



RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT

Thursday, 14 February 2013

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THURSDAY, 14 FEBRUARY 2013



The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

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

PRIVILEGE

Bovine Johne's Disease, North Queensland



Hon. JJ McVEIGH (Toowoomba South—LNP) (Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) (9.31 am): I rise on a matter of privilege. Yesterday in the House in answering a question from the member for Dalrymple which referred to research capability at Townsville and Toowoomba vet labs, I stated that testing capability for bovine Johne's disease never existed at the Townsville vet lab. I wish to clarify that response which was in the context of this particular BJD outbreak. While Townsville or any individual laboratory may have the capability to conduct testing for BJD, testing for BJD on this scale was always going to be carried out in Toowoomba firstly before all tests were transferred to the state-of-the-art laboratory at Coopers Plains and the latest PCR tests are being done at the Eliza Macarthur institute in Camden in Western Sydney. Secondly, it is important to understand that the scale of this particular BJD outbreak is such that testing would never have been likely to be completed in its entirety at any individual laboratory. I have been advised in recent weeks by a Cattle Council of Australia BJD counsellor that, in his view, not only is this outbreak the biggest in Queensland's history; it is the largest in Australia's history. I am pleased to confirm to the House therefore that national arrangements are in place to share laboratory facilities between the Australian states in such instances, and that is exactly what we have been able to do over recent weeks—over and above our current and future expanded laboratory facilities in Coopers Plains. I reiterate that the Newman state government is working closely with industry to maintain Queensland's protected status for BJD.

REPORT

Office of the Speaker



Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I lay upon the table of the House the *Statement for public disclosure: expenditure of the Office of the Speaker* of the Legislative Assembly for the period 1 July 2012 to 31 December 2012.

Tabled paper: Statement for public disclosure, Expenditure of the Office of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly for the period 1 July 2012 to 31 December 2012 [\[2075\]](#).

PRIVILEGE

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



Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, on 15 January 2013 the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts wrote to me alleging that the member for South Brisbane deliberately misled the House in statements made in the Assembly on 15 November 2012. I table the correspondence in this matter.

Tabled paper: Correspondence relating to an allegation of deliberately misleading the House by the member for South Brisbane, Ms Jackie Trad MP [\[2076\]](#).

I note that the minister makes the point that the member for South Brisbane incorrectly outlined portfolio responsibilities pertaining to the minister. In considering this matter, I remind all members that they have ample opportunity to speak in the House and may use these opportunities to judiciously comment upon statements made by other members within the House, particularly if the statement relates to them personally. Under the criteria set out in standing orders for referral, I do not consider that the matter raised with me is one that warrants the investigation of the Ethics Committee as it is trivial. I will not be referring the matter to the Ethics Committee.

PRIVILEGE

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

 **Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, on 15 November 2012 the member for Mackay wrote to me alleging that the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts deliberately misled the House in statements made during an answer to a question without notice on 14 November 2012. In accordance with standing order 269(5), I wrote requesting further information from the minister. I table the correspondence on this matter, including correspondence provided by the minister from the Integrity Commissioner, Dr David Solomon AM.

Tabled paper: Correspondence relating to an allegation of deliberately misleading the House by the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts, Hon. Ros Bates [2077].

I am aware that this matter and others like it have received considerable public attention. I am also aware that some of the public commentary surrounding such matters has not necessarily made the distinction between the keeping of lobbyist registers and the separate issue of allegations of deliberately misleading the House. My ruling today concerns the second issue, but I note the paucity of public information about the issue in its entirety. Advice received is that the keeping of such registers is not an explicit legislative duty of a minister, nor is it an obligation contained in any other document such as the Ministerial Code of Conduct, Ministerial Handbook or the *Cabinet Handbook*. However, my role is not about enforcing the obligations to keep such registers. The keeping of such registers is a matter for the executive.

In terms of the tabling of documents such as registers, I note that it is not a contempt to simply table an incorrect document. The tabling of an incorrect document only becomes a possible contempt if the person tabling it intended to mislead the House or a committee. But the matter before me does not even centre on the accuracy of the initial tabled document or the document subsequently tabled, which I note was a correction initiated voluntarily by the minister. Rather, the matter before me is to decide on the allegation that the minister's statement about the reason for the correction was deliberately misleading.

