per kilowatt hour net feed-in tariff will remain unchanged. The government is reducing the size of eligible individual's solar photovoltaic systems to a maximum five kilowatt capacity and limiting eligible systems to one per premises. Most participating solar PV systems have a generating capacity well below five kilowatts and are used by homeowners to generate power for household use. The five kilowatt system limit is being introduced due to the growing number of people installing large systems of up to 30 kilowatts just to make money out of the scheme. The Solar Bonus Scheme was not designed to provide investment returns to some individuals at the expense of all Queensland electricity consumers. The change will ensure the scheme continues to provide value for money and does not place upward pressure on electricity prices.

Since the Solar Bonus Scheme commenced on 1 July 2008, Queensland's solar PV generating capacity has increased from 3.2 megawatts to well over 220 megawatts today. That is enough solar energy to power approximately 50,000 homes for a year. With long-term economic, environmental and social advantages, solar technology is transforming energy markets in the most developed economies as well as the world's poorest regions. Although 1.5 billion people still live without electricity across the globe, it is anticipated that with technology improvements and cost easing many of these poorer areas will have access to basic electricity in the future.

Internationally we are now seeing companies with decades of experience in power plant construction entering the solar energy market because they see it as a great business opportunity. I have visited RedFlow at Seventeen Mile Rocks in my electorate of Mount Ommaney a number of times with the Minister for Energy. This company is a world leader in cost-effective stationary electricity storage. Their products address needs in several applications—meeting peak demand in overloaded electricity distribution networks, storing and smoothing out electricity generated by renewable resources like solar photovoltaic panels and supply for rural off-site grids. Key drivers and demand for their products include the worldwide push to cleaner energy sources, along with the rapidly improving economics of solar panels and the rising cost of fossil fuels. As such, the Australian government's climate change plan, announced on 10 July, is likely to further stimulate demand for RedFlow's energy storage systems within Australia. Their challenge now is to lift production of their innovative ZBM units and packaged energy storage systems to meet the growing demand they see internationally as well as in Australia.

Last year this government set a target to double Queensland's use of solar energy to 500 megawatts in five years. Last month we smashed our virtual solar power station target more than three years ahead of schedule. Five hundred megawatts of solar energy is larger than the operating capacity of many of Queensland's smaller coal, gas and renewable energy fired powered stations. It represents more than 230,000 household solar hot-water systems and the equivalent of around 140,000 small scale 1.5-kilowatt solar panel systems. The fact that we have met this target more than three years early shows that Queenslanders have embraced solar technologies and that the government's Solar Bonus Scheme and Solar Hot Water Rebate Scheme are great successes.

Besides the cost benefits provided by solar energy, this government is endeavouring to reduce the cost of living to Queensland families through the abolition of the community ambulance cover levy, saving $113 per year, from 1 July this year. The government's $60 million extension of the ClimateSmart Home Service, including the new standby power eliminator, could potentially knock another $190 off the power bill, and we have ordered Ergon and Energex not to pass costs relating to the natural disasters on to consumers. The electricity rebate has increased by 6.6 per cent to $230 for pensioners and seniors, the council rates rebate has increased to $200 and the pensioner water subsidy for those within the Seqwater grid will increase to $120. Through this legislation and through budgetary measures we have endeavoured to ease cost pressures on the people of Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

Dr DOUGLAS (Gaven—LNP) (4.03 pm): It is most interesting that it is 130 years since both Tesla and Edison set up the competing systems of AC and DC. Tesla's system was AC, which became the system that was overwhelmingly used. What has happened since that time is interesting. It changed the world.

It would be very difficult to ever again trust any organisation or government that has told such terrible untruths regarding our massive energy utilities. These massive semigovernment authorities, wholly owned GOCs, have a great history of service to the state, but it was all ruined by the sales of Energex and Ergon into private hands. The resulting massive increase in domestic and commercial electricity charges has been a major issue raised by many that has led to a large group demanding a change of government because the increase of 15 per cent per annum in their fees for the service has led to great community pain and anger.

The proffered excuse from the Bligh Labor government that electricity charges have been inappropriately held down for years seems hollow and weak. In truth, these largely South-East Queensland electricity retailer entities were sold at artificially high prices as electricity competitive retailers but with a guaranteed return on investment to ensure that pricing on sale. The retail entities were engineered to return eight per cent plus after every and all costs were extracted. The companies, such as Origin and AGL, literally came in and cleaned up. They used capital raised from the market and used the income to facilitate dividend and debt repayments. It was ingenuous and no-one could blame them. Those retailers were set up to be sold irrespective of whatever Peter Beattie, the previous Premier, had said earlier.

The impact on everyday Queenslanders has been cost-of-living increases over and above what they could afford, wages not being commensurately increased and the difficulties that have arisen since then. It is arguable that even the recent tragedy in Logan in which 11 people tragically lost their lives—that is three adults and eight children—was preventable. It must never recur. I had highlighted the issue in my own electorate literally two weeks before then. In my area there are many homes owned and, more commonly, rented in which up to 10 and sometimes 16 people are living for a variety of reasons. Those reasons are complicated by casualisation of the workforce, kinship family structures and ease of access to benefits. Being limited, councils could not effectively solve the problem. Electricity prices have a major knock-on effect in the community. There are strong suggestions that gas in bottles, for example, was being used in the house where there was a recent fire as a replacement energy stock.

This bill replaces the benchmark retail cost index methodology for determining electricity prices with a new methodology—that is, the network plus retail cost build-up approach, with a new set of tariffs to be introduced. The LNP has already called for the abolition of BRCI. The LNP is concerned about the move to a market based mechanism in one jump.

Various stakeholders are concerned, too. The alternative long-run marginal cost, LRMC, mechanism has been suggested or recommended by those stakeholders involved but their requests have been ignored. The reason is that the market based mechanism will give short-term relief but long-term pain, with a spike in price at the end of next year. In addition, by moving from a market approach we will see much greater volatility in prices. Residents may find budgeting very difficult under this scheme and they are certainly going to have a tough couple of years.

If the public find petrol, LNG and LPG pricing difficult, they have seen nothing yet with what will occur with electricity as the utility-charging schemes come in. They will be rising at the same 15 per cent increase per annum in parallel with the bulk water price, which will be increasing at the same rate. Combine this with the three other major cost factors directly related to state government confused policies—rents, public transport costs and motor vehicle and bike registration, which have risen at that rate of 15 per cent or greater—and clearly this Bligh Labor government is talking about planning to deliver little other than pain or misery to the public. Rents are rising due to the dual assault on both our

house sales and the economy. Even petrol has not escaped this government's clutches with the removal of the state petrol subsidy having a massive impact on everyday consumers' meagre paypackets. As yet it is only food that the government has not impaled itself upon.

These cumulative statistics are what is driving the cost-of-living increases and inflation. Inflation is what is causing great community pain, because it is the primary reason behind our interest rate rises. They are the highest in the First World. Home mortgages averaging $160,000 four to five years ago are now twice that. Every fraction of a percentage point increase is maximising that community pain. Interest rates of 7.5 per cent are comparable to the 20 per cent interest rates of the Keating era. People have no confidence and they are now saving at historic World War II levels.

These seemingly inconsequential, minor increases of Labor's, like those resulting from these newly proposed electricity charges, will add to the impacts I have raised. This is how an incremental, desperate lunge for income from a government leads to problems for consumers. Within this bill the link to the carbon tax is in clause 7(5). It is a bit more evidence of how wrong one's judgement can become when the distance between ideology and common sense quickly grows immeasurably.

Irrespective of the federal government announcement today that the carbon tax will be rammed through next Tuesday, the carbon tax is dead. Its chief supporter, the current Prime Minister, is a dead woman walking and the public will feel vindicated only when Labor in government also collapses. Members do not have to take just my word for it. Yesterday's *Australian* says it all—every editorial and every journalist. The impact of the carbon tax on every point between generators, transmitters and distributors has been effectively and extensively discussed.

The directors of the GOCs have given ominous warnings about this, particularly the CEO of CS Energy who, in a recent estimates hearing, spoke about the costs in real money. The carbon tax will mean a 50 per cent increase in operating costs and 40 per cent in retail costs. In other words, most people will pay an extra $160 a year. Has anyone in the bowels of the Labor Party got off their anticholinergics just for one day? There is an avalanche of increased charges coming. All this is being done just to transfer capital to Third World countries that elect dictators who invest in tax havens and loot their own countries, such as Gaddafi has been shown to have done. That is all the carbon tax will do. It will not reduce carbon emissions; it will not reduce the number of trees as they need CO_2 for biosynthesis and, moreover, it will do nothing to reduce the community's need for energy.

I table an *Australian Financial Review* article by Marcus Priest, dated Wednesday 31 August 2011. The article states—

Power prices could rise by up to 40 per cent above increases caused by the federal government's carbon scheme ...

...

Both the chair of the Australian Energy Market Commission and the government's Investment Reference Group have warned a carbon price is likely to decrease the frequency and length of supply contracts.

...

According to the ACIL-Tasman modelling a 5 per cent reduction in contracting would result in up to a 10 per cent increase for smaller energy users in 2015 and a 15 per cent increase for larger users.

A reduction of 15 per cent in contracting would see a 43 per cent increase in 2015 for small users and 61 per cent increase for large users.

Tabled paper: Article, dated 31 August 2011, from the *Australian Financial Review* titled 'Electricity price explosion predicted' [5242].

There are significant increases coming. As with all Labor's flawed energy plans, the bill links to the Queensland Solar Bonus Scheme. New South Wales's flawed scheme led to a near $1 billion blow-out in the budget. In this scheme, they are paying households a net feed-in energy tariff per kilowatt hour for power produced by day when the vast bulk of consumers pay 9c per kilowatt at night. In 2008 the LNP had reasonably offered a gross feed-in tariff of 44c per kilowatt hour on all solar power generated as excess by Queensland households and businesses.

In his second reading speech the minister said—

From June 2008, we have seen an increase from 1,200 rooftop solar systems with a generating capacity of 3.2 megawatts to today where we have over 78,500 Queenslanders providing 165 megawatts generating capacity to the Queensland electricity grid.

What the government fails to understand is that not only are the majority of those 1.5 kilowatt and three kilowatt systems hopelessly inefficient and that their distribution negates the net benefit but also Queensland could face power shortages within two years unless—

Mr O'Brien interjected.

Dr DOUGLAS: No, this is based on evidence. There is no new investment in power generation to cater for a rising demand in the next phase of the mining boom. I refer to a *Australian Financial Review* article by Mark Ludlow, Matthew Dunckley and Peter Kerr, dated 31 August 2011, in which they quote the report of the Australian Energy Market Operator—AEMO—released today. The article states—

The report has found that while renewable energy projects such as wind and solar are in the pipeline, they are a long way from challenging coal and gas for baseload power generation over the next 10 years. This could threaten Australia's target of producing 20 per cent of power from renewable sources by 2020.

...

AEMO's Electricity Statement of Opportunities finds that the strong demand for power from Queensland's coal and gas projects would bring the state to its 'low reserve condition' by 2013-14—

That is very close—

unless new investment was made. Queensland is set to reach the energy critical point—where the power system adequacy falls below long-term reliability standards—earlier than other states, according to the report. It finds the state needs at least 341 megawatts of new generation to avoid the 'low reserve condition' which could lead to power shortages.

We have been talking about brownouts, which is what that is means. The article delves further into the AEMO report, from which some key factors have come. The article states—

AEMO chief executive Matt Zema said it would take decades to transform Australia's energy mix, as there was still a large disparity in price between traditional fuel sources such as coal and gas and renewables.

...

According to figures compiled from data provided by the Energy Supply Association of Australia (ESAA), renewable energy sources—such as wind, solar and hydro—accounted for only 8.3 per cent of principal electricity generation in 2009-10.

This is compared with black and brown coal, which accounted for more than three-quarters of Australia's electricity generation at 77.4 per cent, and gas (14.2 per cent).

The figures showed the level of renewable energy production in 2000-01 was also 8.3 per cent.

The latest available figures compiled by the Clean Energy Council show renewable energy production increased to 8.67 per cent to October last year.

That is 2009. In other words, it has gone up only 0.47 per cent in about eight years. The article continues—

Despite schemes by the federal and state governments to encourage the development and use of clean energy, the slow uptake has raised questions about whether solar, wind and hydro will be able to provide an affordable alternative to coal and gas.

I table that document.

Tabled paper: Article, dated 31 August 2011, from the *Australian Financial Review* titled 'Power-hungry states face energy shock' [5243].

In a nutshell, that article not only debunks any belief that the solar scheme will do anything other than address the gap in Queensland's immediate power generation demands by using consumers who are funded by a rebate but also any confidence that the 20 per cent renewable energy target is either achievable or affordable by 2020. The carbon tax just makes that harder. If nothing else, this bill probably confirms much of what is going on and what has gone wrong in Labor's delivery of a coherent energy policy for Queensland consumers. The cabinet has just ticked through an inclining block tariff structure for residual customers on tariff 11 and approved the switch to the network plus retail cost build-up approach without really informing the public of the impact. Year 1 will be okay, but year 2 onwards could be awful. I guess the Bligh Labor government has decided the public will not know until the election is over.

Critically, what is exposed is the absolute ignorance of what is going on and what is needed to fix it. At the same time, Labor is cheering itself on about new gas and coal projects, but Labor has failed to build the crucial power generation infrastructure that the growth requires. Tragically, it has gone one step further into the abyss of irrelevance by wasting potentially $1 billion on a scheme to put further inefficient solar panels on roofs. That money should be directed into particularly targeted new electricity generators—also known as Kogan Creek 2 style plants—to keep Australia's and particularly Queensland's economy rolling. Members opposite, particularly the Treasurer, talked about that today. Labor has shackled itself with a ridiculous aspirational dream, which Bob Brown and the Greens also share, that no new coal fired plants are required and that solar roof panels and giving trivial rebates back to consumers will drive our economy forward. Not only is this naive but also it is completely irresponsible and it is debunked by evidence.

Mr O'Brien interjected.

Dr DOUGLAS: This bill is evidence that Labor has nothing but contempt for consumers. Labor is hijacking Queensland's future for its own—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms van Litsenburg): Order! Member for Cook! Order!

Dr DOUGLAS: Thank you for your protection, Madam Deputy Speaker. Labor is hijacking Queensland's future for its own blind adherence to its 'carbon is death' dogma and, furthermore, is fuelling inflation and its consequential effects on fuelling interest rates by driving up electricity prices. As many government speakers have stated, the bill is straightforward. It sure is. It demonstrates Labor's claims in the minister's words that it has carefully planned over the last three years by taking the advice of the QCA. In contrast, it has not sought to act in everyone's interests; it has acted in its own interests.

Evidence supports that statement. As I have stated, no wonder the public have had enough of Labor in government. It makes up the script as it goes along and it expects everyone to be gullible and believe in this nonsense that it puts forward as fact.

Mr McLINDON (Beaudesert—TQP) (4.20 pm): I would like to contribute to the Electricity Price Reform Amendment Bill 2011. It is a fairly straightforward bill. It makes sense and is very reasonable. However, it is concerning that the economies of scale or the methodology known as notified prices ever needed to be introduced. I will give an example of a constituent who came to my office some months ago. She was an elderly lady, a pensioner, who said that she was surviving on some $36 a day and she was actually using candles at night-time. That is extremely concerning to me given that it is 2011. Yet this is the reality for some people who are trying to survive the rises in the cost of living due to what this government has done over the last two decades.

What is more concerning is that there is still no ironclad guarantee that the electricity grid or the ports will not be sold off under an LNP government. I am not letting the government off the hook, but I think it is about time that the media and the public put the spotlight, the attention and the magnifying glass on what the LNP does or does not intend to do should it win government.

In March the LNP candidate for Ashgrove stated in an article in the Gladstone *Observer*—

'Just because you own the power grid, it doesn't mean you can't have a private-sector firm maintaining the power grid for you,' he said. 'And there is no need for a (government) port authority to own a coal terminal.'

This is of grave concern. How can we have an opposition that supposedly admits to having a point of difference—and I am still trying to get my head around that in itself? How can we have an opposition that is prepared to say on record that it will continue to go down this privatisation track? The Australian Party—no ifs or buts—has a very black and white position when it comes to privatisation. The ports, the water, the rail, the electricity and the toll roads should always remain in the people's hands. As a member of any government, we should be stewards of these assets and act as guardians, not as auctioneers. There is absolutely no guarantee under an LNP government that this will be the case.

We have seen what happened with the Abbot Point Coal Terminal; it was sold for $1.8 billion over a 99-year lease. That will be paid off in as little as nine years. That means for 90 years Queenslanders will lose the revenue they would have received and it will instead go to an overseas company because of an irresponsible decision made in a two-year political cycle. The LNP will sit on its hands and do exactly the same thing. I will not stand here in this chamber and let the LNP opposition get away with it. If it intends to make these statements when in opposition, can you imagine what it will do when in government? It is extremely concerning that the LNP candidate for Ashgrove has not ruled out further privatisation of the coal terminals or the power grid. This is where the tough questions need to be asked and this is where we need to get the answers from this opposition. How can its members say on one hand that they have a point of difference or they will govern better when it is in the policy platform and the ideology of the handful of faceless Liberals who are now running the show for the LNP? That is of concern. That is where the tough questions need to be asked.

Yes, I will support this bill. Obviously, the economies of scale make sense in terms of people knowing when they use electricity and how they will be charged accordingly. There are some unintended consequences, though, such as for large families who might be high users of electricity and are quite often struggling to keep the mortgage down and cope with the cost of living. This will have an added impact on those larger families. As one of nine kids, I remember that dad was always on to us about turning the lights off. I always used to think that he was a bit over the top, but I can tell you now that they were tough times and they remain so today.

I believe that the opposition needs to state unequivocally that they do not intend to privatise—unfortunately, even then, you cannot believe what they say. I think people have lost a lot of faith in the system on both sides of the parliament. It is time for people to realise that this next state election will be a referendum not only on democracy but also on asset sales, landowner rights and the coal seem gas industry that is currently flawed and is being steamrolled from Queensland community to Queensland community.

The opposition does need to come clean on its position on privatisation. We know that for most of the Liberal Party's existence it has been pro privatisation. I can see no light at the end of the tunnel—unless it is a train—that under an LNP government the prices will be reduced. I would go so far as to say that they will be increased. The privatisation or flogging off of public entities by the government will only be accelerated under an LNP government. This is very serious. Its members have to come clean to the electorate before the state election. But even then, as I said, we have to question the sincerity of any statements that they do make as in the past they have moved the goalposts time and time again.

I will continue to ensure that Queenslanders' voices are heard in this chamber. I reiterate that The Australian Party believes that the assets of this great state will always—and should always—remain in the hands of Queenslanders.

Mr CRANDON (Coomera—LNP) (4.26 pm): I rise to contribute to this debate with respect to the Electricity Price Reform Amendment Bill 2011. The bill was introduced in June this year by the Minister for Energy and Water Utilities. Among other things, it is intended that the bill will ensure that individuals

do not profit from the Solar Bonus Scheme by putting in large photovoltaic generator systems. That is fair enough; it was never the intention of the scheme for it to become a money-making enterprise for anyone having the PV systems installed.

What about the forgotten Queenslanders, the excluded Queenslanders, those who do not have an option about whether they can get a solar bonus rebate? In his second reading speech, the minister says that the new system is a fairer pricing framework. There is a group of Queenslanders who will beg to differ on that point. The minister talked about consumers benefiting from a fairer system that aims to encourage Queenslanders to use electricity more efficiently. There is a group of Queenslanders who want to do just that but they are not being rewarded for their efforts. The minister talked about there being a phenomenal growth in the number of solar PV systems in Queensland. I can tell you that those excluded Queenslanders to whom I am referring are part of that group. They are doing their bit, but they do not benefit from the feed-in tariff that the minister has talked about.

Those excluded Queenslanders to whom I refer are those who have opted to move to a manufactured home park. As the shadow minister and member for Buderim mentioned yesterday, say a person lives next door to a manufactured park home, installs the PV systems on their roof and enjoys the minimum rebate of 44c and the deal that has been offered and they then decide it is time to sell up and move. Maybe they will put their three-bedroom or four-bedroom home on the market and allow a young couple to move in with their family and they move—as we all want people to take advantage of this type of living—to the manufactured home park right next door. Immediately those people will find that they will be paying significantly more for the electricity for which they were receiving a rebate when they lived next door to the manufactured home park. Where is the fairness in that? My constituents—Queenslanders all—and those many thousands of other Queenslanders have moved from their family home where they could benefit from the feed-in tariff to a new home where they cannot. A very large number of these Queenslanders are retirees. As such, they are least able to afford the significant increases in electricity that this Labor government has foisted on them and every other Queenslander. To rub salt into the wound, it excludes them from the feed-in tariff rebate. This government needs to address this unfair system that penalises those who can least afford the increase.

Talking about rubbing salt into the wound, I come to the carbon tax. As stated by the minister, the bill is also intended to ensure that carbon costs can be passed on to consumers. So here we are again. Not only are these Queenslanders I referred to being left out in the cold when it comes to benefiting from feed-in tariff rebates; they are also going to join all other Queenslanders and be hit with Julia Gillard's carbon tax in the form of additional increases to their electricity bills. Gillard's unnecessary and costly $9 billion tax will hit all families in the state seat of Coomera and right across Queensland. This Labor-Greens carbon tax will drive up electricity prices, threaten jobs and do nothing for the environment.