In this respect, I note statements made in extra parliamentary forums are irrelevant if they do not themselves provide evidence of a contempt within parliament or its committees. The statement which the member for Mackay alleges is deliberately misleading is on page 2575 of *Hansard*. Minister Bates says—

Yesterday I explained that the original document was tabled in haste by my staff member after six o'clock and estimates. It was an administrative error that anybody could have made. It was a mere Excel spreadsheet. There were two pages to the Excel spreadsheet. It was faxed, at the behest of the opposition, during that time.

The member for Mackay has queried the nature of the administrative error described. The lack of accuracy in the tabled document is regrettable, but that does not mean that the initial tabling was done with the intention to mislead, nor does it mean that the explanation when tabling a replacement is necessarily misleading. Indeed, members have long been encouraged to address mistakes as soon as possible. If we were to find a correction itself as evidence of a contempt, we would quickly have few voluntary corrections. While a need to correct a document may be evidence of the need to fix a mistake, it is not evidence of deliberately misleading the House. No evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the minister's statement was a contempt. I will not be referring the matter to the Ethics Committee.

PETITIONS

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

Emergency Services Cadet Program

Hon. Cripps, from 557 petitioners, requesting the House to reinstate funding to the Emergency Services Cadet Program [2078].

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

QR National, Coal Dust Emissions

Mr Symes, from 54 petitioners, requesting the House to seek legislative measures to ensure QR National use tarps to cover coal freight trains to restrict coal dust emissions on route to the Port of Brisbane [2079].

Petitions received.

TABLED PAPERS

MINISTERIAL PAPER TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following ministerial paper was tabled by the Clerk—

Attorney-General and Minister for Justice (Mr Bleijie)—

[2080](#) Electoral Commission of Queensland: Research Report 1 of 2013—Statistical Profiles, Queensland State Electoral Districts

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Ministerial Expenses, Report

 **Hon. CKT NEWMAN** (Ashgrove—LNP) (Premier) (9.39 am): I lay upon the table of the House the public report of ministerial expenses for the period 1 July 2012 to 31 December 2012. This is my first six-monthly public report of ministerial expenses since becoming Premier on 26 March 2012.

Since taking office, I have ensured that the ministry operates with economy and efficiency. This report shows that ministerial expenditure is being kept to reasonable levels, which reflects the priority of this government to act in a fiscally responsible way. Major items of expenditure outlined in the report are salaries and related costs at approximately \$11.18 million, administrative costs at approximately \$5.88 million and depreciation of \$122,010.

The report also includes some outstanding expenses that have continued to be processed for the former government cost centre. As at 31 December 2012, total charges processed for the former ministerial offices amount to \$53,392. I commend the report to the House.

Tabled paper: Document titled 'Public Report of Ministerial Expenses, Total for all Ministerial Portfolios for the Period 01/07/2012 to 31/12/2012' [2081].

Chinese New Year

 **Hon. CKT NEWMAN** (Ashgrove—LNP) (Premier) (9.41 am): Last night, I was pleased to host a reception at Parliament House to celebrate Chinese New Year and welcome the Year of the Snake. Lisa and I thank you for coming down. The Chinese horoscopes predict that the Year of the Snake will be a year of steady progress. Focus, discipline and attention to detail will deliver success and happiness over the next 12 months. Those traits sum up this government and our priorities for 2013. We are taking a disciplined, detailed, step-by-step approach to getting Queensland back on track. We are rolling out our second six-month action plan and continuing to grow the four pillars of tourism, construction, resources and agriculture.

Each of these industries are benefiting greatly from our strong relationship with the People's Republic of China. That is why the Treasurer led a trade trip to China last July, where he officially opened a Queensland trade office in Beijing to add to our offices in Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hong Kong. Our tourism industry is already feeling the positive effects of these strong partnerships, with additional flights from China Eastern and China Southern Airlines. As we celebrate Chinese New Year, I wish to thank our Chinese community for their valuable contribution to strengthening our ties with China.

I have one final observation to make. The last two federal elections held in snake years were won by the coalition—in 2001 and 1977. I do not know if that helps at all, but it warms the cockles of my heart. I say: happy Year of the Snake to you all, particularly those opposite.