All Queenslanders, our forgotten families, are already struggling and the carbon tax will make a bad situation worse, with around a $515 a year hit on their cost of living. And that is just for starters. Let us remember that this is the biggest and most punitive tax in the world. Among other things, this carbon tax means a $9 billion a year new tax, a 10 per cent hike in electricity bills in the first year alone and a nine per cent hike in gas bills in the first year alone. Millions of middle-income families will be worse off under this carbon tax.

A policeman and a nurse each earning $70,000 a year with one dependent child will be on average $230 a year worse off, even after compensation. And that is just for starters. Should this couple do some extra shifts and earn an extra $5,000 a year, that bill will increase to $528. These parents trying to get ahead and provide for their families will be penalised by the carbon tax that is being built into this legislation. It needs to be said again and again to get the message through: this go-it-alone carbon tax will impose a heavy cost on all Queenslanders. Queensland jobs will be sent offshore for no environmental gain. It will push up the price of electricity, gas, transport and food. Small business in the Coomera electorate and right across Queensland will face increased costs, with no direct support.

Julia Gillard has betrayed all of us and those members opposite have aided and abetted her. They have confirmed their support for this carbon tax in this place numerous times. As late as yesterday they voted again for the carbon tax. Days before the last federal election Gillard said, 'There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead.' The day before the election she said, 'I rule out a carbon tax.' And, as I said earlier—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms van Litsenburg): Order! Is the member speaking to the bill?

Mr CRANDON: Absolutely, Madam Deputy Speaker. As I said earlier—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Which clause is the member speaking to?

Mr CRANDON: The carbon tax was mentioned in the second reading speech by the—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Will the member be sure to stay on the bill, please?

Mr CRANDON: Absolutely. Thank you for your guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker. As I said earlier, since she implemented it, those opposite have voted for it and supported it in this place numerous times. Now we see the minister enshrining the carbon tax in this legislation.

Mr RYAN (Morayfield—ALP) (4.33 pm): I was waiting for the climax. Maybe I missed it. It is a great pleasure to contribute to the debate on the Electricity Price Reform Amendment Bill. I must say from the outset that I do have solar panels on my house and I am—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr RYAN: No. This is a serious matter. I think it is appropriate that I declare that I am a participant in the Solar Bonus Scheme. I just wanted to put that on the record because I understand that this bill deals with the Solar Bonus Scheme.

I am very pleased to see this bill before the House. The reason I am very pleased to see this bill before the House is that for many, many years since my election I have listened to the concerns of the people of the Morayfield state electorate about cost-of-living issues, and one of those issues is electricity prices and increases in electricity prices. Last year I wrote to the minister, in a letter dated 1 June 2010, on behalf of my constituents. I thought it appropriate that I read out that letter. It states—

Dear Minister

On behalf of many concerned residents of the Morayfield State Electorate, I am writing to urge you to review the current electricity pricing model.

As you would be acutely aware, the increasing cost of electricity is hitting working families and low-income earners especially hard.

People in the Morayfield State Electorate appreciate that current electricity pricing is determined by a regulator—the Queensland Competition Authority—which is independent of government. They are also aware that the Queensland Government provides many measures to assist Queensland households to meet the costs of living, such as pensioner rebates, solar hot water system rebates and the ClimateSmart Home Service.

Despite the Government's best efforts the costs seem to be spiralling ever upward, which puts immense pressure on household budgets.

On behalf of residents in the Morayfield State Electorate, I urge you to review the current electricity pricing model with a view to replacing it with a fairer structure that provides a true and reasonable reflection of the cost of supplying electricity to Queensland homes.

I table that letter.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 1 June 2010, to Hon. Stephen Robertson MP, Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy from Mr Mark Ryan MP, in relation to the current electricity pricing model [5244].

I also think it is appropriate that I table a letter on behalf of the minister from his parliamentary secretary, the member for Capalaba, dated 23 June 2010, which pretty much says that the government is reviewing the structure. I thank the member for Capalaba for his letter on behalf of the minister, and I also thank him for his kind words when he says—

Thank you for your strong representation to the Minister on behalf of your constituents.

I table that letter as well.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 23 June 2010, to Mr Mark Ryan MP from Mr Michael Choi MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Trade, in relation to the current electricity pricing model [5245].

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, you can understand why I am very pleased to see this bill before the House. Not only is it something that I called for, but I am very pleased to be part of a team that is responding to cost-of-living pressures and doing what it can to relieve the pressure on household budgets. This is an important bill. This is a bill that will go some way to addressing the cost-of-living concerns in respect of electricity price increases that many people all over Queensland have. Accordingly, I am very pleased to see this bill before the House.

As we have heard, this bill will lead to the introduction of a new methodology for retail electricity prices. This bill will transform the current legislative framework, which is complex, inflexible and does not respond well to emerging issues and unforeseen circumstances. The new framework contained in this bill will be a less prescriptive and more flexible and responsible framework. Importantly the new framework will facilitate a move to cost-reflective regulated retail tariffs. This is important. Included in this bill is the introduction of an inclining block tariff model, with effect from 1 July next year. This means that the less you use, the less you relatively pay per unit of electricity. In other words, the more you use, the more you relatively pay per unit of electricity.

Not only does this framework encourage energy efficiency; this framework also encourages people to use less electricity, which in turn relieves pressure on the electricity network and relieves pressure on the on-peak demand capacity. In my view, that is a fairer way to charge electricity and especially a fairer way to charge electricity for those people who use less electricity, and they are typically those people who are pensioners or who are on fixed incomes. The message to Queenslanders arising out of this bill is that this government has listened to their concerns. This government is about acting on the concerns of the people of Queensland, particularly when it comes to their issues to do with increasing electricity prices. It proves that this government is acting to reduce the pressure of price increases and to reduce cost-of-living pressures for the people of Queensland.

But we should actually compare the real and practical action that this government is taking to what tory governments around Australia have been doing and have been supervising. For instance, have a look at the tory government in Western Australia where electricity prices have increased by almost 43 per cent over three years. Compare this to the tory government in New South Wales where not only have they experienced a 55 per cent increase in electricity prices over three years but the tory government also axed the very generous feed-in tariff scheme which not only supported people's

conversion to renewable energy but also helped them relieve pressure on their electricity bills. That is what the tory government did down there. Not only have they seen prices increase in New South Wales, but the tory government is actually kicking people while they are down—a tremendous thing that tory governments do to the people of Australia; they whack them when they are down.

Let us have a look at this tory opposition and the record of their leader when he was the Lord Mayor of Brisbane. What did we see? We saw rates for some residents in Brisbane increase by up to 700 per cent—not 100 per cent, not 200 per cent but 700 per cent. That was the increase in charges for the people of Brisbane while the tories' leader was Lord Mayor of Brisbane.

Let us also have a look at what the tories' Treasury spokesperson said in 2006. This is in *Hansard*; it is on the permanent record. He said—

> One has to ask: why not sell the poles and wires as well? Why not sell the generators as well?

What did he say? He said—

> One has to ask: why not sell the poles and wires as well? Why not sell the generators as well?

What did the tories' leader say in the *Weekend Australian* in March this year? Mr Newman said—

> There would be room for more sell-offs, including the remaining coal terminals, and outsourcing.

This is the cracker quote—

> Just because you own the power grid, it doesn't mean you can't have a private sector firm maintaining the power grid for you.

What do we have? Not only do the tories have form for overseeing huge increases in prices which households experience, not only do they have form when it comes to cutting concessions and rebates available to people to help them deal with the cost-of-living pressures that they are experiencing, but they are also committed to a program of selling off the electricity assets of this state. They are their words. That is what they are committed to.

These tories will say anything to get elected. They will scaremonger. They will mislead. They will deny the truth. They will invent the facts. The message to Queenslanders is: do not believe them. Do not believe them when they try to scare people about the federal government's carbon price because they fail to tell them that on average people will receive more compensation than the expected price increase. What was that? On average people will receive more compensation than the expected price increase.

But also, Queenslanders should not believe those opposite when they fail to tell people that, according to Treasury analysis and data, Tony Abbott's direct action plan will cost households up to twice as much plus they will not get any compensation. So we have the carbon price plan where on average households will receive more compensation than the expected price increase and then we have Tony Abbott's direct action plan where not only will it cost people more but they will not get any compensation either.

Finally, do not believe those opposite when they say they are going to give people a better deal. Do not believe them. They fail to tell people what the tory governments in Western Australia and New South Wales have done. They have cut concessions, they have cut support, they have cut rebates. We cannot believe this tory opposition. We cannot believe them about anything.

I am very pleased to support the bill before the House. This is direct action by this government on relieving cost-of-living pressures for Queensland households. This will make our electricity pricing model fairer and more transparent. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHOI (Capalaba—ALP) (4.45 pm): I rise to speak to the Electricity Price Reform Amendment Bill 2011. In my contribution this afternoon I would like to focus on the Solar Bonus Scheme amendments. In doing so, I think it is necessary to take a look at the Queensland government's commitment to renewable energy in the last few years.

Queensland has signed up to the national Renewable Energy Target. This target aims to see 20 per cent of Australia's electricity supply coming from renewable energy sources by the year 2020. The Bligh government has a renewable energy plan and we are committed to ensuring that the state is not left behind when it comes to this rapidly emerging global sector. We know that renewable energy complements other initiatives to slow the growth of the state's energy consumption and to manage peak demand. Importantly, we recognise that climate change is one of the great challenges of our age, and we are prepared to meet that challenge.

This government has implemented a raft of policies to move Queensland to a clean energy future, including actively encouraging Queenslanders to switch to solar energy. The government currently offers two major solar programs to Queenslanders. They are the Queensland Solar Bonus Scheme and the Solar Hot Water Rebate Scheme. The Queensland Solar Bonus Scheme that is pertinent to this bill has resulted in extraordinary growth in solar PV panel capacity in Queensland in the last few years. The scheme pays householders 44c per kilowatt per hour for any surplus electricity generated by their rooftop solar panels that is fed back into the grid. The scheme aims to make solar power more affordable for Queenslanders, stimulate the solar power industry and encourage energy efficiency.

Certainly, the Solar Bonus Scheme has exceeded all expectations. Under the scheme, Queensland's solar PV capacity has grown from just 3.2 megawatts in 2008 to well over 220 megawatts today. That is enough solar energy to power roughly 50,000 homes for a year. In my electorate of Capalaba so far more than 12,000 residents have installed solar PVs on their roofs, with a total installed solar capacity of around 2.7 megawatts. I declare that I have taken advantage of this particular scheme and installed a standard 1.5 kilowatt system on my roof. The energy generated within my electorate is enough to power over 500 homes and offset almost 4,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases each year.

What we wanted to do was make solar power more affordable and accessible for all Queenslanders. In that regard, the figures speak for themselves. However, what we have unfortunately seen in some areas is investors seeking to profit from the Solar Bonus Scheme. This was never the intention of the program. This bill will amend the scheme to curb the recent increase in applications for large scale rooftop panels. This important change will ensure the scheme remains cost effective and equitable for Queensland families and small businesses who are looking to do the right thing by installing solar panels on their premises. The cost of the Solar Bonus Scheme has had a minimal impact on electricity prices. For an average household consuming about 7,900 kilowatt hours of power each year, the cost of the Solar Bonus Scheme equates to an increase in their annual bill of around 50c.

Investors may still wish to invest in larger scale solar as part of their investment portfolios where there is an economic case for them to do so. The Queensland government continues to support large scale solar power investment and has provided more than $8 million to build solar farms in Hervey Bay and Cloncurry, but we really want to see everyday Queenslanders switching to solar. Our second major solar program is also helping in this regard. The Solar Hot Water Rebate Scheme offers $1,000 rebates for pensioners and low-income households and $600 for other eligible applicants to replace an existing electricity hot-water storage system with a solar hot-water system or heat pump system. Locally, around my electorate more than 240 homeowners have already received solar hot-water rebate payments worth more than $170,000. State-wide, more than 23,000 Queenslanders have received solar hot-water rebates since the scheme commenced on 1 July 2010.

But our investment does not stop there. The Bligh government is also funding the $5.8 million Solar Kindergarten Program to fund the installation of solar PV panels on the roofs of around 400 new and existing kindergarten buildings over the next four years. The Gambling Community Benefit Fund also has grants available for not-for-profit community and sporting groups to install solar PV or solar hot water at their facilities. More than 318 Queensland community organisations and sporting groups have been awarded almost $3 million in grants for solar projects.

In the last two weeks or so, the government conducted a Bright Thing solar forum in my electorate of Capalaba at the Alexandra Hills tavern. It was not a very sunny day that day—it was actually quite wet—but fortunately at least 120 people turned up to attend the forum. A survey was conducted at the end of the presentation and it revealed the following. Close to 38 per cent of the people who attended came to learn specifically about solar power and 60 per cent indicated that they came to learn both about the solar PV panel as well as the solar hot-water system. Pleasingly, 89 per cent of those who attended the forum believed that the questions they had before they arrived at the forum were answered by presenters. As a consequence, 59 per cent of those who attended the forum believed that they are more likely now to install a solar panel on their roof. Also, 73 per cent believed the forum was either good or very good in terms of being informative about their choices in terms of a solar hot-water system or solar PV on their roof.

This bill complements the government's actions to see our economy moving forward to a cleaner energy future and will offer continued support for Queenslanders to do just that. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (4.52 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Electricity Price Reform Amendment Bill. In particular, I want to discuss the issue canvassed in the explanatory notes accompanying the bill under the heading 'Electricity pricing', which has been previously identified during the debate. It has been acknowledged that the bill relates to the potential impact that the Gillard Labor government's proposed carbon tax may have on electricity prices in Queensland.

The explanatory notes accompanying the bill state that the proposed amendments will provide sufficient flexibility to deal with any unidentified policy changes or market upheavals. In particular, the explanatory notes state that this approach will ensure the regulatory framework is flexible enough to allow any future carbon costs or additional costs associated with environmental obligations to be captured and passed through to end use consumers. The amendments that supposedly ensure that the regulatory framework will be flexible enough to allow any future carbon costs or additional costs associated with environmental obligations can be captured and passed through to end use consumers obviously refer to the proposal by the Gillard government to put a tax on carbon emissions.

Specifically, clause 7 of the bill states that the new section will provide that a pricing entity, in making a price determination, must have regard to all of the following—

- The actual costs of making, producing or supplying the goods or services;
- The effect of the price determination on competition in the Queensland retail electricity market; and
- If the QCA is the pricing entity, any matter the pricing entity is required by delegation to consider.

The proposed amendment would also provide for the pricing entity to have regard for any other matter the pricing entity considers relevant.

This bill will allow the QCA to incorporate into its pricing mechanism for retail electricity the costs of the Gillard government's carbon tax on the generation and supply of electricity to electricity consumers in Queensland, because Queensland's electricity generators will be among those entities described by the Gillard government as Australia's top 500 big polluters. This bill exposes the untruth being peddled by the Gillard government that the top 500 big polluters will pay the carbon tax. This bill facilitates the direct transfer of the costs of the Gillard government's carbon tax to Queensland's electricity consumers. This bill makes the Bligh government a partner in that direct transfer of the carbon tax from electricity generators to electricity consumers.

The Minister for Energy and Water Utilities in his second reading speech stated that consumers will benefit from the amendments in this bill because the pricing system will encourage customers to use energy more efficiently. That is of course code for the amendments in this bill allowing the QCA to add the carbon tax to the retail price of electricity, meaning electricity consumers will be motivated to use electricity because it will cost more. The question is: will electricity consumers in Queensland really be motivated to use less power upon the introduction of a carbon tax by the Gillard government?

Several weeks ago, Australians right across the country received in the mail this publication from the Gillard government called *What a carbon price means for you: the pathway to a clean energy future*'. This publication goes to great lengths to explain that, although the costs of the carbon tax paid by polluters will be passed through to consumers, we ought not worry about this because half the money raised by the carbon tax will be used to fund tax cuts, pension increases and higher family payments. The document goes on to explain that what the Gillard government prefers to call a carbon price is not in fact a tax on households but will be paid by Australia's top 500 big polluters. The top 500 big polluters will be required to purchase permits for every tonne of carbon they produce, with the cost of the permit being the carbon price and the initial price being $23 a tonne.

The document goes on to explain that pensioners and low- and middle-income households will get assistance to help manage increases in the cost of living as a result of the carbon tax. Specifically, the document states that by 2012-13, with Australia expected to have almost nine million households, over four million households will supposedly be better off compared to the average price impact of the carbon tax. This means they will apparently receive assistance that is at least 20 per cent greater than the expected impact of the carbon tax on the cost of living for a household of their type and income.

Almost six million households will supposedly be assisted to meet the average price impact of the carbon tax. This means they will apparently receive assistance that covers at least the average impact of the carbon tax on the cost of living for a household of their type and income. Also, around eight million households will supposedly get some assistance through tax cuts, payment increases or both.

The document goes on to suggest that this assistance will mean pensioners and self-funded retirees will get up to $338 extra per year if they are single and up to $510 per year for couples. Families receiving family tax benefit A will get up to $110 per child per year. Eligible families will get up to $69 in family tax benefit B per year. Allowance recipients will get up to $218 per year for singles, $234 per year for single parents and $390 per year for couples combined. Also, 7.5 million taxpayers with an annual income of under $80,000 will get a tax cut, with most receiving at least $300 per year.

The document claims that, on average, households will see cost increases of $9.90 per week but will receive assistance of $10.10 per week. Pensioners, self-funded retirees, families, people with disabilities, carers and students will no doubt take great comfort from the fact that their standard of living will be fully and completely protected by the Gillard government from cost increases as a result of the carbon tax by a buffer of 20c. Far be it for me to question the Gillard government's integrity.

For the purposes of today's debate, let us take a leap of faith and accept the proposition put forward in this document—*What a carbon price means for you: the pathway to a clean energy future*—and let us accept the reassurance of the Gillard government that pensioners, self-funded retirees, families, people with disabilities, carers and students who will be protected by that massive buffer of 20c will not be disadvantaged by the carbon tax. Let us then reflect once more on the statement by the Minister for Energy and Water Utilities in his second reading speech that consumers will benefit from the amendments in this bill because the pricing system will encourage customers to use electricity more efficiently. We know that this means electricity customers will be motivated to use less electricity because it will cost more. However, if low- and fixed-income consumers who the Gillard government have decided need support will receive enough compensation to ensure they are not disadvantaged by the carbon tax, what will be their motivation to change their behaviour and use less electricity? Furthermore, the Gillard government has decided that those remaining consumers who are on higher incomes can afford to pay the carbon tax and do not need compensation. If they can afford to pay the carbon tax, what will be their motivation to change their behaviour and use less electricity?

Generators that will be required to purchase the permits and pay the $23 per tonne of carbon emitted will not be motivated to change their behaviour because their customers who consume their product will be fully compensated for the increased cost of that power or, if they do not need compensation because they can afford it, will not similarly be motivated to change their demand for that

product. So if no-one is motivated to change their behaviour as a result of a carbon price being added to the retail price of electricity—because they have been compensated so that they are no worse off or because they have enough disposable income and can afford it or because demand for electricity produced by the generators is not declining due to the compensation paid or due to the fact that people on higher incomes can afford it—does that not mean that the assertion by the Minister for Energy and Water Utilities that the electricity pricing system that includes the carbon tax will motivate customers to use less electricity cannot be true?

This is the inherent contradiction in Labor's argument. Labor claims that the carbon tax is a market based solution that will send a signal to consumers in that market to reduce consumption of certain goods to which the carbon tax is applied. However, Labor at the same time proposes to interfere with that market signal by compensating those consumers on low and fixed incomes who would be forced to change their behaviour if the price went up. By definition, the remaining consumers on high incomes can afford to absorb those cost increases, so their behaviour will also not change. Either the Gillard government's carbon tax policy is flawed and the compensation will not actually cover the increased costs of the carbon tax and therefore people will have to change their behaviour, or the assertion by the Minister for Energy and Water Utilities that this new pricing mechanism will drive behavioural change is wrong. Both propositions cannot be right.

Price increases in electricity to Queensland customers that incorporate the carbon tax will not necessarily reduce electricity consumption because the Gillard government has assured us that those people who need it will be compensated with the 20c to spare and will continue to consume at the same rate because they are no worse off. Those who do not need the compensation have no reason to reduce electricity consumption because the Gillard government tells us that they can afford it, so their behaviour will also remain unchanged.

The objectives of the proposed amendments before the House to allow the QCA to incorporate into its pricing mechanism for retail electricity the costs of the Gillard government's carbon tax on the generation and supply of electricity to electricity consumers in Queensland will certainly be achieved through the passage of this bill. Whether or not the amendments will drive the behavioural change claimed by the Minister for Energy and Water Utilities in his second reading speech remains to be seen.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (5.04 pm): At the outset I commend the member for Hinchinbrook on a very thought-provoking contribution to the debate. Electricity pricing is a great contributor to people's economy in terms of their bill paying and it is certainly one, from the feedback I have received and from my own experience, that has increased exponentially over the last 12 to 18 months. I believe that this piece of legislation will increase that cost additionally.

I refer to the contribution made by the member for Barron River last night in relation to this bill. The member for Barron River spoke about the equalisation of electricity prices across Queensland and espoused that it was a policy of the Labor government to ensure that stays in place. It is my understanding—and I do stand to be corrected—that this is a policy that was in place in Joh's day and it has continued on through coalition and ALP governments subsequently. It is a policy that justly recognises the interdependence between urban and bush; it justifiably recognises the need for each other in this state, not only in terms of developing and producing commodities but also in the fact that we are people who need to be dealt with equally. So I would thank both sides of politics for that price equality. It would be a brave government—indeed, an incredibly stupid government—that altered that.

The bill introduces a new pricing policy for power. I am sure there would be many in my community who are concerned about the potential impact of this change in the pricing policy. The objective is to replace the existing benchmark retail cost index with a pricing methodology that will be determined by the QCA. When the Queensland Competition Authority was first introduced into Queensland quite a number of years ago, the rationale, the reason or the justification given to me—the minister was in the chamber at the time and I am sure remembers the debate—was that we should support the Queensland Competition Authority because without the QCA Queensland individuals and companies would be subjected to oversight by the national competition authority in that it would look at matters from a national perspective and there would be nuances in the Queensland jurisdiction that it would not pick up on and therefore Queenslanders would be disadvantaged. On the basis that the QCA was intended to protect the interests of the people of Queensland in the area of competition, the QCA was established and I supported it on that basis.

Time has shown, though, that in many instances the QCA does not act for the community. In fact, its decisions act against the community. There is a specific experience in my own electorate where the QCA put out water pricing policy for the communities throughout my electorate and one small community was going to have its water pricing increased 700 per cent. It was untenable. The people who lived there would not be able to sell their homes because of the cost of water and eventually pressure was brought to bear and that recommendation was changed. So I have some misgivings about this proposal that effectively allows the QCA to set the new pricing policy for power.

It proposes a two-stage pricing policy—that is, the network charge and the retail charge. There is not a lot of detail about what that will entail. In the water area there is an access charge and a consumption charge and I would expect that it will be similar, but perhaps the minister could clarify that in his summing-up. However, that allows for two bites at the cherry in terms of pricing increases.

I note also that in relation to this new pricing policy there has not been any consultation with the community. As yet there is nothing, I believe, to consult on. But the bill will be passed and the opportunity for community concern to be expressed will be gone. I wish to place on the record my concern about the potential impact on consumers—the mums and dads in our community—and the potential impact on their electricity bills.

The member for Hinchinbrook certainly gave a very detailed contribution in relation to the carbon tax. There is great concern in my electorate in relation to the carbon tax, and quite reasonably so because we have a very high industry component that are all high emitters of carbon. None of them would say that they want to be a problem. However, they fall within that category. Whilst I think the federal government was talking in terms of in excess of $70 billion raised from this tax, my belief is that the majority of that cost will be borne by ordinary Queenslanders. The member for Hinchinbrook gave a detailed breakdown of those who will receive subsidies and those who will have to buy permits. The fact is that trade exposed industries will receive some relief. There are companies who are listed in the top 500 that are going to have to pay additionally because of their carbon emissions. However, many of those will have the opportunity to pass that additional cost on to the residents of Queensland. It is the residents who will pay. It will be in small ways: increases in food costs and the cost of commodities. The cost of transporting the commodity will be added into the cost of buying it.

I am yet to be convinced that with the introduction of a carbon tax, even with all of the exemptions and the subsidies that have been outlined by the federal government, the regular people in my electorate will not be significantly disadvantaged. That issue is raised with me quite regularly when I am out talking with members of the community. They also are not convinced. That is not to say that these mums and dads, these people in the community, are not concerned about the environment. It would be a wrong criticism to make that they do not care. They care deeply, but they want to do something that will create a change that will be beneficial. Frankly, I think all of us would have to acknowledge that for families in the community today the cost of living, particularly in my electorate, has risen exponentially and many, many, many families are struggling.

I note also that there are amendments in this bill to restrict or to cap the size of the individual solar system to five kilowatts and a limit of one photovoltaic generator system per premises. I had a constituent come in who was very agitated about the subsidy scheme. He had received his subsidy. I bring this matter to the minister's attention because my constituent asked me to. He wanted to know why, with a scheme that was going to contribute potentially very positively to greenhouse gases, there was not a multi-entry subsidy scheme. He said at this stage he could afford one system, but further down the track, maybe in another five or six years, maybe 10 years, he could afford to increase the size of that system. He believed that that should also attract a subsidy. I guess it depends on your rationale for the whole solar system. If it is to reduce reliance on gas fired electricity and the like then certainly there is merit in his argument. The same question pops into my mind when the size of the system that a householder can install is capped. If indeed they are going to be positively contributing to greener power generation, why would the cap be necessary? I ask that question on behalf of that constituent.

I have already raised the fact that the QCA will undertake consultation with stakeholders on the new electricity pricing methodology and tariff structures from July 2012, but I do believe that once this bill is passed much of the ability of the community to change the direction of government will be lost. Once it is in legislation the head of power exists and therefore the ability for people to significantly influence the way it is implemented I believe will be reduced. I also again note that in relation to the changes to the Solar Bonus Scheme there was no consultation with the community at all.

As I have said, I am very concerned about members of my community, and I am sure all of us here are concerned about members of the community, being able to afford costs of living. We have in Gladstone many people now who are either homeless or on the brink of homelessness. The vast bulk—certainly more than 50 per cent in some instances—of their income is spent just paying rent. When commodity prices like water and power increase, it will not just mean that there will be less disposable income; it will mean that there will be no disposable income. I think the pricing of such fundamental commodities is important. It has to be kept as affordable as possible so that people who find themselves in difficult circumstances—the elderly included—do not find themselves switching off necessary appliances to be able to save money in our weather, whether it is in the heat or in the cold. I do hold serious concerns about this bill and about the pricing impact on the community and I look forward to the minister's response prior to forming an opinion in relation to voting.

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (5.16 pm): I rise to speak to the Electricity Price Reform Amendment Bill 2011. I have heard a couple of people describe this particular bill as a pretty simple bill. On the face of it, it is not a very big bill and it could quite conceivably be called simple, but over my lifetime I have found that simple matters have the potential to escalate into something almost unmanageable. I have concerns about this bill, which I will outline later. The bill really has only two main objectives. The first, as it states in the explanatory notes, is—

... to replace the existing annual BRCI methodology for determining notified electricity prices and allow for the introduction of a new price setting methodology for notified electricity prices.

The second policy objective is—

... to introduce an individual system cap of five kilowatts and a limit of one photovoltaic (PV) generator system per premises, applicable from 8 June 2011, for customers to be eligible for a feed-in tariff of 44 cents per kilowatt hour (the solar bonus tariff). Customers with existing connections to the Scheme that are above five kilowatts in size will continue to be eligible for the solar bonus tariff.

Both objectives are pretty simple. However, I have a concern with a particular sentence under 'Electricity Pricing'. I mentioned it to the member for Beaudesert and he has spoken to the minister. I would like the minister to clarify exactly what this means so that it will not do what I think it will do. It states—

In particular, this approach will ensure the regulatory framework is flexible enough to allow any future carbon costs or additional costs associated with environmental obligations to be captured and passed through to end use customers.

I would like to know if there is a limit on what will be captured under these future carbon costs or environmental obligations. How wide is that framework going to be? This sounds to me like an open cheque. Future carbon costs—open cheque. Costs associated with environmental obligations? We know these obligations have changed year in, year out, month by month and day by day. To me it is a blank cheque after a blank cheque that the people will have to pay. I have huge concerns in relation to that.

I know there will be imposts across-the-board. We all know that the federal government talks about a carbon tax—or carbon pricing, as the Prime Minister likes to call it. Whatever you call it, it is a tax. We do not have it at the moment. A lot of people would not like to see it come in. It is not here yet, but we are assuming that it will come in. Most people probably believe they know the reason for it; whether or not they believe in a carbon tax is beside the point. However, this tax is based on something that even the scientists cannot agree on and, therefore, is very airy-fairy. Most people will find that the carbon tax will be an impost on them. The federal and state governments have said over and over again that the 500 top polluters will pay the carbon tax. The truth is that we will pay the carbon tax. The end users will pay the added costs of powering the energy companies and the power stations, and the added costs for the fuel that goes into the trucks that cart the coal and the machinery. We will pay for the production of the energy. We will pay for the processing, the transport and the list goes on and on. It may start off as a negligible amount, but when added together and by the time the costs are passed on to the end user they will be considerable.

People are afraid of this tax. Over the past few years I have watched my own electricity bill rise. A constant stream of people have complained to me about how they cannot afford electricity. Over and over again in the parliament I have spoken about people turning off their lights and lighting candles. We have heard stories of people who turn off their hot-water systems. They will have a hot shower on the first day, a lukewarm shower on the second day, a cold shower on the third day and then they will turn the system back on again. It is horrendous that anybody is reduced to such circumstances. I am trying to understand how a government that knows that people are in such dire straits can say that those people can put solar systems on their roofs and reap the benefits of its solar scheme. The people who are hurting now perhaps are not being recognised by the government, but we all know that they are there. They are the ones who will suffer even more in the future.

This bill directly relates to the impact of a carbon tax. Ergon Energy has told me that in the future the carbon tax will be its major cost. Accommodating that cost will be a major impost. I think the shadow minister said that the carbon tax will account for 50 per cent of energy generator operating costs. I do not doubt that, because Ergon Energy has told me that it will be a major component of its production costs.

I have to declare that there are solar panels on my roof. I had them installed recently. I hated it when they changed the meter-reading system, because I liked to see my meter go backwards. It was lovely to see that I was saving power. That provided a real incentive. I spoke with the people who installed the panels and the Ergon people who made sure it was ready and safe for the grid et cetera. It concerned me greatly when it was indicated to me, and other people who have solar panels on their roofs have been told the same thing, that within five years they expect the power prices to rise to such an extent that the 44c will be negated. I find that really concerning. One has to ask: in the future why would anyone want to put solar panels on their roofs?

The member for Gladstone raised with the minister an issue about a gentleman who said that he can afford a system now, but he would like to upgrade it and continue to add a lot of energy to the grid. I did not have time to look this up, but a constituent of mine spoke to me about his situation. He owns a number of rental properties. He asked me what incentive there is for him to put solar panels on all of his properties if the benefit will be negated in five to 10 years. I would appreciate it if the minister addressed that question.

I was concerned that this bill did not go to a committee for review. That is not a huge ask. It is not an urgent bill. It accommodates a tax that has not yet been implemented. I cannot really see the urgency in it. I can understand that it was not referred because it was tabled before the new committee system came into existence. However, I see no reason it could not have gone to a committee. I do not see why

we should not be taking the time to understand the full impacts and all the finer details, which we do not know about at this point in time. I doubt it would take much time to clarify all the questions surrounding this tax.

A lot of people have installed solar panels on their roofs. They are doing the right thing. A lot of people thought they would install bigger systems to try to earn a little extra money. They thought they might have been on a good thing, but, as we know, things changed. If people make too much money, somehow or another the tax man or somebody will come along and change the rules so that they do not get the benefit of it in the long run. I believe that is what has happened here. My sister lives in the Canberra area. In the first instance she was offered 60c per kilowatt. The government tried to reduce that amount. The matter went to court and they were told that they must abide by their contracts. So the people who initially signed up on a 60c contract retained that. However, across all states the price is coming down.

We know that as more and more people went onto the grid, the power cost rose a lot. Ergon informed me that they were not covering their replacement and repair costs, which was the only reason they really needed to lift their prices. Again, one has ask: if that is what happens why would we all bother to try to save energy? I know people who have changed the configuration of their houses so that they use as little energy as possible. I know one couple who do not use air conditioners or fans in their house. They have changed their house to the point where it naturally draws air and keeps the place cool. In winter they shut it up and it mostly stays warm.

People do the right thing, yet the more they try the harder it gets. It is a shame that when people try so hard they are still forced to ask why, in a country that has such vast resources and a limited population, we pay such high prices for energy. What about China and its enormous population? Admittedly, a lot of Chinese people do not access power but many do. The power difference is quite considerable. We talk about going green and we talk about solar and wind power. To date, as far as I am aware—unless things have changed in the past 24 hours—those are two of the most expensive forms of energy production that we could find. That does not help people very much, either. I do have major concerns about this bill. It sounds simple, but I think it could eventually blow out to some enormous tentacled creature that draws expenses for various reasons simply because we have to deal with any future carbon costs or additional costs associated with environmental obligations. I think this is a blank cheque. It is one that I would be terrified to sign. I do not believe we need to push it through today. We should wait until we find out all the details. I will be interested to hear the minister's response to all of my questions.

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—LNP) (5.30 pm): The Electricity Price Reform Amendment Bill 2011 amends the Electricity Act 1949 and the Electricity Regulation 2006 to replace the benchmark retail cost index, which is used to determine, notify and allow the introduction of a new price-setting methodology which will commence on 1 July 2012. As we have heard from the honourable member for Buderim, these amendments are the result of the process undertaken by the government to accommodate predicted increases in the cost of electricity production arising from the federal Labor government's carbon tax. The amendments will also allow for retrospective changes to the eligibility criteria for the connection to the Queensland Solar Bonus Scheme. The LNP has argued for a long time that the benchmark retail cost index needs to be replaced with the long run marginal cost method of pricing electricity. This would provide long-term stability to the electricity prices, which is more in line with reforms proposed by stakeholders representing consumers, those with disabilities and disadvantaged Queenslanders.

In May 2011 various stakeholders were asked to comment on price reform and many recommendations were to incorporate market data into determining electricity prices. However, the Queensland Council of Social Service, which represents the disabled, the elderly and the disadvantaged, raised concerns over using a purely market based mechanism as consumer acquisition costs could be unrealistically inflated. The method for pricing electricity that will replace the benchmark retail cost index put forward by Labor will largely determine the cost of production, which is predicted to rise 50 per cent once the carbon tax is introduced. The introduction of a market based mechanism for determining the wholesale cost of electricity production will introduce greater volatility in electricity prices.

The objectives of this bill are to 'provide flexibility to deal with any unidentified policy changes or market upheaval'. I cannot help thinking that this statement was written with tongue in cheek. We have heard the history of this bill as outlined by the shadow minister. It is clear that the primary market upheaval referred to here as an 'unidentified policy change' was to be Kevin Rudd's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. Perhaps the minister took Prime Minister Julia Gillard at her word, just like the rest of Australia did, when she said there would be no carbon tax.

Over the last 12 months people have suffered massive electricity price increases, particularly when this government introduced full retail competition and promised that electricity prices would be low and affordable. Now we are going to see electricity price increases due to a carbon tax. The disappointing thing about this is that last year everybody was doing it tough. We were going through rain

periods and massive floods and then after that many of us went through cyclones. While we were struggling and doing it tough, what was the best thing that this Prime Minister offered us? It was to hit us with a carbon tax. It is typical and un-Australian. Then, just as people were struggling to get used to that idea, what did she do? She banned the live cattle export market! Now here we are copping high increases in electricity prices and then we will be hit even harder with this carbon tax.

For those opposite to claim that the amendments before the House have nothing to do with the massive hikes in cost due to the federal government's decision—the disastrous Labor tax—is absolutely laughable. They are desperate to appease the green vote that paradoxically pushed through amendments that will protect retailers and producers from the expected increases in the cost of producing and distributing electricity. These amendments are the result of the investigation funded by taxpayers into how our producers, wholesalers and retailers can pass on the bill for the carbon tax to the mums and dads, disabled and elderly people and the taxpayer. The proposed retrospective cap on the size of solar units installed on homes under the solar scheme fits the same mould. Solar power without storage has been an ill-considered waste of time and money to satisfy the Greens. The harsh reality is that the Greens will never be satisfied until we all go back to the Stone Age. But even then they will still find something to whinge and whine about.

Generators, distributors and retailers have no interest in accepting feedback into the grid in off-peak periods. The cap on solar unit capacity only encourages further generation build-up of distribution and retailing driven purely by profit motives with no concern for either the consumer or the environment. If the goal of the government was to reduce emissions, reduce the cost of electricity to consumers and ease the cost-of-living burden for householders, why is a cap on the size of a solar power generation system being introduced? If every Queenslander was able to feed enough power back into the grid, Queensland would lead the way in achieving renewable energy targets. A move to cap solar generation by consumers with no public consultation only highlights the hypocrisy of this attempt to appease the green vote. Nobody, including those opposite, knows what the implications of Labor's carbon tax will be. However, it is the general consensus that it will be a great big devastating new tax, and we are seeing the legislation being introduced right now to allow producers, wholesalers and retailers of electricity to directly pass on the tax to the consumers, exempting the government from that responsibility.

In conclusion, it is disappointing to see that the Queensland government has taken the side of its federal counterparts against mums and dads, the elderly and the disadvantaged by not allowing this bill to simply be referred to the Environment, Agriculture, Resources and Energy Committee for consideration and scrutiny.

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Energy and Water Utilities) (5.36 pm), in reply: Firstly, I want to thank all honourable members for their participation in this debate. Despite what many members opposite have been going on about, this legislation is not about the federal government's announcement to put in place a price on carbon. This legislation is all about delivering a fairer and more flexible electricity pricing system for Queenslanders.

It is fair to say that we live in a different world today compared to 20 to 30 years ago. The environment changes and we must change with it. The cost-of-living pressures are front and centre in the community and that is something that the Bligh government understands. We understand that every day families are struggling with paying all kinds of bills including electricity, and the current electricity pricing structure does not suit our current environment. That is why we are taking this action. We want to reward people for being energy efficient where they can change their behaviours. That is only fair. We also want people to have the power to choose which electricity tariff suits their own individual lifestyle. That is why we are doing all we can to ease the burden of increasing electricity prices and increasing electricity demand on Queenslanders.

There has been a lot of scaremongering by members opposite about the federal government's announcement to introduce a price on carbon. I think it is fair to say that, apart from the member for Hinchinbrook, no member opposite has bothered—because I appreciate it does not suit their purpose—to mention the significant compensation package that the federal government has announced to provide relief for families, particularly low-income earners, in dealing with the introduction of a price on carbon. I thought I might deal briefly with the contribution of the member for Hinchinbrook. He clearly put some thought into the contribution that he made.

He talked about, on the one hand, encouraging people to be energy efficient via a carbon price mechanism but suggested, on the other hand, that offering compensation for the impact of the carbon price is somehow counterintuitive and argues against the policy target that the carbon price is designed to introduce. I will make this point: what the member for Hinchinbrook did not introduce into his analysis is what is behind moving to an inclining block tariff structure as well as moving to a system of time-of-use tariffs—that is, where people can change their behaviour they should be rewarded for it. It also recognises that there is a section of the community whose demand for energy and use of energy is somewhat inelastic—it is sticky. They cannot change their lifestyle and, therefore, we need to have the benefit of inclining block tariffs and time-of-use tariffs. Therefore, those people should not be penalised for that stickiness or their demand for their particular lifestyle. So it does make sense in that respect that you would introduce a mechanism of compensation to cushion the impact of the introduction of a carbon price. But at the other end, where people do have elasticity, where they do have flexibility in how they

live their lives and utilise energy, they should be rewarded by being offered products such as different time-of-use tariffs to allow them to reduce their electricity price. Nevertheless, I appreciate the thought that the member for Hinchinbrook put into his contribution.

As I mentioned before, the Bligh government is very conscious of the impact that rising electricity prices has on Queensland families and their household budgets. That is why this government directed the QCA to develop a new pricing system and tariff structure that is fairer to all Queensland electricity consumers. The reforms which I announced in May and further introduced into the House on 15 June this year will remove the outdated benchmark retail cost index methodology that the QCA currently uses to set notified electricity prices and replace it with a more transparent system based on the underlying cost of supply from 1 July 2012.

We believe that the new methodology will address issues with the prescriptive and inflexible nature of the current BRCI methodology by providing a more enabling legislative framework which will allow for greater flexibility and responsiveness in calculating notified prices for Queensland consumers. The amendments will provide sufficient flexibility to deal with any unidentified policy changes or market upheavals and will also ensure the framework is flexible enough to allow for any additional costs associated with environmental obligations to be captured and passed through to consumers. I note that this was an issue that the member for Nanango mentioned, and I will respond briefly to that.

I think every member in any parliament has a responsibility to recognise and be honest with their constituents about the cost pressures that are imposed on them not just by governments but by the simple fact of what it means to be living in a community in the 21st century. It is fair to say that governments have a range of mechanisms at their disposal to redistribute income to those who are most needy from those who can afford such redistribution. You do that in a number of ways. You do it through, for example, the taxation system that is in place, where a balance is attempted to be struck between rewarding people for their initiative and recognising that there is a section of society that requires assistance for different facets of their lifestyle, whether it be the age pension, whether it be the baby bonus, whether it be a family income supplement.

This is about ensuring that the real costs of delivering energy in the 21st century are passed through to those people who actually use the energy. You need to accept the fact that energy does not come free. Unless you actually get the income through that is needed to support the network and the various demands on it in the 21st century—and understanding what that actually means—then very soon you will return to the days of blackouts and brownouts as a result of insufficient investment in the network.

What we have seen over the last 10, 20 and, indeed, 30 years is a significant change in how energy is actually used—used by us. It used to be the fact that our peak load occurred during the middle of the day. That is no longer the case. Our peak load now has shifted from the middle of the day to between 4 pm and 8 pm, when we come home from work and switch on the lights and switch on the air conditioners and switch on all the appliances. That is now what is driving investment in the energy network. Unless we can pass through the actual costs—the true costs—associated with our own lifestyles, associated with our own choices, into the energy bills that we pay, then we will have underinvestment in the network and we will destabilise the network, leading to insufficient investment and therefore increased unreliability.