Bee Gees Way

 **Hon. CKT NEWMAN** (Ashgrove—LNP) (Premier) (9.42 am): This afternoon at two o'clock at Redcliffe the Moreton Bay Regional Council is expecting thousands to honour the Bee Gees and witness the unveiling of the Bee Gees Way tourist attraction and statue that pays tribute to the Gibb brothers. Congratulations are due to Mayor Allan Sutherland and his team for all the work that they have done over so many months to prepare. I would like to put on the record my sincere best wishes. I would love to be there today, but, unfortunately, I cannot owing to parliament.

It is very exciting for Queenslanders like me who lived through the disco era that Barry Gibb—

A government member: Show us your flares.

Mr NEWMAN: Yes, I had flares and, more importantly, I had long hair.

Mr Seeney: Bust a move, Premier.

Mr NEWMAN: Madam Speaker, I seek your protection from the Deputy Premier. He is laughing way too loud.

I think all Queenslanders have looked on with great excitement and interest during the development of this new attraction. I know many people will be on hand for part of the unveiling. I know that Bee Gees Way will be a great long-term attraction that will bring more tourists to Redcliffe and to Queensland in the future.

Australia Day II

 **Hon. CKT NEWMAN** (Ashgrove—LNP) (Premier) (9.44 am): I am pleased to inform the House of a new tourism campaign urging Australians to holiday in Queensland by celebrating Australia Day II on Saturday, 23 February 2013. We are acutely aware that Queensland's tourism industry was not immune to the impacts of ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald and, following industry concerns about forward bookings, the government is keen to reinforce the message that the vast majority of Queensland's tourist destinations are

open for business and ready to welcome visitors. Many Queenslanders also did not have the opportunity to celebrate Australia Day over the 26 January long weekend owing to the wet weather, so the campaign will encourage Queenslanders and all other Australians to holiday in Queensland and celebrate Australia Day II.

We are truly honoured to have media personality Sam Kekovich as the face of the campaign, with his very Australian, very unique style of humour. The campaign involves a number of print, digital and television marketing activities to be conducted throughout February and is being rolled out in Queensland as well as key interstate markets such as Sydney and Melbourne. I table an example of one of the print ads that has been running.

Tabled paper: Advertisement—Australia Day II in Queensland on Saturday, 23 February [2082].

Tourism and Events Queensland is also working with regional tourism organisations and operators all over the state to support events that are to be hosted on 23 February. So far, we have the Agnes Water Blues and Roots Festival, the Bleach Festival on the Gold Coast, and Hayman Island's annual Australia Day BBQ being held once again. The Mayor of Mount Isa, Tony McGrady, is particularly pleased, as it is an opportunity to add another special day to the city's 90th birthday celebrations that are taking place on 22 February. On the Fraser Coast, Tourism and Events Queensland, local councils and community groups are working to reignite washed out celebrations, including an Aussie breakfast at Maryborough, a seven-a-side cricket tournament at Munna Creek, live music by the beach at Hervey Bay, and toad races at Boonooroo—that is probably worth a trip. The Fraser Coast Australia Day Awards and Citizenship Ceremony will also be held on Australia Day II.

I wholeheartedly encourage my fellow Queenslanders and people all over Australia to take the time to enjoy 23 February 2013 by heading to their favourite part of Queensland and celebrating Australia Day once again. In the words of Kekovich, 'Even if you can't celebrate on the day, book a Queensland holiday anyway and experience all it has to offer.'

Mining Industry, Water

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (9.46 am): Last November I announced that our government would initiate a pilot release of legacy mine water from BMA mines in Central Queensland during the then coming wet season. It was the first step to develop a long-term solution to address the problem of mine water and to protect the water quality in the Fitzroy Basin catchment, a solution which the previous Labor government had failed to find at great cost to the Queensland economy and to every Queenslanders.

The wet seasons of recent years have left the mines of Central Queensland with a major water problem. It must be addressed. It should have been addressed immediately it became apparent. Unfortunately, it was not. The previous Labor government failed totally to take any action and shirked its responsibility. This government has taken that responsibility.

Last November I travelled to Rockhampton to explain our plans to the local community, particularly members of the Rockhampton Regional Council and the Fitzroy Basin Water Quality Advisory Group. Our pilot release scheme will provide us with the information to design a considered, balanced management system to enable mines to deal with the disposal of excess water on a continuing basis