I have said constantly, having lived through that period and addressing it back in 2004 with the Somerville report, that I would never want to see Queensland go back to those days where we do not pay our dibs to ensure the lights remain on in a reliable fashion, given that Queensland is a mature, dynamic, First World economic power. That is a hard won achievement for this state, and reliable and efficiently delivered energy is a critical part of maintaining that status.

I will deal briefly with the issue of the Solar Bonus Scheme, because I think there is a lack of understanding by many members in this place about how the Solar Bonus Scheme is actually funded and therefore why we took the decision to cap access to the Solar Bonus Scheme at five kilowatts. Many members on the government side have spoken quite correctly about how popular the Solar Bonus Scheme has been and the fact that we are now generating well over 200 megawatts of energy from solar panels on residential roofs. It is a great achievement. There is no two ways about it.

As we have seen in other states, unless you get your policy setting right then very quickly that scheme can be unaffordable, because you have to ask yourself who is actually paying for the 44c per kilowatt hour that participants in the scheme are getting. It is not the government; it is everybody else. What other states have found is that with their schemes—the overgenerous ones like New South Wales of 60c per kilowatt hour gross feed-in—the impact on everybody else's electricity bill becomes unaffordable.

What we were starting to see—and you only need to look at advertisements in weekly newspapers, and I am not critical of these people; they were entrepreneurial by nature; they had worked it out—was that, if you could invest in solar panel arrays of 10 kilowatts, 20 kilowatts and 30 kilowatts and access the Solar Bonus Scheme, you would be achieving rates of return on investment of around 20 per cent per annum. I defy anyone to find a vehicle for investment that gives you a 20 per cent per annum return.

Mr Dickson: Your policy.

Mr ROBERTSON: No, hang on. I will get back to that. Of course that would be unsustainable because, while they would be reaping returns of 20 per cent per annum, it would be every one of us—or people who do not participate in the scheme—who would be paying for that windfall gain that they achieved. That is why we have acted to cap the scheme. It was never meant to be an investment vehicle. It was, however, always meant to be a scheme that had the widest possible application that individual residents could benefit from and take some pressure off their electricity bill. That is why we have moved to do what we have done.

We will continue to look at ways to make sure that this scheme remains sustainable long term, because I am also very conscious of the fact that what we have seen is tremendous growth in employment in the solar panel sector. We have mentioned the number of installers who are now out there. It is not true to say, as one member said earlier, that the last solar panel manufacturer in Australia closed down in New South Wales recently. That member is obviously not aware of the wonderful company eco-Kinetics on the Gold Coast, which is kicking some major goals in terms of solar panel construction. It is now employing hundreds of people and has a growth profile which is, frankly, exceptional.

This goes to show that we can compete against the Chinas when it comes to the solar industry. We need to be smart about where it is that we play. But the fact that we have such a successful company based on the Gold Coast delivering panels is a real vote of confidence in the future of this industry. The challenge for government is to ensure that we maintain our settings right, that we do not send a shock into that industry at the very time that it is growing so positively and, at the same time, that we do not send inappropriate or unsustainable messages into other parts of the market.

I could go on about the issue of privatisation and the mutterings of the LNP candidate for Ashgrove—the fan of privatising Energex. He indicated this in the *Australian* by his quote—

Just because you own the power grid, it doesn't mean you can't have a private-sector firm maintaining the power grid for you.

That is code for 'privatise Energex and Ergon'. There is no interpretation you can give to that statement by Campbell Newman other than that those opposite are going to the next election with a policy, stated or otherwise, that if they are in government the first thing to go would be Energex and Ergon. That is quite obvious. That is backed up by the statements of the shadow Treasurer only a couple of years ago when we introduced into this state the retail reforms for electricity. He was pleading with us to go the full monty and get rid of the poles and wires at the same time. Let there be no misunderstanding what the LNP policy on energy is. It is to sell Energex and sell Ergon and sell the generators. There would be a fire sale of the energy industry in this state under the LNP.

There was an issue mentioned by the member for Gladstone. She was making representations about one constituent who was arguing for multiple entry points. He has obviously invested in a small solar panel scheme and wants to build on it as more money becomes available. Again—and not being in any way critical of this gentleman—this would contradict the stated aim of this policy, which is to ensure that the maximum number of Queenslanders get the benefit of the scheme rather than some individuals being able to capture more than what would be considered to be a fair share of a very generous feed-in tariff.

A number of members, including the Independents, have mentioned their concern about moving to a new system of electricity tariffs without suitable or appropriate oversight. I think it needs to be remembered that this process did not begin with the introduction of this bill. This process of tariff reform has been going on now for well over two years. There have been multiple public reports produced by the QCA as we have gone through the process of disentangling the current tariff structure and analysing the options available for government. Those reports have come after significant input by the broader community and all stakeholders, including the Queensland Consumers Association and others. Those reports and submissions are all public.

It is incorrect to suggest that we are moving to some new system without broader consideration and input by the community. It is not right. I encourage people to go to the QCA website and see the extent of the reports and submissions that have been around for well over two years. If they do then I think it is fair to say that they will come to the conclusion that the government has been moving cautiously and appropriately in this regard and not rushing to conclusions or into a new system that has not been adequately thought through. The record shows otherwise.

I would like to acknowledge the very hard work of my staff and the staff of my department. It is fair to say that this stuff can really make one's head hurt from time to time. The fact that they have been able to, in some ways, keep it simple for their minister has been appreciated and not easy to achieve. It is important work. The fact that they have dedicated themselves to it and met some pretty tight time lines I really do appreciate and I thank them for that.

As I mentioned earlier, this is not the end of the road. This is just part of the process that we are going through. We have already commissioned the QCA to undertake the detailed modelling. Submissions from various consumer groups and stakeholders have already been received. I mentioned that last evening. That report will be available early next year. We are still on target to meet the 1 July introduction of the new tariff system, but I can offer members the commitment that we will continue to be

very diligent as the modelling informs us of the impact on the range of different users in our community, whether they be pensioners, ordinary mums and dads, large families or small families or singles. We need to ensure that, as much as possible, we achieve benefits for the largest cross-section of people. Where vulnerable people have an adverse outcome we will apply our minds to ensure that they are appropriately compensated by adjustments through our existing mechanisms, for example pensioner discounts.

The last matter I will mention is the issue raised by the member for Coomera. He has written to me on a number of occasions and I understand the issue. I also have some personal experience in this regard. My in-laws live in one of these villages and they have solar panels.

Mr Dickson: You're not going there for Christmas?

Mr ROBERTSON: In fact I am. Since they have installed their panels on their roof they have not received an electricity bill. Firstly, they are not big electricity users, as most pensioners are not. They get the benefit of the electricity they use being generated by the solar panels plus they get the $237 per annum pensioner discount. They actually do not receive an electricity bill anymore.

Mr Dickson: No 44c?

Mr ROBERTSON: No, they do not get the 44c, but the installation of solar panels plus the pensioner discount of $237 has resulted in them not getting an electricity bill. That will not apply to everyone's circumstances. But I do not think it is fair to suggest, as the member for Coomera has, that it is discriminatory. The simple fact is that these people are not customers of Energex. They are customers of the resort that they live in. That makes it difficult to pass on the feed-in tariff. We are still looking at it, but the mechanics of it are really difficult for us to manage.

There is a supplementary issue that the member for Coomera has brought up with us. My colleague the Minister for Community Services is looking at that issue because of the provisions under the manufactured homes act rather than the Electricity Act, so I will not deal with that. I mentioned my own family's experience to indicate that, firstly, I have been following this issue pretty closely myself and, secondly, in some respects there is a second story to be told there in the circumstances that some people face, which I acknowledge may not be faced by everyone. Once again, I thank the shadow minister for his contribution. I commend the bill to the House.

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

AYES, 77—Attwood, Bates, Bleijie, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, Crandon, Cripps, Croft, Darling, Davis, Dick, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Farmer, Finn, Fraser, Gibson, Hinchliffe, Hobbs, Hoolihan, Hopper, Horan, Jarratt, Johnson, Johnstone, Jones, Kiernan, Kilburn, Knuth, Langbroek, Lawlor, Lucas, McArdle, Male, Malone, Menkens, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nicholls, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Powell, Rickuss, Roberts, Robertson, Robinson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Seeney, Shine, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Spence, Springborg, Stevens, Struthers, Stuckey, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wellington, Wells, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Keech, Grace

NOES, 5—Cunningham, McLindon, Pratt. Tellers: Foley, Messenger

Resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 6, as read, agreed to.

Clause 7—

Mr CRIPPS (6.09 pm): I appreciate the response that the minister gave to my second reading contribution in his summing-up of the debate. Certainly, I acknowledged in my second reading contribution that the bill will achieve its objectives in terms of legislating for the fact that the pricing mechanisms for people who use less power in their quarterly or monthly electricity bills outside the peak times—the tariff provisions—will provide reduced costs to those individual consumers. I acknowledged that the bill will actually achieve its stated objectives.

The point that I was trying to make is that at the same time the Gillard government does not propose to provide any incentive for the same customers to change their behaviour, because it claims that those who are exposed to the increased costs of the product through the addition of the carbon tax to that good or service will be compensated to that extent. So there is no motivation for customers of energy utilities in Queensland to modify their behaviour to use less power on a monthly or quarterly basis because the Gillard government maintains that any good or service for which the cost of the carbon tax is passed on to the consumer will be compensated for.

If this bill was implemented in isolation—that is, if the carbon tax and the associated compensatory payments were not made—I concede to the minister that the different pricing mechanisms would drive that behavioural change in Queensland amongst electricity consumers. Can the minister advise if the objectives of the bill will be foiled by the fact that any increase in the cost of the good or service—in this case, electricity provided by a retailer to a consumer—will simply be overcome by the compensation made available by the Gillard government to that customer?

The objectives of the bill on the one hand in this document and the explanation of the Gillard government's policy of implementing the carbon tax and the compensatory arrangements that will be made as a result would seem to be incongruous. They cannot be achieved simultaneously. I take the pertinent point that the minister made about the stickiness of demand by customers. The minister referred to the demand for some services and goods in the market that are critical—they are basic services—and demand for them will not be as elastic as demand for other products. I agree that electricity is not so much a substitutable good, but the minister is placed in a situation where the objectives of his legislation appear to me to be foiled by the fact that simultaneously the federal government proposes to compensate for any cost impact that will be created as a result of the mechanism that the minister is introducing through this bill to incorporate the cost of the carbon tax into the cost of providing electricity to Queensland consumers.

Mr ROBERTSON: I thank the member for Hinchinbrook. The answer is no because the price on carbon is not the sole determinant of future increases in electricity prices. Electricity prices will move as a result of a whole range of factors which in fact the QCA has to take into account. Accepting this point, if for ordinary consumers the compensation provided by the Commonwealth equals the impact on the price of electricity so that it becomes a zero-sum game, there are still incentives for people to reduce their electricity bill, because, as we have seen over the last extended period, electricity prices have increased. We know from our own conversations with our constituents that they are keen to find ways to reduce their electricity bills.

Taking the carbon price argument out of this for the moment, there is still plenty of incentive for people to want to reduce or find ways to reduce their electricity bills. I did make the point, as the member noted, that because of some people's lifestyles that just will not be possible. But what we hope is that through moving to an inclining block tariff from the current BRCI even people with sticky demand and sticky behaviours will still benefit from moving to that inclining block tariff by either putting downward pressure on future increases or actual increases or actual decreases from the bill that they currently pay. So there are a number of levers at work and it is not just the carbon tax that would still incentivise people to look at the way that they use energy and find ways to address that either through changed behaviours or by simply moving to a new suite of tariffs that will be on offer post 1 July next year.

Mr MESSENGER: Clause 7 is the amendment of section 90 relating to deciding prices to non-market customers. Firstly, I ask the minister to offer some clarification on who are actually non-market customers that are affected by this particular clause. Just to put it in context in terms of the stakes that are at risk at the moment in Queensland about the pricing of electricity, I have a document from QAL where it talks about the price of electricity for its company under a new regime which will obviously be affected by this. It states—

QAL is a large emitter of greenhouse gas (CO_2 emissions of approximately 4.4 million tonnes per year) and will be taxed accordingly. QAL has no ability to pass the carbon tax on to our customers, as will happen with domestic electricity, because the carbon tax is not applied in countries where our major competitors produce their alumina.

The Government have proposed a fixed carbon price for a 3-5 year period before introducing an emissions trading scheme where the market will determine the price of carbon based on the level of emissions set by the Government. Full details of the scheme have yet to be released.

Under the proposed scheme the alumina industry has been classified as an emissions-intensive trade-exposed industry making it eligible initially for free permit allocation equal to 94.5% of industry average emissions, decreasing over time.

The allocation of free permits by the Government is a form of industry protection to compensate against competition from refineries in countries that do not have substantive carbon taxes.

The document goes on to quote China, Brazil, India, the Middle East and Jamaica. The document continues—

However as QAL is predominantly a coal fired refinery it will be disadvantaged against the lower emission intensive Australian refineries by paying a carbon tax of over 6 times the rate of the average Australian refinery.

Even with the permit allocation to QAL the costs are very significant. The carbon tax, the costs imposed by the Renewable Energy Target Legislation and the flow through effects of the carbon tax on other purchases means that QAL will still pay a carbon cost many times that faced by overseas competitors.

It then goes on to say—

Initially the additional cost of the tax will be over $35 million per year rising to $55 million over 5 years and continuing to rise into the future.

That is how high the stakes are with this electricity pricing. We have a significant company incurring multimillion-dollar costs. The only response from those companies can be to either shut down and take their business overseas or to go into swing-shift mode and not be as productive. Does this clause of the bill allow the price determination to take into account any future carbon tax as mentioned, for example, by QAL? Does this new method of price determination make the building of new coal fired power stations in Queensland, assuming a federal carbon tax becomes a reality, unviable?

Mr ROBERTSON: In relation to the multiple questions asked by the member, a non-market customer is those people in Queensland who still have their energy charged at the regulated price. For example, if some have chosen, because someone has knocked on their door, to join a particular electricity retailer, as a result of that they then become a market customer. They come off the regulated

tariff. However, if, as in my case, a person has chosen not to go with one of these retailers who knock on the door from time to time, they will still have their electricity charged at the regulated rate. The regulated rate is the rate that is announced by the QCA that has been determined by the existing benchmark retail cost index. That is what we are moving away from. That is the difference between a market customer and a regulated non-market customer.

In relation to QAL, I find your advocacy for a rather wealthy multinational curious. Putting that aside, you perhaps need to understand that QAL has an individual power purchase agreement which, for historical reasons, is significantly beneficial to that company and way below the power costs that other companies in Queensland pay. They already receive a benefit of paying a power price which does not reflect the true cost of providing that energy. In terms of any advocacy by QAL in terms of the impact of a carbon price, I would encourage them to be similarly forthcoming with exactly how much they are paying for their energy, historically and currently, which is significantly in their favour. They need to be very careful how they conduct these political arguments lest the full story of their operations be told.

Mr MESSENGER: Just to answer the minister's point about my advocacy on behalf of a multinational, I will always be an advocate in this chamber for businesses that provide employment for workers in the Burnett. It is those very multinationals that are manufacturing and creating wealth for our state and for our country and, of course, providing valuable jobs in the Burnett area. There are many people within the Burnett area who travel through to Gladstone and proudly work at QAL. We do not want to see this business killed off. If this business was to stop manufacturing and producing aluminium due to market forces with the introduction of a carbon tax, it would mean utter devastation for Gladstone and the northern Burnett region. It would see jobs exported overseas. Companies would then make the decision on whether to dig the stuff out of the ground and further process it in Australia or just dig it out of the ground and then export it to the competitive countries. I am sure that none of us wants to see our jobs exported overseas to our competitors who will not suffer from a carbon tax.

This legislation mentions environmental considerations as one of the factors the minister or the QCA must take into account in determining electricity prices. Could the minister please explain who decides the environmental considerations? Is it only the state government? Is it a combination of state and federal government? Is it the minister or is it the QCA? Which entity decides those environmental considerations?

In finishing, I remind the minister that the five largest economies in the world do not have a tax on their electricity through a carbon tax. They do not have environmental considerations on their electricity. America, China, Brazil, Japan and India do not have a carbon tax. Australian and Queensland industries are the only industries that will be paying a carbon tax in order to stop world climate change.

Mr ROBERTSON: I dealt with the issue of environmental considerations in my reply speech. Those environmental considerations could be generated by the state government with the oversight of the state parliament or generated by the Commonwealth government with the oversight of the Commonwealth parliament. There is nothing untoward or unusual about that.

I would just correct the member in terms of his view that the five largest economies in the world do not have the pass-through environmental considerations in the energy that they pay for. That is simply incorrect. I could take you to China or to the USA—particularly the state of California, the fourth largest economy in the world—and point to the pass-through of environmental considerations into the price of electricity.

Mr Messenger: They don't have a carbon tax.

Mr ROBERTSON: You said the five largest economies in the world do not pass through environmental considerations into the price of energy they pay. They do. You have misled this place again.

Clause 7, as read, agreed to.

Clause 8—

Mr MESSENGER (6.26 pm): Just to correct the record—and I am happy to have a look at *Hansard* and see what it says—the point I was making before was that the five largest economies in the world do not have a carbon tax as proposed by the Gillard Labor government in Australia.

Mr ROBERTSON: This is clause 8. Clause 8 does not deal, from my reading, with the issue of a carbon tax.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms O'Neill): I would ask the member to return to the matters contained in clause 8.

Mr MESSENGER: In talking to clause 8, there are a number of questions that arise. Can the minister provide for the House some examples of reasons he would decide to delegate a function relating to price determination to the QCA? Does the minister already have powers as a pricing entity and what current role does he have in the price determination? Can the minister share with the House any calculations that his department may have made regarding the likely amount that electricity prices will rise once a federal carbon tax is levied?

Mr ROBERTSON: The provision the member refers to is, in many respects, an existing provision. The way that energy prices, particularly the regulated energy price in this state, are determined is by analysis by the QCA. That is the delegated authority that it has. It then reports back to the minister of the day. That is the process that has been in place in this state for quite a number of years now. It has been the subject of quite a deal of analysis and commentary over that period of time. To that extent, there is nothing new in that regard.

In terms of the analysis of the impact on electricity prices, I trust the member was aware of the detailed statement made by the Treasurer during the last sitting week as to Treasury's analysis of that impact. I would refer the member to the statement of the Treasurer.

Mr MESSENGER: I would prefer to hear it from the minister's own mouth instead of taking the lazy option of referring me to the Treasurer's statement. The minister, if he was a proficient minister, would have those figures and facts on hand now. This is a very, very important issue to the constituents of the Burnett. I invite the minister once again to share with the House any calculations that his department made—and it should be his department that made them—regarding the likely amount that electricity prices will rise once a federal carbon tax is levied. He is the minister in charge. He is the minister responsible. He should have directed his department, if he was on his game, to have those figures before him right now as part of this debate.

Clause 8, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 9 to 16, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Energy and Water Utilities) (6.30 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a third time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Energy and Water Utilities) (6.30 pm): I move—

That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm.

UNIFORM CIVIL PROCEDURE (FEES) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT REGULATION (NO. 1)

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (7.30 pm): I move—

That the Uniform Civil Procedure (Fees) and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2011, Subordinate Legislation No. 166 of 2011, tabled in the House on 6 September 2011, be disallowed.

I move to disallow this insidious, sneaky fee hike that restricts access to justice to all Queenslanders, which is a right that is fundamental to a principled society. This great big new tax on justice ensures that applicants who file initiating processes in the District and Supreme courts will incur a 50 per cent increase over fees revised in July 2010. If nothing else, this new tax is a slippery slope towards a justice system for the rich rather than for all Queenslanders. This comes from a Labor Party that purports to represent the working class, when really it does not represent anything or anyone anymore. The light on the hill is fading further and further into the distance.

Members on the other side of the House believe that Queenslanders seeking justice through our courts should have to pay more and upfront whether they win or lose and despite the merits of their case. This regulation, which took effect on 1 September 2011, ensures that court filing fees are increased and introduces setting-down and hearing fees in civil matters. However, we should not be surprised. After all, this is a government that presided over the cost-of-living increases that are strangling the family budget. This is a government that went broke on the back of a major mining boom.

This is a government that lost our treasured AAA credit rating. This government is addicted to spending and bureaucratic waste, and the taxpayers of this state have had enough. As a result of this financial incompetence, obviously government revenue has to be increased. This comes in the form of taxes, levies, fees and charges. Whatever you want to call it, this cost increase is just pure revenue raising at a time when government debt is spiralling out of control.

This is a great big new tax on Queenslanders who are seeking a remedy for a particular grievance or a perceived injustice. Of course, this Attorney-General says that he has a great interest in consumer law reform and protecting those in our society who are most vulnerable, but the only thing he seems to ever refer to are the gift cards with expiry dates. That is about the depth of the reform agenda of a long-term Labor government that is out of ideas and is steering this great state in the wrong direction.

This regulation and fee impost has the potential to restrict access to justice for Queenslanders, which is a situation that Attorneys-General of all persuasions should always aspire to prevent. Under the stewardship of the current Attorney-General, Queenslanders will face hikes in legal costs thanks to this great big new tax on accessing justice. It will raise the barrier for ordinary Queenslanders to access courts to resolve their disputes, creating a justice system only for the rich. In referring to these access to justice concerns, Mr Bruce Doyle from the Queensland Law Society stated—

The new increased fees represent an undesirable additional obstacle to citizens seeking justice through the courts.

In responding to my recent press release on this great big new tax on access to justice, the Attorney-General complained that I was 'asleep at the wheel'. So too must have been the Bar Association of Queensland, the Queensland Law Society, the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties and the Australian Lawyers Alliance. In his media release, a copy of which I will table for the benefit of all honourable members, the Attorney-General stated—

It only applies to the District and Supreme courts and most people in society will never have a matter in the District or Supreme courts.

Tabled paper: Media release, dated 30 August 2011, by the Deputy Premier and Attorney General titled 'Bleijie asleep at the wheel again' [5246].

I ask the Attorney-General to consider the plight of a flood victim who wants to take action against an insurance company that is refusing to pay out for a new house. I ask the Attorney-General to consider the plight of a small business run by mum and dad operating a proprietary company that is struggling to get money owed to it. How do they cope? I ask the Attorney-General to respond to that. It is far too generalised to assume that most people will never have a matter before the District or Supreme courts. In reality, that may be the case and one would hope so. However, it is vital that this long-term Labor government governs with the interests of all Queenslanders in mind rather than those who can afford the escalated fees and additional charges. In his media release the Attorney-General went on to state—

The fees only apply to new matters filed from September 1 so no existing litigant, no matter how wealthy, will be disadvantaged.

The amount of money raised at $3 million is very modest.

The statement continues—

Mr Lucas said charging court fees would bring Queensland into step with other states in Australia and funds collected this financial year would go towards important initiatives such as the Murri Court and the Queensland Indigenous Alcohol Diversion Program.

That seems to be the excuse for most things this government does, that is, it will bring us into line with other states in Australia.

While I am on the topic of national harmonisation, I take this opportunity to discuss correspondence that I have received from Mr Richard Douglas SC, President of the Bar Association. I will table that correspondence at the end of my contribution, as I will refer to it throughout this speech. In the correspondence, Mr Douglas SC referred to national harmonisation. He stated—

It is quite wrong for the government to characterise the regulation as being, in substance, an exercise in harmonisation ... with the other states and territories.

It seems that national harmonisation is not even a convenient excuse for this particular tax and it is simply not the case. In relation to the setting-down and hearing fee, Mr Douglas makes the following points: there are no such fees in Tasmania, the ACT, the Northern Territory or the Land and Environment Court in New South Wales; there are such fees in varying amounts in South Australia, Western Australia and the Supreme courts of New South Wales and Victoria; and the amount of the fees, where imposed, vary considerably, but the fee changes in Queensland are pitched at the high end. In a letter to the Attorney-General, Mr Douglas states—

I can only assume you did not know of the minutiae of such fees, for otherwise you would not have adhered to your harmonisation contention. It is such a pity that I have to seek out and provide such information, and cognate submissions, to you on the run.

The contention of the Attorney-General in relation to national harmonisation has been blown out of the water and exposed for what it is: a poorly conceived misrepresentation of the facts. In a letter dated 7 September from the Bar Association to the Attorney-General, in reference to national harmonisation Mr Richard Douglas states—

On the above analysis, any Queenslander litigating for up to $750,000 plus statutory interest would be better off commencing in New South Wales or Victoria rather than the Queensland District Court. So much for access to justice in the sunshine state.

That is the mantra of this long-term government that is taking Queensland from the head of the pack to chasing the tails of the other states.

Today the Queensland Law Society issued a letter to the Attorney-General in which Bruce Doyle, the President of the Queensland Law Society, talks about the national harmonisation approach. In part the letter states—

It is apparent that you have proposed these fee increases on a mistaken basis.

The letter sets out a detailed cost analysis of a civil trial in a District Court or equivalent jurisdiction right around Australia. This letter, which I will table, clearly shows that Queensland will be one of the most expensive states in Australia in which to commence an action in a District Court. Setting-down fees will be a new cost. A corporation will pay $2,250. In other states, including Victoria, a corporation will pay $529 and in Western Australia a corporation will pay $1,019.

These new fees are an injustice. It is an access to justice issue which has been clearly set out by the Law Society, the Bar Association and others. I table a copy of that letter for the information of members of the House.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 7 September 2011, from Mr Bruce Doyle, President, Queensland Law Society to the Deputy Premier and Attorney-General regarding Queensland courts civil fee increases [5247].

That is why Campbell Newman and the LNP will fight to ensure that Queensland is No. 1 again. We will fight to stamp out this injustice here tonight. We have already committed in the media to keeping these types of court fees level with the increase in CPI. That is the promise that we will keep. We believe that it is vital that all Queenslanders have access to justice and that no disadvantage is sustained through a lack of means or financial barriers.

I say to the Attorney-General: where was the consultation? Where was the commitment to work with our legal profession and stakeholders to improve access to justice for all Queenslanders? Where was the commitment to working families in Queensland? Once again we have seen this approach which is typical of this government and this minister.

This is a minister who we know was moved on from the Health portfolio because the monumental bungle that was the Health payroll disaster lingers on. This is the minister who is all huff and no puff. He likes to rant and rave in this place, as is the case with this government, but it is all spin and no substance. On the topic of consultation, it is one thing to bury this kind of fee hike in a state budget; it is another to completely ignore the legal associations such as the Bar Association, the law association, the Law Society of Queensland, the Australian Lawyers Alliance and the civil liberties council. I am sure that, at the very least, they would have appreciated adequate notification of fee changes that would impact upon their clients and particularly access to justice for all Queenslanders.

What this minister does not seem to understand is that it is one thing to increase the fees which will restrict access to justice for Queenslanders; it is another thing to simply put it in and then say to the industry, 'Deal with it.' That is exactly what has happened here. Instead of paying the courtesy of advising our peak legal representative organisations, the minister ran away and hid, hoping this great big new tax on justice would come into effect and people would accept the increases and new charges. That is not going to happen. Peak bodies such as the Bar Association, the Queensland Law Society, the Council for Civil Liberties and Australian Lawyers Alliance have all expressed dismay and extreme disappointment at the new charges and the lack of consultation from the government.

In a letter from the President of the Law Society, Mr Bruce Doyle, to the Attorney-General on 29 August Mr Doyle stated—

The first notice that the Queensland Law Society had of the detail of these proposals was on Friday 26 August 2011. We forwarded this notice to our members on the same day. This means that our members have only received three clear days' notice of the proposed changes which take effect on ... 1 September 2011.

He went on to say—

In circumstances where there are new fees which were never previously charged and where fees that were previously charged have substantially increased, this is likely to cause substantial inconvenience for litigants and their lawyers. Therefore this level of prior notice and consultation is entirely inadequate.

I have tabled a copy of the media release from the Attorney-General. He also said in that media release that the Queensland Law Society was in the lockdown when the budget was being discussed. That is funny because the Law Society sent out its *Law Society Update* late this afternoon, at 4.24 pm, to all its members in Queensland. The second item of the *Law Society Update* is titled 'Queensland courts civil fee increases'. It states—

Queensland Law Society President Bruce Doyle recently wrote to Attorney General The Hon Paul Lucas in relation to his disappointment at the short notice given to the profession regarding recent court fee increases. A media release issued by the Attorney General inaccurately claimed that QLS was involved in the budget lock-up and advised of these fee increases.

The Attorney-General of Queensland sent out a press release and said the Law Society was involved, that it knew about it and that it was involved in the budget lockdown. Why is it that at 4.24 this afternoon the Queensland Law Society has to issue a notice to its members saying that that statement is inaccurate? The Deputy Premier and Attorney-General needs to explain that. If it is the case that his press release is misleading, we need to ensure that appropriate parliamentary procedures are followed to correct that. I table a copy of that *Queensland Law Society Update*.

Tabled paper: Email, dated 7 September 2011, from the Queensland Law Society titled 'QLS Update' [5248].

The president of the Bar Association also wrote to the Attorney on 29 August. He said—

The enactment of the regulation, both in the manner it was introduced without proper consultation, and in substance, on any view, represents a cynical exercise of government power undertaken with utter disregard for due process or the interests of the general public.

I table further copies of letters—a letter from the Bar Association of 7 September, the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties, a copy of a letter from the Australian Lawyers Alliance and a copy of a letter from the Queensland Law Society dated 29 August.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 29 August 2011, from Mr Richard Douglas SC, President, Bar Association of Queensland, to the Deputy Premier and Attorney-General regarding the Uniform Civil Procedure (Fees and Other Legislation) Regulation (No. 1) 2011 [5252].

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 7 September 2011, from Mr Richard Douglas SC, President, Bar Association of Queensland, to the Deputy Premier and Attorney-General regarding the Uniform Civil Procedure (Fees and Other Legislation) Regulation (No, 1) 2011 [5253].

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 30 August 2011, from Mr Michael Cope, President, Queensland Council for Civil Liberties, to the Deputy Premier and Attorney-General regarding the Uniform Civil Procedure (Fees and Other Legislation) Regulation (No. 1) 2011 [5251].

Tabled paper: Letter, undated, from Mr Adam Tayler, Queensland Branch President, Australian Lawyers Alliance, to the Deputy Premier and Attorney-General regarding the Uniform Civil Procedure (Fees and Other Legislation) Regulation (No. 1) 2011 [5250].

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 29 August 2011, from Mr Bruce Doyle, President, Queensland Law Society, to the Deputy Premier and Attorney-General regarding Queensland courts civil fee increases [5249].

How is it that so many associations representing lawyers, barristers and Queenslanders' access to justice have got it wrong? How is it that so many have got it wrong? How many of these associations have got it all wrong?

Mr Lucas: It is like mining companies when you put up royalties. Of course they don't like it!

Mr BLEIJIE: The Attorney says they all have it wrong. The LNP will not stand by and let these new fees—court taxes—go through without a fight.

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—LNP) (7.45 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the disallowance motion before the House tonight. I start by congratulating the member for Kawana and shadow Attorney-General on his contribution. In a letter dated 29 August 2011, the president of the Bar Association says at page 2, under the heading 'Implications of substance'—

... there has been a 50% increase, over fees last revised in July 2010, for filing initiating process in the Supreme and District Court.

On page 3 of the same letter, about a quarter of the way down the page, he says—

Suffice it to say the consumer price index has not increased 50% in 12 months.

In its letter to the Attorney, the Australian Lawyers Alliance makes this comment—

We are particularly concerned that these charges were introduced without any consultation with the profession.

In its correspondence, the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties was concerned about not having proper consultation and review. In its correspondence of 29 August 2011 to the Attorney, the Queensland Law Society made this concluding comment—

Therefore this level of prior notice and consultation is entirely inadequate.

The member for Kawana asked why consultation did not take place. That is a valid point because, when you consider the increase in the fees, the Bar Association refers to the fact that in a conventional case the setting down fees vary from $1,125 at the lowest in the District Court to $2,500 at the highest in the Supreme Court. The daily fees for hearing go from the low figure of $810 to the high figure of $1,800 and doubling if a matter proceeds for more than nine days. We are not talking here about an increase by way of CPI; we are talking here about a significant increase. In fact, on the Bar Association's correspondence it is an increase of 50 per cent.

The concern the profession has raised is that they simply were not consulted and that they, as the member for Kawana indicated, were not advised of the intentions of the Attorney or the department. In fact, the Bar Association goes much further. At the base of page 2 its correspondence reads—

Plainly the government sought to avoid consultation with the Association on this issue.

The last paragraph on page 2 states—

Worse still, the Department knew of the Association's particular interest as noted above but studiously avoided involving us. We can only infer that occurred within the direction of executive government. That, with respect, was unforgiveable and those involved ought to be censured.

The Bar Association is a conservative body of men and women. There is no doubt about that. However, within the terms of the words I have read out—a very clear, angry and directed statement towards the Attorney—the Bar Association believe that they were deliberately locked out by the Attorney and the department from consultation. That is an issue that the Attorney does need to address here today. It is important that the Attorney places on record the circumstances by which these very important bodies were excluded from the consultation process.

Yes, the Attorney and other members on the government side of the House may well argue that these people have a vested interest in what happens within the court jurisdiction. May I remind all members that, yes, these associations are associations for their members but they are, and always have been, associations that look after the interests of litigants as well. You will find the Queensland Law Society and the Bar Association are at the front of many movements, let alone the Council for Civil Liberties, who is renowned for taking issues up on behalf of people right across this state who need assistance and help.

The member for Kawana raised the point that this has become a tax grab. One has to wonder, with such a large increase of the nature indicated in the motion, why the figure has jumped significantly and why the new amounts have been imposed upon areas involved in litigation that have never before been covered by fees. Again, those are questions that the Attorney has to answer here tonight. At the end of the day, this is seen by the profession—and generally I suspect by those who are aware of what has taken place—as a grab for cash. The justice system is not a place for a grab for cash in relation to matters of this nature. The justice system should be open to all men and women across the state equally so that they have the opportunity to litigate matters that they are involved in or feel aggrieved by as a consequence of some action or inaction by a third party.

The shadow Attorney-General has outlined two cases where the fees will have a significant impact. Certainly for the mums and dads across Queensland the increase in fees that are being proposed in the District Court and the Supreme Court are significant and will certainly have a role in determining whether or not an individual takes an action forward. As I said, there are two questions here: firstly, why the consultation process did not take place, bearing in mind the content of the letter from the Bar Association and their very strong words that, in essence, they were cut out almost deliberately by the Attorney and the department; and, secondly, why the increase, as I understand it, has been significant. There is almost a doubling of fees in some cases and imposing new fees in other cases.

Can the Attorney also confirm that if the state is a party before a court these new fees do not apply, as is stated in the Bar Association's correspondence? It is important that members of the public do have the right to access the court and that access should not be fettered or deferred as a consequence of filing fees. Certainly these fees can be mitigated, but in most cases they are not. In the end, the Attorney must justify the actions of himself and his department in this matter and explain why these fees have risen so quickly and with little or any consultation whatsoever.

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (7.53 pm): At the outset can I state the obvious that nobody in their right mind would welcome any substantial increase in fees of this nature—legal fees or any fees that would increase the cost of living, the cost of the provision of services of any sort whatsoever in our community. However, we are always conscious of the need for there to be access to justice in our justice system in Queensland. We are conscious of the limitations that apply in terms of the limitations of the legal aid system—good though it is. We are conscious of the fact that already many people are self-represented in our courts, not just in Queensland courts but even in the High Court of Australia, where self-representation is a fact of life these days.

I take this opportunity to commend the work of those who work for the legal aid service in Queensland, as I commend the work done by those people who work in the community legal centres throughout Queensland as well. They do a sterling job and are very much at the coalface of the delivery of legal services in this state. In particular, I have an association, as you would expect, with the Toowoomba Advocacy and Support Centre, which are the community legal centre in Toowoomba. They have provided a great service for the Toowoomba people since their foundation a couple of decades ago. As a local member of parliament—and I am sure this is a common feature for most members of parliament—I refer many people who come to my office looking for remedies to problems to the local community legal centres, because the problems often are legal ones as opposed to ones that members of parliament can directly assist with.

The problem of access to justice and the cost of delivery of legal services is something that has been with us for all time. I have sometimes felt that the people who supply health services through the provision of Medicare may well have the solution to the access to justice issue by way of the provision of some sort of 'Legibank' similar to the provision of Medicare—in other words, a compulsory type of insurance scheme which might be, at the end of the day, what will be required. In the meantime, however, the Attorney and the government have the problem of how to finance the legal system that we are privileged to have in this state.

As I look at the regulation, it seems to me that what is being considered here is a substantial increase in fees but they are fees directed to particularly commercial type cases. I think it is reasonable that people who receive the services of highly qualified Supreme Court and District Court judges should pay something towards the cost of the provision of that service. We know that increasingly in our legal system many cases are disposed of by way of mediation, and the cost of a mediator would far exceed the costs that are set out in this regulation that is the subject of discussion tonight. I think it is quite reasonable and proper to make that comparison in dealing with the topic under discussion. I refer of course to mediation, let alone arbitration where the costs are really skyrocketing.

The other issue I wish to mention is that the regulation refers to proceedings under the Uniform Civil Procedures Rules. Of course that would cover actions with respect to personal injury, but it has to be borne in mind these days that most actions of that nature—for example, the great majority of workers compensation cases—are disposed of by way of mediation and would not be subject to these types of increases that we are talking about tonight. It seems to me that it is appropriate at this time in the development of our legal system that litigants should pay something approaching the real costs of the administration of justice in this state. I think what is proposed in the regulation, the subject of discussion tonight, achieves that aim.

For those reasons, I do support the new fee structure provided for in the Uniform Civil Procedure (Fees) and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2011. Can I say that the government is committed to providing what is a fair, safe and just society for all Queenslanders.

The amending regulation has introduced a fee reduction regime which applies not only to individuals receiving particular welfare benefits but also to individuals and corporations who can demonstrate financial hardship. Fee reductions are available for individuals on stated welfare benefits such as social security payments and Austudy. Individuals can also apply for a fee reduction on the grounds of financial hardship. The regulation does make provision for those types of circumstances.

What must also be borne in mind, and from my reading of regulation 4A, is that this fee will apply only in cases that are set down for in excess of one day and will not apply to those cases involving interlocutory applications. The one-day case provision would cover many cases, I think, that go before the District and Supreme Court. Its application is not as widespread as one might first think. For the reasons I have stated, I support the regulation applying and oppose its disallowance.

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (8.01 pm): I rise to speak against the motion of disallowance. I think it is quite instructive if we stop to have a look at the whole basis for the disallowance. We have heard some unmitigated claptrap from the member for Kawana that advanced the argument absolutely nowhere. Perhaps the member for Kawana would be able to tell the House how many matters he has had set down in the Supreme Court and what he knows about it, because I am willing to bet that we could count the number of times he has been in the Supreme Court and set matters down on one hand, if we are lucky.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr HOOLIHAN: And the member for Callide has never been there at all. He would need a road map to find his way there. We have also heard from the member for Caloundra. There are a number of lawyers in this House and there are some people who have probably practised law for longer than the member for Kawana has been on this earth. Let us look at some background.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! If the member for Kawana wants to interject, please do so from your seat.

Mr HOOLIHAN: We have heard about all of the nonconsultation. I am still a member of the Law Society. I have been a practising lawyer since 1980 and I worked in the court system for 20 years before that. I have seen both sides of the operation of the court. The biggest problem for courts is litigants either appearing for themselves and not knowing what to do or 'lawyers' going into court and completely messing up the whole system. They ask for adjournments and waste time and effort.

These fees will ensure that people are ready for trial when the trial is ready to go. It will also assist people to go into alternative areas, as the member for Toowoomba North said. The majority of trials today are either resolved by mediation or by paying retired judges to hear them. I am talking in the order of $5,000 to $10,000 a day just to have a retired judge to be there. They are commercial cases.

There are no fee rises in the Magistrates Court under this regulation. I would remind members—and particularly those who are not lawyers—that every practising lawyer is admitted to the Supreme Court. Under section 118 of the Supreme Court of Queensland Act—and members can read this in the explanatory notes to the regulation if they wish—under the rules for court there is a provision relating to the consent of the rules committee established under the act. Section 120 of the Supreme Court of Queensland Act provides that the Governor in Council may make regulations for matters including the fees and costs and how fees, costs and fines are to be received and dealt with.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr HOOLIHAN: Let us keep the echoes out of this. The member for Kawana had his opportunity to say what he wanted to say. If he wants to show some real manners in this place, let him sit there in silence. The member for Kawana would do very well to consult with the rules committee of the Supreme Court. The rules committee was consulted about this. All members of the Bar Association are admitted as officers of the court and are bound by the rules of the court that are made. The rules committee has approved the amendments to the Uniform Civil Procedure Rules.

Those opposite waffled on about being worried about raising only $3 million. The provision of justice today will be provided in high-tech courts. In case anyone has not been down George Street, I can tell them that the new courts are just about ready to start their decades of service. There will be a legal precinct for the Magistrates Court and two new District and Supreme Court buildings. They will have mediation rooms, closed-circuit television facilities and all of the necessary accommodation to provide first-class, world-class legal services. The budget for that was $570 million. To stand up in this House and suggest that an additional $3 million will advance the building of courts is a nonsense.

Mr Bleijie: It's not going to that court.

Mr HOOLIHAN: That is right. It is not going to it. It is part and parcel of the provision of justice. The member for Kawana would not know about that.

As I said, the fees in the Magistrates Court are not being increased. Because of the changes in jurisdiction, the majority of litigants in Queensland appear in the Magistrates Court. The jurisdictions were increased last year. Those people still have that access.

The other change made is with regard to the reduction in fees available to people who really need access to courts. This is set out in the regulation. The reduced fee is $100. That reduced fee ensures that those people who need access to justice can get that access to justice. If one reads the new regulation and the amendments that it makes to the 2009 regulation one would also note that the continuing fee is not payable if the matter is set down for less than one day.

Those increases—and no-one is saying that they like increases and we are very mindful that those increases might fall upon those who really need access to justice—have been kept to a minimum, or nil in the case of the Magistrates Court. The fees are canted towards large corporations and it clearly sets out that that aligns with the Federal Court. We heard some comparison with some other states but we did not hear a comparison for those higher jurisdiction courts. It does align those fees. Most of the fees relate to high-end legal services. In terms of the regulation, I support the regulation and I oppose the disallowance.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (8.09 pm): At the outset, can I say that I am not a solicitor—and I am thankful for that—and I have never been to the Supreme Court, and I really never want to go as a person involved in a court case. I am speaking in this debate because I am concerned about the quantum of the increase that is being proposed. We have heard often that there is a great deal less concern if government fees across-the-board rise at the same rate as CPI, but it does always present a more concerning case when the increase is more—and in this case it is significantly more.

I am happy to admit that I do not understand the interplay between different jurisdictions of the court and which organisations the solicitors, the lawyers and the silks are involved in and who talks to whom. I do know that the Bar Association wrote a letter to the honourable Deputy Premier and Attorney-General—and I thank the member for Kawana for providing me with a copy of that letter from the Bar Association—in which they set out very clearly and articulately the concerns they hold in relation to these fee increases. Their concerns are not presented in a smart alec way; they are presented very graciously to the Attorney-General.

I noted the interjection from the Attorney-General, and I am sure he will elaborate on his interjection—

Mr Lucas: I didn't say anything.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: Sorry, it was a previous interjection in relation to nobody liking a fee increase. This interjection happened when the member for Kawana was speaking—sorry. I look forward to the Attorney-General elaborating on that interjection and explaining the increases from his perspective, but on the basis of the information that I have at this time I am certainly very concerned about the quantum of the increases.

The member for Toowoomba North said that the majority of workers compensation claims are now being settled by mediation. I would certainly be interested in the statistics to back that up. I know that people who have to go to court for workers compensation matters—unless they go on a no-win, no-fee basis, and even in that instance they can face costs—are usually in difficult financial straits. They have often been off work for a long time which results in reduced workers compensation payments and therefore they as individuals or families are struggling financially, so increased court fees of the amounts that are in the regulation are significant amounts for them to be able to accommodate.

The Bar Association expressed a number of concerns, some of which have already been commented on. They were concerned that they received notification of the regulation after it had been to the Governor in Council. They were aggrieved by the avoidance of consultation, and they stated—

... the Office of the Director General of Justice and Attorney-General knew of our interest in what had only been mentioned to us in passing as a proposal.

The Bar Association had indicated an interest in being consulted. I believe the member for Caloundra also referred to this next paragraph in the letter, where the Bar Association referred to the 'implications of substance' of the increase and stated that there had been a 50 per cent increase in fees

that had been revised last in only July 2010. This is a large increase and it comes on the heels of an increase in July. They stated that there was an increase in the daily fee for hearings from $810 to $1,800. That is a huge increase.

I think this next bit is concerning because the community looks at this parliament and the government and expects it to be subject to the same set of rules. I will give an example from a different sphere altogether but using the same principle as is espoused in this letter. Landowners accept that they have to look after noxious weeds on their properties but they get angry if the government, as an adjoining landowner of forestry or national parks, does not apply that same rule to themselves and the landowners are given greater costs to control weed that they receive from the government's land. The Bar Association stated—

Cynically again, the only body exempt from these fees or the filing fees is the State where it is litigating as a court user.

There is a resentment in the community that—

Mr Hoolihan interjected.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: The member for Keppel says, 'That's not right,' and I am sure the Attorney-General will correct me and the Bar Association if that is wrong, but that is what they stated in the letter. I quote—

What possible justification could there be for all that?

They are talking about the increases.

Worse still, setting down fees and hearing fees have been introduced.

So there is a new fee. They continue—

There is little scope for reduction or exemption.

Then they say—

Cynically again, the only body exempt from these fees or the filing fees is the State where it is litigating as a court user.

If that is not accurate, I would appreciate that correction.

Mr Lucas: What share of the costs of litigation do you think the state pays? This is a minuscule amount of the total $1 billion budget that we have.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: Then I would appreciate that in your reply. The Bar Association gave two examples which the member for Kawana summarised. The first example was of a homeowner where the increase in fees would be $2,660, and the second example was of a businessman where the increase would be $5,325. They are separate cases and there are no doubt separate conditions around those cases. This is a significant amount of money.

The member for Keppel talked about litigants appearing for themselves and messing it up and people going to court ill-prepared. Often where there is an additional cost involved, rather than fixing that problem it exacerbates the problem because people who feel aggrieved may attempt to cut costs in other ways. The letter from the Bar Association said—

There are many personal injury plaintiffs who will not trigger any of the reduced fee opportunities. Most injured persons attempt to return to work, even if part-time. Many have savings. Means testing would remove many of them from the reduced fee categories.

Again, I emphasise that those people who have been off work for a long period of time because of work injuries are the ones who are least able to find the money to mount these cases. The other matter I want to raise relates to the exemptions. Again, the Bar Association said—

The opportunity for gaining a reduced fee provided by the regulation is narrow, being confined, in effect, to pensioners or those with government benefit cards, or also those with a legal aid certificate.

As to the latter opportunity—

that is, the legal aid certificate—

again it is a cynical inclusion in the regulation given that civil legal aid in this state for superior court litigation has been non-existent for the last 25 years, the profession having to take up the slack with pro bono and speculative briefing.

That again will add a layer of frustration to those people who use this court process.

I am happy to listen to the response from the Attorney-General, particularly in relation to the matters raised by the Bar Association. In my time in this parliament I have not known the Bar Association to be frivolous objectors to matters that are raised in relation to their area of expertise. I believe that this letter was written in a genuine attempt to get some consideration by the Attorney-General. I look forward to his response to these matters prior to the vote.

Mr MOORHEAD (Waterford—ALP) (8.19 pm): I rise to speak against the motion of disallowance and to support the new fee structure introduced by the Uniform Civil Procedure (Fees) and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2011.

Mr Lucas: Tell us about the record of conservative governments in abolishing common law claims for workers.

Mr MOORHEAD: We might get to access to justice and I will talk about workers compensation as raised by the member for Gladstone. There are two streams of argument being put by the opposition tonight. One is a process of consultation, which has by far been the majority of the complaint made, and the other one—a very small amount—has actually been to the substance of the regulation and the question of whether it does actually pose an obstacle to people gaining access to justice in this state, and I put it to the House tonight that it does not. Like everyone else in this place, my constituents talk to me about the cost-of-living pressures that they face. They talk to me about their electricity bills and I tell them that we have taken the ambulance levy off their bill. They talk to me about their water bills and I explain that we have cut the retail increases by capping them at CPI. I talk to my constituents about the carbon tax and I am happy to explain the generous compensation package in the Clean Energy Future package.

But do members know the one thing they have never asked me about? Court fees for the District Court and Supreme Court, because for the people that I represent this is not something that stands in the way of their access to justice. The people who I represent cannot get the money to go and see a solicitor in the first place. These people rely on the good work of community legal centres, Legal Aid and solicitors doing pro bono work to get basic levels of advice. They do not go around issuing District Court and Supreme Court claims and statements of claim. They want basic advice to protect their rights. What they want is basic levels of legal advice to help them through their everyday life. They want more Legal Aid funding.

In reality, if those opposite are concerned about access to justice, they should be talking to our federal colleagues and asking them for more funding for Legal Aid. That is the thing that addresses those real barriers to justice in our community. We in this place also have an obligation to make sure that we are making best use of taxpayer resources. The court system is an expensive system to run. While the system needs to be there when people need it, we need to ensure that it is being used judicially, for want of a better word. There have been some recent media articles on the new fee structure which have included some examples to try to highlight the effects of this fee structure, and later in my contribution I will address some of those issues.

I did want to raise the issue of workers compensation as raised by the Deputy Premier and the member for Gladstone. The first thing I would say is that it is pretty hard to have access to justice when you have taken away all of the common law rights, which is what tory governments around this country have done when they have had the chance. It was significantly wound back in 1997 by Santo Santoro.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr MOORHEAD: The member for Toowoomba South was here then. He supported Santo Santoro taking away journey claims from workers. He supported taking away common law claims. There is no access to justice when you take away people's rights full stop.

Mr Bleijie: Or when you make it so unaffordable they can't get in there.

Mr MOORHEAD: I take that interjection. The issue that the member for Gladstone has rightly raised is that most people who participate in workers compensation claims are doing it on a no-win, no-pay basis. That is not because they think it is some sort of wonderful experience. People take up no-win, no-pay because they do not have other options. They do not have the money to do it. They often pay higher rates, and I understand the legal professional rules allow them to do that. In that case the outlays are generally met by the firm taking up the case and that means that workers can access this system without it being a barrier to accessing justice for their personal injury claim. A few hundred dollars here and there on a District Court claim is not the barrier to justice. They have been very fortunate to have the system of no-win, no-pay and I will defend that as an important way that people on working-class incomes get a chance to recover moneys from some traumatic injuries that they have suffered.

We have to recognise that what we are talking about here is something that very few people will ever come in contact with—that is, it is predominantly people pursuing commercial claims and it only applies to civil matters heard in the District and Supreme Court with regard to people who are making a claim of $150,000 or more, and even then the setting down fees only apply to trials for matters that are going to take longer than one day. The reality is that this fee targets a very small number of participants and focuses on those people who should be quite mindful about the use of the taxpayers' resources that they are affording themselves to in participating in the justice system.

Mr Bleijie: Are you saying they shouldn't be allowed to go to court?

Mr MOORHEAD: Sorry, member for Kawana?

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind members to direct their comments through the chair.

Mr MOORHEAD: Like everything else, there needs to be a degree of flexibility, and that is contained in the fee reduction provisions which have been expanded from the traditional process for waiver that has been available through the registrar. This means that individuals and corporations now can apply to have fees reduced or waived in positions of financial hardship. So those persons who can show to the court that they cannot afford to pay the fees that are being charged in this regulation can put

their case to the registrar. Just the other day I helped a constituent of mine who was applying to the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal to make a claim in the domestic building work area that she could not afford. I helped her put together her claim for waiver and that was accepted. This has been a long-running process in that people who cannot afford those court fees are given the opportunity to put their case and have court fees waived. The reality is that the barrier is actually in the legal professional fees that people cannot afford, and this was my point from day one: the barrier to justice is actually getting access to solicitors.

In the short time I have available to me I want to address some of the media reports. The first example in some of those media reports is a small business owner seeking to recover a bad debt. As I have already said, that will only be a bad debt that goes beyond $150,000 and for a trial that goes beyond a day.

Mr Lucas: It would be pretty interesting to liquidate a debt that went to the District Court for a trial beyond a day.

Mr MOORHEAD: I take the interjection from the Deputy Premier. Most small businesses are availing themselves of the small claims procedure that is available through QCAT to recover small debts that are outstanding to them. In terms of flood victims, most flood victims need assistance to go through the significant Ombudsman process that is available with the insurance industry and that often takes a significant period of time. It takes a great deal of assistance before they come to the court process. Again, if they are not in a position to pay for the fees outlined in this regulation, they are entitled to apply for a waiver and, if they cannot afford the fees, it is likely they will get that waiver. Court fees are a very small part of bringing a legal action, but in most cases the significant legal professional fees will far outweigh the costs that we are considering in this regulation.

The Queensland government has invested a significant amount in the state's justice system. It is reasonable to expect that a person bringing a civil claim in the District or Supreme Court should contribute to the cost of court services that they use. It is an expectation of taxpayers that their resources should be used wisely, and imposing a fee for using the court for longer than one day encourages parties to work hard to resolve their disputes or at least minimise the number of issues in dispute that need to be determined by a court. This results in a much more efficient use of the court's time and a much more efficient use of the money provided by the taxpayers that we represent.

Dr DOUGLAS (Gaven—LNP) (8.30 pm): I share the concerns of the member for Gladstone, the speakers on our side and particularly the shadow Attorney-General. I particularly share the member for Gladstone's concern in relation to the issue of the Attorney-General's response to the Bar Association and the Queensland Law Society. Has the price of justice been raised beyond what is reasonable? Have Queenslanders just been delivered the end result of a 20-year experiment with Labor's governance? Could it be that we are now seeing that which the great socialists condemned those class enemies—capitalists—for doing? Could it be also said that to raise the cost of the District Court fees to $1,125 and Supreme Court fees to $2,500 is really just a tax? The answers to those four questions must be, on the basis of evidence, yes. It is a resounding yes.

Certainly Richard Douglas SC, Queensland Bar Association President, thinks so; his argument being that the fee impost was, in his words, 'in respect of services to which they ought to be entitled in the event that usually, through no particular choice, they are forced to litigate.' He is a very reasonable fellow. He has 30 years experience at the bar. He has a formidable intellect, he is nonpartisan and certainly, yes, he is my brother. Queensland Law Society President Bruce Doyle went further. He said, 'Access to the Supreme and District Courts should not be limited to those who have the wealth to pay the new fees.'

Before government members start claiming that the selected fees were due for a rise, to book a day in court now costs $1,000—just to book a day. A hearing fee starts at $450 per day and there has been a 50 per cent increase in the cost of filing documents to start legal actions. Amazingly, claims involving less than $150,000 will be exempt. Who goes to court for less than $150,000 anymore? The answer is very few since mediation is widespread—as it should be—and wasting more money than the sum actually owed on legal jousting is an appalling waste of money. It is very expensive, but the new charge is an obscenity.

There is no evidence from the Attorney-General that these fees are justified. No, he did not consult with stakeholders either. His stated reasons were that he did not need to, he is just bringing the fees into line with the other states. What about legal aid? Most people cannot get it. It is needed to fund the Murri Court. I do not know. I do not think so. From his statement, most are on a no-win, no-fee. It is not all PI. It is a sustainable planning instrument. This is all just garbage. It is nothing other than a desperate grab for cash when there are not many hollow logs left to raid for Labor in government. Even the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties president, Michael Cope, said it was 'a revenue grab'.

I am really struggling with the Attorney-General's interjection that he appears to believe that justice should be a user-pays experiment. I am a doctor. We charge fees.

Government members interjected.

Dr DOUGLAS: We will talk about fees. We have to submit to the independent arbiter and be benchmarked, but the government most commonly chooses to ignore those fees. I have to do this because I am obligated under registration rules to do so. You are not. Do you know what? You need to be.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Order! Through the chair, please, member for Gaven.

Dr DOUGLAS: The extension to the argument raised by the Attorney-General that in this state the user should pay for the services provided would then imply that we have a $13 billion health system and he would then expect that people going through the hospital system would pay. Because the fees are only minuscule—are they not, Minister?—so they should be charged when they go to the hospital.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Gaven, through the chair.

Dr DOUGLAS: I defer to you, Mr Deputy Speaker. These fees are unreasonable. This sort of argument is a specious, ridiculous argument. What are the GST, income tax and line item fees for? This is a ridiculous argument. The logic is fatally flawed. The Attorney-General's statement was, 'I think Queenslanders would expect business to pay something towards the cost of charges, the courts and their staff, just as they are to pay big money for their legal representation or commercial mediations.' I say to the Attorney-General that people are paying big money, but the fees must be reflective of the reasonable charges for recovery of costs and professional items. They are already spending a fortune. By choosing to put in a 50 per cent surcharge his role is nothing other than that of a loan shark. It gets worse when the Attorney-General went on to state, 'Of course the Bar Association would oppose that, just like mining companies oppose increased mining royalties.' I say to the Attorney-General that the Bar Association opposed these fees because they were unfair, they were unjustified and they were a tax. States are not allowed to charge taxes.

Finally, mining companies do not oppose mining royalties. What they have opposed is the mining resource rent tax, which is uniformly derided because it is conceptually flawed and it is not justified. Royalties reflect that the state owns the resource and charge a fee to extract it. Companies pay it before they sell the product. We all need our miners to keep on doing what they do best since the chance of building a successful mine that is paying us royalties is a one-in-a-million risk. The Attorney-General has no idea what he is doing and is using any sort of argument to justify his actions. The LNP has stated that it will fight these actions and completely review fees and charges if elected and will work with stakeholders.

Mr Lucas interjected.

Mr Dick interjected.

Dr DOUGLAS: The Attorney-General is making a lot of noise over there, as is the education minister, who is a barrister as well.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Education will cease interjecting.

Dr DOUGLAS: Why not join us? One is a solicitor; one is a barrister. They may need the work post the election. Their clients will be forever grateful. The answer to those first four questions should be no. Consult with the Bar Association and the Law Society and negotiate a reasonable fee. To feign some understanding of why most have chosen to object to it is to demonstrate their own inadequacies. That is what the member for Gladstone was saying. Look to your own argument and reflect on it. It does not hold substance.

Mr RYAN (Morayfield—ALP) (8.37 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate regarding the motion of disallowance of the Uniform Civil Procedure (Fees) and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2011. Despite the jokes that are often directed at the legal profession, I am very proud to put on the record that prior to my election to this parliament I was a legal practitioner. Although I no longer practise law, I continue to be a member of the Queensland Law Society. I am proud to be a lawyer because at the heart of being a lawyer is the concept of respect for institutions, including a respect for the parliament and the courts and a sense of duty. If we look closely at the reasons behind this new fee structure as proposed in the amending regulation, we would see that the reasons justify a new fee structure and we would see that we all have a sense of duty to a large extent to support the amending regulation.

The explanatory notes to the amending regulations state—

> The benefit of this amendment is to prescribe new fees and increase some existing fees for court services. It is anticipated that the introduction of these fees will improve the parties' preparation prior to a hearing or trial, improve planning and use of available court time, encourage greater use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms; and potentially remove unnecessary proceedings from the courts. The Amendment Regulation provides for an expanded fee reduction regime to ensure justice continues to be accessible to all who need it.

If we think for one moment about it, rather than just shooting from the hip like the member for Kawana and other members opposite, we would think that this new fee structure will encourage greater use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and will thereby support our courts by potentially removing unnecessary proceedings from the courts. Reducing the pressure on our courts will indirectly improve access to justice.

Let us also put it in this context: the new fee structure, set out in this amending regulation, does not apply to matters before the Magistrates Court or QCAT. Those fee structures are not changed by this amending regulation. What is more, this new fee structure applies predominantly to commercial matters before the Supreme and District courts. As the Deputy Premier has correctly noted, very few Queenslanders will be involved in such matters. If we were to take a poll at the Caboolture South IGA or if we were to have a chat around the barbecue on Saturday night, we would find that very few people would have anything to do with a commercial matter before the Supreme or District courts.

What is more, one of the changes opposed by the opposition is the insertion of new section 4(4) to clarify that a liquidator, administrator or other person acting for or on behalf of a corporation must pay the fee payable by a corporation. That is fair and reasonable in the circumstances, but it is opposed by the opposition. Another change opposed by the opposition is the expanded fee reduction regime. This expanded structure will ensure access to justice continues to be supported by this new fee structure. Again, this is fair and reasonable in the circumstances, but it is opposed by the opposition.

Further, the new fee structure will support an increase in recurrent funding for two key access to justice programs. On 15 June 2011, when the Deputy Premier first informed the House about the new fees, he said that the new fees are estimated to provide an additional $3 million per annum to fund two important justice programs, the Murri Court program and the Queensland Indigenous Alcohol Diversion Program. The Murri Court is a key part of the Queensland government's Indigenous justice strategy. An independent evaluation by the Australian Institute of Criminology found that the Murri Court makes an important contribution to addressing overrepresentation by providing a culturally appropriate sentencing process, improving relationships between the criminal justice system and Indigenous communities, improving support for participants pre and post sentence and improving court appearance rates.

I take this opportunity to thank the Deputy Premier for joining me at Caboolture last week for the sashing of Murri Court members. The Caboolture Murri Court does exceptional work. I am very pleased that this new fee structure will support its work of promoting access to justice and delivering real justice outcomes for our community. This is fair and reasonable in the circumstances, but it is opposed by the opposition.

There is also a strong link between alcohol consumption and the appearance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system. The Queensland Indigenous Alcohol Diversion Program aims to reduce alcohol related crime by providing intensive alcohol treatment and case management to Indigenous adults involved in the criminal justice or child protection systems because of alcohol misuse. The Queensland Indigenous Alcohol Diversion Program was independently evaluated by Success Works. This evaluation identified a number of benefits, including improved health and social outcomes for participants.

In addition, the evaluation suggests that the program impacts on offending by reducing the likelihood of serious reoffending in the short and medium term, diverting offenders from high-level penalties and reducing the number of offences committed post graduation. The relatively small amount of revenue raised through the new court fee structure will support important justice initiatives aimed at reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system. This is of direct benefit to the Queensland community. It is fair and reasonable in the circumstances, but it is opposed by the opposition.

The Queensland government is committed to providing a fair, safe and just society for all Queenslanders. I support the amending regulation and I oppose the disallowance motion.

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—LNP) (8.44 pm): When you are broke, at times you can do some cruel and silly things. When a government is as broke as this government is, things such as this massive increase in costs arise as part of the problems that it has. When you are staring down the barrel of $85 billion of debt and when you are staring down the barrel of approximately $600,000 an hour in interest charges, you do things such as this. Instead of properly funding the Murri Court or the Indigenous alcohol rehabilitation and counselling system, which are good initiatives and should be funded, you look for ways to slug people who are seeking access to justice because you are broke.

We have seen some outstanding examples of what has happened under this broke government. A petrol tax of approximately 10c a litre has been imposed on every Queenslander. Never before have Queenslanders had to pay that tax. We have seen the sell-off of $15 billion of income-earning assets. Those assets were earning more income than the interest they saved, but they had to be sold off to try to retrieve our AAA credit rating. At the last election the government was facing a debt of $65 billion. Having sold off $15 billion worth of assets, we have a debt of $85 billion. Electricity prices have increased, the cost of groceries has gone up and the costs of drivers' licences and car registration have increased. In Queensland the cost-of-living increases can mostly be sheeted home to the financial mismanagement of the state government and its massive debt.

This disallowance motion relates to a smaller matter, but it deals with the very important principle of access to justice. People should be able to seek justice at a reasonable and affordable price. Even the member for Keppel said that people should be able to access proper legal advice and use the system to get the best result possible. However, many people will be virtually priced out of the system by cost increases of 50 per cent and the imposition of totally new charges. It behoves a good opposition to stand up to cruel increases such as this.

If government members sat on this side of the House, I can imagine that they would stand up in absolute horror at a 50 per cent increase in fees and new charges. They would be saying, 'How can people get justice? What are you doing?' Instead, we have one after another of these contrite Labor lawyers standing up and saying, 'I am a lawyer,' and then coming up with all these subtle reasons for supporting the regulation. Half of them are embarrassed to do it, but they have all these subtle reasons for increasing the fees by 50 per cent and imposing new charges. They are letting down the principles that their party once had. Once, the Labor Party stood up for people's right to justice and the idea that working people should pay modest charges.

Of course, we have heard the grandaddy of all excuses—that is, this will harmonise us with the other states. Let us take ourselves down to the lowest common denominator. Once upon a time, Queenslanders were proud to say that our costs of living were lower. We left money in people's pockets to pay their kids' school fees, go on holidays, buy clothes for their kids or advance their family somehow. Under this broke government, which has massive interest repayments that it will probably never be able to handle, these sorts of imposts are coming down. This is another shining example, although on a smaller level, of increases such as the petrol tax and the massive increases in the cost of electricity, drivers' licences, registration charges and so on. All the ministers are trawling through their departments to find something that will bring in some income to pay the interest charge of $600,000 an hour, which we will be staring down the barrel at for years to come.

The people of Queensland have a right to a reasonable system of justice, but they are going to be penalised and pinged by this government. It has been pathetic to hear the excuses of those opposite. I heard the minister interject, saying that this is only a minuscule amount of the $1 billion budget. It is not a minuscule amount for someone who needs justice and is trying to take a matter to court. They have to decide whether or not they should do that, even though they need justice. Tonight we have heard examples given of people involved in flood insurance claims or small business matters. While they have to consider whether or not they can afford to go through the court system and whether or not they can afford the time away from their businesses, this government will slug them with extra charges.

My colleague the member for Morayfield has tried to say that he was a lawyer. He should be sticking up for the people in his electorate who may wish to go to court. What if the good people of Caboolture want to go to court and say, 'I cannot afford this; there are all these different levels of charges and on top of that I have to pay the legal fees—the cost of the lawyer or barrister'?

This is another example of an over-the-top increase that has been brought about by a government that is broke. People can understand a modest increase, an increase at CPI or similar. There might be some small additional charge that has to be brought in for some other reason. But when you get 50 per cent increases and totally new charges, that is over the top. It is not fair on the people of Queensland. The people of Queensland seeking justice should not be punished for the incompetence of this government. If this government was not broke it would be funding the Murri Court system because it is a good system and it would be funding the Indigenous alcohol counselling system because it is a good system, not trying to take money from people who are trying to access the justice system and using that to fund another part of the justice system. I do not speak about that part of the justice system they are accessing, but they are taking it away to fund another part of the justice system.

I think this parliament should start to consider a few principles. The principle of justice is a very important principle. There are some things that the state should always do. Things like justice, health and education are the cornerstones of what we do in the state. It is important to provide those principles to people at a reasonable or modest cost. In some cases, such as in education and our public health system, they have always been free. Our justice system has always been affordable. However, if we place it outside the reach of people then we are breaching the promise and the principles of what we were elected to this parliament to do.

One of the most important things in a society is to have a fair system of justice. All of the lawyers from the other side who have spoken should be imbued with those principles. They should have learned them at university or through their particular societies and alumnis. Those principles are that we stand up for justice, it should be accessible, it should be reasonable and it should be modest in cost. Prince or pauper, you should be able to access that system of justice.

I support this disallowance motion that has been moved by our shadow minister. It is a sorry day in this parliament, because once upon a time people from the legal profession or from their side of the House would have stood up for people having access to fairly priced justice. However, members opposite have succumbed to the financial mismanagement that has beleaguered their party, that has virtually destroyed the grassroots of their party and has delivered to the people of Queensland an interest bill that in about two years time will amount to $600,000 an hour—every hour of the day, every

hour of the week and every hour of the month. What a pathetic situation we have come to and what a pathetic argument was mounted by those members of the government today in trying to defend these unfair and massive increases.

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State) (8.53 pm), in reply: The disallowance motion moved by the honourable member for Kawana referred at significant length to the views of members of the profession regarding the issue of increasing the fees for filing in the Supreme Court and District Court matters and other things. Much has been made about the nature of the consultation in relation to the quantum of those increases. I make this simple point: it is self-evident that when one is increasing a fee such as this, that is a matter ultimately of government policy. You do not go out with mining companies and say, 'Listen, we want to increase royalties. By the way, this is how we are going to do it.' These are matters that are decisions of governments and, ultimately, they are subject to criticism if people do not like them. To suggest, however, that there are matters of criticism in relation to the consultation aspect is simply wrong. To suggest that this government is not committed to funding the court system, and in particular the Supreme and District courts, is simply wrong. You only have to go down to the other end of George Street to see $570 million worth of funding for the Supreme and District courts.

Mr Bleijie: $600,000!

Mr LUCAS: There has been a saving of $30,000 through efficient work. There is $570 million of funding for the Supreme and District courts for their premises for the future—for the judges, for the barristers, for the solicitors, for the litigants. That money is there plain for anyone to see.

It is a ridiculous assertion from the member for Gaven—and I usually enjoy what he says, but this was beyond even his wildest contributions—that this is user pays and, therefore, it is an extension of what we might do in health and the like. There is a world of difference between a court system where filing fees have always been charged—admittedly not in relation to hearing fees or setting down fees, but it has never been a principle in the civil court system that there have not been fees paid. Indeed, the majority of work in the criminal system is, in fact, paid for by clients, unlike the majority of work in the health system, which is publicly funded. That was quite a specious and ridiculous claim. I say simply this: I would rather the money come with a modest contribution that, in the case of most people in the street, would be paid for by insurance companies at the conclusion of matters than having that come out of their schools, hospitals and Police Service.

This new court fee structure, of course, was in the Uniform Civil Procedure (Fees) and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2011. Prior to the introduction of this new court fee we generally did have the lowest fees in Australia compared with the larger Australian states such as New South Wales, Western Australia and South Australia. One has to ask why, though, would you pay big dollars for your lawyers in these matters—and I will get to the amounts in a minute—but not a contribution towards the court matter? Do you know who pays for the courts? I do not pay for them personally. The taxpayer pays for the courts. The broad taxpayer, the four million people in Queensland, pay for the courts. The greater the extent to which the costs are not recovered, then the taxpayers do not recover that cost. We are spending taxpayers' money here.

In addition, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia have setting down and hearing fees in their Supreme and District courts. The amendment regulation achieves fee parity with the Federal Court for matters of shared jurisdiction under the Corporations Act and the Admiralty Act by introducing relatively modest setting down and hearing fees for matters of non-shared jurisdiction in the Supreme Court. The Queensland court fee structure is aligned with the fee structure, broadly, in other states.

It should be remembered that civil litigation in the District Court will concern sizeable funds—disputes for amounts exceeding $150,000 up to $750,000. We have heard all of these arguments such as those about flood claims. Any flood claim up to $280,000 is able to be heard without legal process before the insurance ombudsman. That is where it is done. That is where we are providing free support for people through Caxton and Legal Aid. Do not forget about that furphy. The hearing fee and the filing fee do not apply for matters of less than a day. I will tell honourable members about debt matters because I did plenty of them as a lawyer. If you have a liquidated debt—in other words, a debt that is certain—and you are taking action against someone, it must be a pretty funny old debt that runs for more than a day in court. Let us remember everybody else who goes to court in the Supreme and District Courts with large corporations. It costs about $6,000 a day to run a court and other than the filing fee they are paying no contribution towards that; the taxpayer is paying. So the shopper at the Wynnum IGA is paying for the property dispute between the developers and whoever else. That is what is happening. It is not unreasonable.

Based on figures for the 2009-10 financial year, which are publicly available to all in the *Report on Government Services 2011*, 82,000 matters were filed in the Supreme, District and Magistrates courts. I say that 15.8 per cent of civil matters filed in the Supreme and District Courts are those to which the new fees will apply. The data in the report indicates that the Magistrates Court, where these fees are not charged—they are CPI-ed each year—deals with the majority of these civil matters. There is no change to that other than CPI.

Under the new fee structure, matters which may be brought in either the Federal Court or the Queensland Supreme Court attract the same fees. That is important because up until now in Corporations Act matters you could have companies bringing applications in the Queensland Supreme Court instead of the Federal Court. So the Queensland taxpayer was picking up the cost of that rather than the federal taxpayers across the Commonwealth. They were forum shopping. That is how it happens.

We are all used to the life of debating in this place and elsewhere, and everyone is quoting whatever fee on whatever line item that is higher or lower. I must say that we have not had much quoting of Supreme Court fees; it has all been about the District Court. But, even with the introduction of the new fee structure, Queensland's Supreme Court fees remain in the low- to mid-range when compared with the fees in other Australian states. For example, the filing fee for an individual in the Queensland Supreme Court for matters where jurisdiction is not shared with the Federal Court is $750 compared with $926 in New South Wales, $2,126 in South Australia and $784 in Western Australia. That is what the comparison is there.

Mr Bleijie: Tell us the comparison with the District Court.

Mr LUCAS: The member is doing exactly what I said. The daily hearing fee for an individual in the Queensland Supreme Court for matters where jurisdiction is not shared with the Federal Court is charged for trials or hearings lasting two or more days. In other words, you only pay a hearing fee if the trial goes for two or more days—not for a single-day matter. The daily hearing fee ranges from $500 a day for hearings lasting longer than one day but less than four days. So for a matter that goes up to two, three and four days it is $500 a day to $1,750 a day for hearings lasting over nine days. By comparison, in New South Wales daily hearing fees range from $737 to $2,384 and in South Australia the daily hearing fee is $2,126.

Importantly, in Queensland both setting-down and hearing fees are not payable on a one-day matter. By contrast, in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia the setting-down fee is payable even if the matter is to last only a day. In fact, even further than that, if the matter settles out of court at least 10 days before it goes to trial and the matter would have gone for two days or longer, you get 75 per cent of the fee back. Again, it is a smaller and smaller category—15 per cent of civil matters in the District and Supreme courts. So if they settle the matter at least 10 days before they go to court and the matter would have lasted more than two days, they get 75 per cent off. All of those things further and further restrict the number of people to whom it actually applies.

In relation to District Court fees, historically they have been 93 per cent of the Supreme Court fees. The District Court fees will now be 97 per cent of the Supreme Court fees. But let us have a look at the comparisons. In New South Wales, the setting-down fee in the District Court is $615 even if the hearing goes for one day. In Queensland, the hearing must go for more than two days and then the setting-down fee is $1,125. In Victoria, the setting-down fee includes the first day. In South Australia, the filing fee is $1,064 and there is a $1,064 daily hearing fee from day one.

According to ROGS, 6.6 per cent of civil matters in Queensland are heard in the Queensland District Court. It costs approximately $6,000 a day to run a proceeding in the District Court. The Supreme Court costs are marginally higher. Still, even with those fees the vast majority of those costs will be paid by the taxpayer—the costs of judges, the buildings, the bailiffs, the filing clerks and all of those people involved. In comparison, the total fees for a two-day trial in the District Court under the new fee structure would be $4,500 for a corporation and $2,250 for an individual.

I had a look at some figures in relation to what lawyers charge. According to some figures in October last year, the cost of Senior Counsel is $4,000 to $7,000 a day; the cost of junior counsel is $2,000 to $4,000; and the market rate for senior solicitors—who would be in the District and Supreme courts—would be $450 to $500 per hour. So if you look at the District Court fees, which on the second day of the hearing are $450 a day, the solicitor, let alone the barrister, is collecting that in an hour. I do not have a problem with them charging appropriately for their professional services. I do not have a problem with that because they are skilled. In fact, the legal profession probably more than just about any other profession has altruism in terms of representing people on a pro bono basis. One needs to acknowledge that.

By comparison, let us have a look at barristers' fees and solicitors' fees. A daily hearing fee from the second day equates to their hourly fee. Expert reports, doctors, engineers, town-planners—they cost hundreds of dollars. Again, look at that cost in comparison to this. According to the New South Wales Law Society, statistics show that more than 90 per cent of cases are settled before they reach the courts. So, again, we have 6.6 per cent of civil matters heard in the District Court and 90 per cent of them are settled beforehand. We know that because there is an increase in the use of alternative dispute resolution processes. For many civil matters now we have QCAT that can deal with matters rather than the traditional civil courts.

The vast majority of Queenslanders never go to court and in particular the District and Supreme courts. Insofar as most people that members in this House would represent go to the District and Supreme courts, they would be for personal injury claims, motor vehicle matters or master-servant matters. They are matters predominantly where fees are covered or carried in various ways which I will

go into in a second. It is funny when we have conservatives in this House talking about access to justice for people, because their hallmark has been the winding back of common law claims in master-servant actions throughout Australia. Santo Santoro got stuck into journey claims when he was the minister for industrial relations in this House. Don't you talk to me about what you would do if you were in government. You are not committing to not bringing in the fees, and we know that you would be straight into workers compensation in two seconds flat.

The new fee structure is intended to address a number of issues. Firstly, it will minimise forum shopping. Secondly, setting-down and daily hearing fees are not imposed until day two and thereon will encourage parties to settle their disputes prior to approaching courts, and it is important that we do that efficiently. The legal profession has spent a great deal of time on that in recent times. I have not practised now for 15 years and in that time more and more matters are settled by mediation. Do members know what happens when you go to a mediation? You pay for your lawyer, your barrister, your solicitor and who else do you pay for? The mediator, and you pay the full tote odds for the mediator, not part of the cost—the full tote odds. I do not have any problem with that, because that is a good way of dealing with matters and I do not have a problem with them charging for what they do. In fact, I was talking to one of my friends the other day who is lawyer about a mediation that he did. It was quite a significant matter. The mediator was paid for, his barrister was paid for—obviously he was charging—and they got a very good outcome. There is no problem with charging for that. There is no question about the mediator charging for that.

Early settlement is important. It saves time, cost and stress to all parties. Further, access to justice is enhanced by the fee reduction provisions. We have a number of things in here for people. First of all, the fee does not cut in many instances until the hearing goes on for subsequent days. Secondly, very few matters go to the District and Supreme courts. Thirdly, most of the matters settle. Fourthly, there are a number of areas either where people do not pay fees or where they are covered.

Most personal injury claims these days are on a no-win, no-fee basis. That means that, if you do not win, you do not pay the filing fee for those lawyers. Also, Legal Aid runs a civil law legal assistance scheme where you can seek them to pay your filing fees and other outgoings. There is also the ability to seek a reduction in your fees to a very modest amount—I think off the top of my head it is $100—if you meet the hardship provisions. Again, in the unlikely event that someone was in the Supreme Court or District Court and they were in a flood situation, the hardship provisions would potentially apply there. That is very significant. That also applies to non-profit organisations and corporations. Additionally in relation to the floods—and I have said this before—in cases involving $280,000 and below the Insurance Ombudsman can deal with them. Secondly, we have provided money to the Caxton Legal Centre—the insurance industry has as well—and Legal Aid has also provided representation for people. It is all there to provide support.

The new court fee structure represents an appropriate balance. It is not fair to expect taxpayers to meet the entire cost of supplying our court system when you are successful, even in that very small minority of matters. I can count on my hands the number of District Court matters that I had that actually went to trial. In fact, I can remember acting in a personal injuries claim against the member for Southport. He acted for the defendant and I acted for the plaintiff. We settled out of court on the day.

It is very uncommon for those matters to go to trial. Members who are lawyers will know that. Very experienced practitioners like the member for Toowoomba North will tell members that. Very experienced practitioners like the member for Keppel will tell members that. They will tell members that that is the case.

The main purpose of this regulation is to work towards the harmonisation of amounts charged, though, of course, they are not all equal; they are not all uniform. That is something that in the future others will examine or look at. This is about a fair contribution. I accept and acknowledge that the profession does not want to see increased fees. It is like tax: people do not want to pay for it.

Mr Bleijie: Who was at budget lockdown from the Law Society?

Mr LUCAS: Noela L'Estrange was, according to the advice that I am given—

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Order! Member for the Kawana, direct your comments through the chair.

Mr LUCAS:—invited to the budget lockdown.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kawana and the Deputy Premier will address their comments through the chair.

Mr LUCAS: The member would be aware that the president of the Law Society specially acknowledges my discussions with him in relation to the matter. The member would also be aware that he also acknowledges there were discussions with the department.

I do not want to get involved in a dispute with the profession because I respect the profession too much. I understand that it has issues when it comes to increases in court fees. But I say this to the people of Queensland: very few people will ever go before the Supreme Court or District Court in their

civil jurisdiction. Very few people will actually have matters in that jurisdiction that do not settle, if they are personal injuries claims, long before they get to court. Very few people will have matters in those courts and not have access, unless they are comparatively wealthy, to a no-win, no-fee arrangement if it is a personal injuries claim, to the civil law legal assistance scheme or to fee waiver, but there will be some people who, because of their comparative wealth, may not.

But it is not true to claim that everybody who ever goes to the Supreme Court or District Court does not have the capacity to pay a modest contribution towards the total cost of $6,000 a day. We know that their lawyers, quite reasonably, are expecting them to pay, if they are a silk, $5,000 or pay a solicitor $450 an hour. Let us have a sense of perspective in this. For that reason, I urge honourable members to reject the motion.

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

AYES, 33—Bates, Bleijie, Crandon, Cripps, Cunningham, Davis, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, Foley, Gibson, Hobbs, Hopper, Horan, Johnson, Langbroek, McArdle, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Pratt, Robinson, Seeney, Simpson, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Wellington. Tellers: Rickuss, Sorensen

NOES, 47—Attwood, Boyle, Choi, Croft, Darling, Dick, Farmer, Fraser, Hinchliffe, Hoolihan, Jarratt, Johnstone, Jones, Kiernan, Kilburn, Lawlor, Lucas, Male, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Reeves, Roberts, Robertson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Shine, Smith, Spence, Struthers, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson. Tellers: Keech, Grace

Resolved in the negative.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (9.18 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

North Queensland, Insurance Premiums

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—LNP) (9.18 pm): 'Beyond the 26th parallel' sounds like a movie title. In North Queensland, living beyond the 26th parallel—that is, anywhere north of Hervey Bay—has turned into something way more scary than any Hitchcock horror flick. Like that mother of all cyclones—Yasi—insurance premium renewals are now arriving in people's letterboxes and are blowing people away. Insurance brokers are struggling to find companies who are willing to underwrite policies, and premiums have risen by 60 per cent in 20 per cent of cases. Some have even risen by 300 per cent or more.

Pensioners living in North Queensland units have had last year's $400 premium skyrocket to $2,400. They are stressed because they cannot afford these extra costs. Farming communities and strata units have been perhaps the most affected, with previous larger insurance companies pulling out of North Queensland, withdrawing policies or not offering them at all. Coverage on strata title units built before 1985 has become the most difficult to obtain. Those companies who have not refused coverage outright have been extremely selective in what risks they are willing to take on or have made sure they have covered themselves by stipulating massive excess hikes. Some strata property owners are paying $70 to $100 per week to bodies corporate just to meet insurance costs, which are legislatively necessary.

North Queensland residents are now being heavily penalised for living beyond the 26th parallel, while this inept Labor government sits back and collects the increased stamp duty from these grossly enlarged premiums. What incentive is there for people to take out private insurance, especially in North Queensland, where people already pay more for everyday items that will not be able to be freighted in when the Bruce Highway is cut off by flooding anyway?

In a *Courier-Mail* advertisement on Monday, 5 September, one insurance company, Suncorp, stated that they had so far paid out $352 million in claims. That figure included $211.2 million on the South-East Queensland floods, $93.3 million on Cyclone Yasi and $47.5 million on the Central Queensland floods. That is just one insurance company—and members will notice that the weighting was towards the south.

While this government spruiked its $11 million donation to the $270 million Premier's Disaster Relief Appeal, it is actually set to rake in $44 million this year from the new flood levy. In addition, this opportunistic state Labor government is set to profit even further from flood and cyclone victims, with more than $500 million going into its consolidated revenue coffers through the collection of stamp duty on these excessive insurance premiums. About $528 million in insurance duty—mainly from house and contents policies—will be collected by this government in 2011-12, an increase of nine per cent on last year. We cannot control what Mother Nature dishes out. However, the system should be fair for all Queenslanders.

(Time expired)

Mount Isa Electorate, Rodeo Events

Mrs KIERNAN (Mount Isa—ALP) (9.22 pm): I rise to speak tonight about two significant events that were held recently held in the Mount Isa electorate: the 57th Ernest Henry Mining Curry Merry Muster Festival and the 53rd Xstrata Mount Isa Rotary Rodeo. These two events are premier and iconic events in my region and both are recipients of Queensland government funding. The government is a very proud supporter and sponsor of these events, which bring together the community and attract national and international visitors to celebrate and be enthralled by the skilled action at the rodeos. The rodeo in Mount Isa has a strong history and these two rodeos are two of the largest on the rodeo event calendar each year.

I think it is fair to say that the north-west is home to some of the great stockmen and drovers in our history, and the rodeo gives a great opportunity for people from all walks of life to see someone get on a bull or a bronc for eight seconds. I do not really understand what possesses them to do that, because I have to tell members that it is a pretty tough sport. Both of the rodeos have now grown to be much more than what they started out as 50-odd years ago. They are now absolute festivals and both go well over about 10 days between the two of them. It is a testament to the communities in Cloncurry and Mount Isa, the fantastic volunteer committees and the wonderful sponsorship and support. Both of these rodeos showcase everything that really is fantastic about our part of the world.

This year we were able to host the Queensland Rail Silver Spike competition. This competition started about 19 years ago in Cloncurry. It is an absolutely fantastic event. The Minister for Transport, Annastacia Palaszczuk, was there for the whole weekend. The Silver Spike competition showcases the bygone skills of manual rail track laying. It was fantastic to have this final—which I have to say was taken from the Ekka—at the Mount Isa rodeo. I would like to again commend all of the volunteers, the Rotary clubs, the local committees and the people who work tirelessly all year round for these wonderful events in my area.

Racing Queensland

Mr STEVENS (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (9.25 pm): It saddens me greatly that again I have to rise in this House to highlight the dysfunctional, deceitful antics of Racing Queensland in its dealings with the three racing codes in Queensland. We have seen the disgraceful abuse of Australian Workers Union funds being used without members' knowledge by its boss, Mr Bill Ludwig, in a $45,000 racing industry defamation case. We have seen the public deceit by the chairman of Racing Queensland, Bob Bentley, who said on 20 May this year—

> I confirm that the litigation between Mr Bill Ludwig and Mr Bill Carter was not funded by Racing Queensland ... but instead, by Mr Ludwig personally.

I repeat: personally. Since when did Bill Ludwig pay his personal bills with AWU cheques? What a deliberate, disgraceful and dishonest deception these government protected, Labor-mates board members are playing out on the racing industries of Queensland.

This latest Racing Queensland fiasco comes on top of the harness industry Bentley blunder, where he spitefully denied the Parklands harness-racing meeting cross-code betting which cost the Tatts Group Ltd company hundreds of thousands of dollars in TAB turnover. Tatts Group Ltd should be asking its board member Bentley why he is taking out his personal frustrations and vendettas to the detriment of TAB turnover, costing Tatts shareholders good money. Mr Bentley subsequently issued a statement, which I table.

Tabled paper: Media release, dated 26 August 2011, from Racing Queensland titled 'Response to Ray Stevens' [5254].

In that statement, he insisted the blame was on Mr Bill Dixon, chairman of BOTRA, representing the harness industry, who demanded the single, stand-alone harness meeting at Parklands. I table Mr Dixon's truthful response on the matter, denying Bentley's false half-truth, which indelibly illustrates the connivance and spin Mr Bentley puts on his public utterances to grease his way around the truth of his actions.

Tabled paper: Media release, dated 30 August 2011, from the Breeders, Owners, Trainers & Reinspersons Association (Qld) Inc. titled 'Response to Bob Bentley' [5255].

Mr Bentley's latest victims of unfair and unjust practice are the Queensland oncourse bookmakers, who are going to be taxed on their winning gross profits on a monthly basis. However, when the bookies make a monthly loss—and I, as a punter, try my very best to make that happen—they are not allowed to credit those losses against their winning, profitable months. Not even the Australian Taxation Office would countenance such an unfair and inequitable outcome. But unassailable, unelected and unbending Bob Bentley has instigated another tax that will see bookies wiped out in droves across the racecourses of Queensland.

Maybe it is his intent to get rid of bookies in Queensland to further TAB turnover as the only option available to punters, but that strategy is flawed and short-sighted as the bookies are a colourful and integral part of the flair and attraction of people to a racecourse in Queensland. Again, the choice is clear for the people involved in the racing industries of Queensland. At the next state election, whenever it is called, a vote for Bligh and the Labor government means they get Bentley, Bentley and more Bentley; or if they vote for the 'Can-do' Campbell team—

(Time expired)

Foster and Kinship Care; Ekka

Ms GRACE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (9.28 pm): It was a delight on Thursday, 11 August this year to join the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport at the Ekka to launch the new foster and kinship carer recruitment campaign. 'Foster a child. Foster a future' is one of the most far-reaching campaigns ever undertaken to find more foster carers. It aims to encourage more people to make a difference in the lives of Queensland's most vulnerable children and young people. Right now in Brisbane, 535 families have to share the care of 1,025 children and young people. We want everyone to get behind this worthwhile campaign. I take a moment to honour those foster-parents who are out there at the moment doing a fantastic job. It is more than just fostering a child; it is really about fostering a future. The campaign encourages community and sporting groups to promote the benefits of foster care to their members.

Prospective carers can find out everything they need to know on a brand-new website simply titled Foster a Future. The site has a step-by-step guide on how they can make a difference and become a real-life carer with stories and a self-assessment tool so they can work out how fostering may fit into their lives. We have also developed a CD tool kit with a range of posters, postcards and a short video giving organisations the tools to promote foster and kinship care, and what a great promotion this is. In addition, the campaign will be promoted with community service announcements on radio, in key national magazines and at a series of major sporting events.

Foster carers are an invaluable part of today's society, where more and more children are entering the child protection system. Currently in Queensland there are more than 8,000 children who cannot live safely at home. These kids need a safe and loving environment where they can reach their full potential. Carers provide that safe haven each and every day and night, signifying the important role they play in a child's life. They make an extraordinary difference to the young lives of Queenslanders. It is a rewarding experience and one I hope many more Queenslanders are eager to take part in. It is fantastic for them to do so and I encourage the residents in Brisbane Central to take up this fantastic offer.

The Ekka was once again a fantastic and very successful event, with more than 400,000 people coming together to celebrate the state's biggest and most loved event—the Royal Brisbane Show or the Ekka, as we all know it. In CEO Jonathan Tunney's words—

More than ever, the Ekka was truly about bringing the city and country together.

The statistics were fantastic. The traditional favourites remained popular, with 244,000 dagwood dogs sold, 10,000 CWA scones enjoyed and more than 100,000 Ekka strawberry sundaes eaten throughout the show, and the minister was one of those 100,000 who enjoyed one. The Ekka was fantastic once again.

Federal Member for Kennedy

Mr RICKUSS (Lockyer—LNP) (9.31 pm): I rise to talk about the 'Katterstrophic Party'. Mr Bob Katter, the MHR for Kennedy, stopped at Gatton on his way to Toowoomba on Tuesday to promote his 'Katterstrophic Party'. This would be 'Katterstrophic' for Australia, for Queensland and for the Lockyer. I have taken the time to write to Mr Katter on two occasions—first on 13 September 2010 and again on 18 November 2010, and I table those letters.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 13 September 2010, from the member for Lockyer to Mr Bob Katter MP, federal member for Kennedy, regarding the Toowoomba range bypass planning project [5256].

Tabled paper: Email, dated 18 November 2010, from the member for Lockyer to Mr Bob Katter MP, federal member for Kennedy, regarding an invitation to inspect the Toowoomba range [5257].

In both pieces of correspondence I have highlighted the fact that the Toowoomba range western freight corridor needs federal support. Mr Katter probably does not realise that most of the freight that is sent to the electorate of Kennedy, particularly the western areas of Mount Isa, Winton et cetera and the vast outback, and all of the freight from South-East Queensland must use the Toowoomba range and James Street—18 sets of lights! But did Mr Katter try to support the area or the transport companies that supply the goods to his area? No! Do members know why? I can say this because Queensland and Australia will get the response I received from Mr Katter—zilch, zero, nought! Mr Katter is as reliable as the 50c Chinese watch that he is always railing about. Mr Katter visited the Lockyer 11 years ago, when he was still a member of the National Party, and he was on about the same thing: 'We'll all be rooned,' said Katter in an accent most forlorn. 'We'll all be rooned before the year's out,' and I give my apologies to the poet John O'Brien. Mr Katter's 'Mad Hatter Katterstrophic Party'—no policies, no responsibilities, no response!

Of course he has the virtue of reliability and stability in The Queensland Party—the other member—in the member for Beaudesert, Mr McLindon. In this place this afternoon the member for Beaudesert said that the parties have to come clean before the next election. This is the same member for Beaudesert who at the last election parachuted into Beaudesert to do the numbers and win preselection, spent LNP money on the campaign, bit the hand that helped him and then decided to become an Independent! He then promoted The Queensland Party and then deserted The Queensland Party to join the Australian Party. The LNP supporters of Beaudesert are livid about this man. There is

an old saying, 'look for the money'. The member for Beaudesert and the 'Mad Hatter' Bob Katter realised the obscene funding regime introduced by this bankrupt government. At $8 a vote, it was too enticing not to have a go at building their coffers. So we have the zilch, zero, nought 'Katterstrophic Party' built by Bob Katter, the federal member who least attends parliament, and the 'Not known for anything, I belong to three different parties' group based on the member for Beaudesert. He will be a one-timer. He will be a oncer—the member for Beaudesert a oncer!

St Francis Xavier Catholic Primary School

Ms CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (9.34 pm): I am very committed to supporting the excellent work being achieved in schools within the Broadwater electorate, and today I want to acknowledge the efforts of staff and volunteers at St Francis Xavier Catholic Primary School at Runaway Bay. It is always a delight to visit this school. I am always greeted by smiling, polite students whose conversations always reflect their enthusiasm for learning and the pride that they hold in their school. In 2009 the school paid tribute to the dedication and vision of founding principal Terry Ivey with the opening of the Terry Ivey activity centre. It is in this building as a frequent visitor to the school that I observe and learn of the great achievements of the students. It is impressive to see the level of confidence and ability demonstrated by the gatherings committee—students who emcee and run the school assemblies and other special occasions held at the school. This week the year 6 students will take over the responsibility of peer mediators from the year 7 students, and I understand that this will now be the beginning for the year 6 students' formal role of leadership in the school—an opportunity that teaches them invaluable skills in problem solving, mentorship of younger students and responsibility. I send the year 6-ers my best wishes as they embark on carrying out these new responsibilities.

Together with the Holy Family parish and Father Barry Grayson, St Francis Xavier offers quality co-education within the context of Catholic values and traditions. Indeed, it is the school's pastoral care that stands out as a special attribute of the school's learning environment. When I speak with parents of students of this school they are always complimentary of how kind and caring the school is of people's individual circumstances, the individual child and the warm welcome that is offered to new parents and students. Under the leadership of principal Peter Anderson the school has made a very strong commitment to tackling bullying and harassment, and this is supported by the mediation training and work in the playground, conflict resolution lessons and the Bully Bulldozer program. I know that the school is very proud of its commitment in this area.

Recently students made the finals of the Wakakirri competition and will compete next week in the state finals. Good luck to all of the students. I know that the school and the community is right behind them. This Sunday the school will hold its biennial fete and I take this opportunity to thank 2011 fete committee members Trudi Murray, Karen Melloy, Kristian Brauer and Jackie Cameron for their volunteer efforts on putting this big fete together. I hope it is a great success and I look forward to being there on Sunday with the St Francis school and parish community to enjoy this great event.

Gaven Electorate, Foodbank; Senior Citizen of the Year

Dr DOUGLAS (Gaven—LNP) (9.37 pm): I wish to pay tribute to volunteers who source food for more than 9,000 needy and homeless people on the Gold Coast each week and to also highlight the importance of the Gold Coast having its own distribution warehouse for unwanted or damaged food. Each week 30 organisations from the coast travel to Foodbank at Murarrie to obtain food for the more than 9,000 people relying on the charity for having something to eat, and often that is all they get to eat. In my electorate alone the Nerang Neighbourhood Centre's team of volunteers drive to Brisbane twice a week to bring back food to be packaged into boxes to feed 300 people—not always the same people but 300 every week, and the demand is increasing—as well as food for breakfast for young children at school and the Benevolent Society's Early Years Centre.

I am lending my support to the establishment of a distribution warehouse on the Gold Coast where supermarkets and conglomerates can donate any unwanted or damaged food. It is estimated that up to $2 million would be needed to set up a distribution centre, including refrigeration. By setting up a Foodbank on the coast, groups will be able to save on fuel and more organisations could access unwanted food as well as utilise the waste that so many food businesses have. This in no way detracts from the wonderful work done at Foodbank in Brisbane, and I cannot speak highly enough of that service. The Nerang Neighbourhood Centre is paying almost $100 a week in fuel as well as the cost of the vehicle to transport food to the coast. Thankfully it has a good team of volunteers or otherwise costs would be much higher. We are probably losing $1,000 a month on supplying the food at the moment.

As I have said before, there is a new underclass developing in our community which is battling to meet the everyday costs of living. At a recent forum in my electorate office we heard how more and more people are accessing charities to get by each day. To shop at the Brisbane Foodbank groups need a shopping card. These cards are available to registered charities, benevolent societies and not-for-profit organisations providing food for the needy. In the instance of the Nerang Neighbourhood Centre,

recipients pay $10 to cover administration costs for at least $70 worth of food and the demand for this food, as I say, is getting higher.

I want to also pay tribute to the Gaven electorate's Senior Citizen of the Year, Beverley Boothby. This lady has worked tirelessly for Nerang Red Cross for almost 30 years and her commitment to the branch has been extraordinary. She is 84. Last week I hosted a morning tea for seniors in my office where I presented Bev with her award and also noted the achievements of other award finalists: Cathy Bayliss, Bob and Helen Crowle, Francis Matthews, Michael Powell, John and Cheryl Lowry, Colin New and Val Connelly. They work in local and international organisations in many ways: Meals on Wheels, Probus, RSL, Eating with Friends, Neighbourhood Watch and a charity supporting underprivileged children in Latin and South America through the Lowrys' love of tango dancing. I congratulate all finalists on their enthusiasm and commitment to this work.

Jellicoe Street Bridge

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (9.40 pm): On 10 January this year when the floods destroyed much of the infrastructure in Toowoomba one of the major pieces of infrastructure destroyed was the Jellicoe Street Bridge, which joins east and west Toowoomba. It is one of the major thoroughfares in Toowoomba. On 10 August this year the Deputy Premier announced that $18 million of repairs to flood damaged roads in the Toowoomba region was approved. This was as a result of applications being submitted by the Toowoomba Regional Council in or around May and they were approved, as I said, in early August this year. Among the projects approved was an amount of $2.67 million for the reconstruction of the Jellicoe Street Bridge. This was very much welcomed as being a very positive move.

Many constituents have raised with me, however, their concern at the lack of action since that time with respect to construction of the new bridge in that place. Businesses in Jellicoe Street in particular are suffering, as one could imagine, but on top of that the bridge being out of action has caused immense inconvenience to people in Toowoomba travelling from one side to the other and has caused financial delay as well. This bridge is in the heart of my electorate and is a major thoroughfare. As I said, it causes a great deal of congestion, particularly during peak hours.

What has concerned me is the fact that a representative of the Toowoomba Regional Council has implied that work cannot start until 2012 owing to some sort of state government red tape. I have received a letter from the Queensland Reconstruction Authority dated 29 August 2011, which I table, indicating that the money is available for the council as soon as it submits the progress payments that are necessary. I call upon the Toowoomba Regional Council to get cracking on this project to fix this problem which is of great inconvenience to the people in my electorate.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 29 August 2011, from Mr Graeme Newton, Chief Executive Officer, Queensland Reconstruction Authority, to the member for Toowoomba North regarding approval of road reconstruction projects in the Toowoomba Regional Council area [5258].

Queensland-New South Wales, Cross-Border Memorandum of Understanding

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—LNP) (9.43 pm): As the local member representing a border electorate, last week I welcomed news of the signing of a new cross-border memorandum of understanding between the Queensland and New South Wales Premiers. An existing MOU, signed by former Premiers Peter Beattie and Morris Iemma back in 2007, has proved to be little more than a stunt for political point-scoring and media exposure. The people of Currumbin deserve better from the Queensland government. This new MOU has come about as a direct recommendation from the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry to improve disaster management and emergency response and will cover the whole border, not just our local region.

After years of Labor governments sitting side by side and neglecting local needs, the goodwill expressed by Liberal Premier Barry O'Farrell, with the announcement of a cross-border commissioner together with this new MOU, brings a renewed sense of cooperation to deliver tangible benefits. A meaningful MOU is long overdue, particularly for the adjoining communities of Coolangatta and the Tweed. It is positive to hear that the 2011 MOU will have a wider scope, expanding on the current health and transport provisions to include policing, social services, primary industries, water and emergency management and response.

For years now I have been calling for a proper cross-border audit to determine the true extent of the services and resources we have to work with. I therefore call on the Premier to release the details of this important agreement so that our communities can work towards implementing its goals. I ask the Premier to honour her commitment to meet with the New South Wales Premier annually and I implore her to include me, the local member, together with local services in discussions to progress cross-border issues. Stakeholders working within the community will have the best understanding of what is working and what areas need attention. It is to be hoped that the new arrangement will work proactively with our New South Wales neighbours to enhance our region and bring improved community services for those working and living in this unique environment.

Living in a community that straddles state borders presents unique cross-border challenges and all too often residents bear the brunt of buck-passing and finger-pointing as states deny responsibility for funding for key infrastructure and social services. The Tugun bypass—or 'impasse' as it was called for many years—was one such example as New South Wales refused to commit a single cent to its cost and Queensland had to foot the bill, which ended up in a massive cost blow-out due to the bumbling of the Queensland Labor government. When it comes to policing, in order to make arrests over the border our police must train to achieve 'special constable' status. Then there is the huge inconvenience of licensing and regulation variances that make life difficult for tradies and professionals who live and work in this region. Mental health and child safety services are also stretched to the limit. Cost-of-living spikes as a result of neglectful and wasteful Labor state governments have created a rise in the number of homeless people seeking shelter. I sincerely hope that this MOU will become a vehicle to resolve cross-border issues and improve service delivery in our region.

James Cook University, My Research in Three Minutes Program

Ms JOHNSTONE (Townsville—ALP) (9.46 pm): Last Thursday I was fortunate to be a judge at James Cook University's My Research in Three Minutes program. My Research in Three Minutes showcases academic research communication skills. Higher degree candidates and staff have three minutes to give an engaging and dynamic presentation on their research topic and its significance in language appropriate to intelligent but non-specialist audiences. For the benefit of members, I point out that this is kind of like speed dating for researchers. The judging panel listened to 18 pitches across three categories: higher degree students, early career researchers and established career researchers. Topics were wide and varied, ranging from ecosystem sciences to climate adaptation, from social sciences to chemical engineering. We had to decide on one winner from each round based on the judging criteria of communication style, creativity, engagement and time.

Kirsty Nash from the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies took out the higher degree category with her three minutes titled 'Of mice, moose and men: a tale of perception of coral reefs'. Kirsty sold us on the importance of the relationship between and perceptions of both scientists and reef fish when measuring reef structure. Dr India Bohanna from the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Molecular Sciences took out the early career researcher title with her presentation titled 'What do we know about cannabis use in remote Cape York Aboriginal communities?' India shared her research in collecting hard evidence as opposed to anecdotal evidence of rates of cannabis use in Indigenous communities in North Queensland. Finally, Dr Phil Schneider from the Faculty of Science and Engineering took out the established career research title with his intriguing presentation titled 'The Real Philosopher's Stone', which was a sobering reminder of the potential threats to food supply from the depletion of phosphorus ore. In fact, Dr Schneider suggests to avoid catastrophe we must develop nutrient recovery systems that recover phosphorus from our waste streams. There were two other categories awarded on the night: overall winner and the people's choice, which was judged by the audience. Both of these awards were taken by Dr Phil Schneider.

Not only did each of these winners receive recognition for their work from participation in the competition; each category winner received a $500 cash prize, with the overall winner receiving $1,000. That meant that Dr Schneider received a total of $2,000 towards his ongoing studies and research. I give thanks to my fellow judges, Mr Pat Hession from ABC North Queensland, Dr Sharon McCallum and Professor Mathias Ackermann. It was great working with them for the evening and collaborating on the difficult decisions to assess winning presentations. My final thanks must go to Ms Roslyn Burgess from James Cook University who not only coordinated this competition but had the huge job of bringing together the whole month of celebrating JCU of which the My Research in Three Minutes competition was just one event.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 9.48 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Attwood, Bates, Bleijie, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, Crandon, Cripps, Croft, Cunningham, Darling, Davis, Dempsey, Dick, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Farmer, Finn, Flegg, Foley, Fraser, Gibson, Grace, Hinchliffe, Hobbs, Hoolihan, Hopper, Horan, Jarratt, Johnson, Johnstone, Jones, Keech, Kiernan, Kilburn, Knuth, Langbroek, Lawlor, Lucas, McArdle, McLindon, Male, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Mickel, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nicholls, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Powell, Pratt, Reeves, Rickuss, Roberts, Robertson, Robinson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Seeney, Shine, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Spence, Springborg, Stevens, Struthers, Stuckey, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wellington, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson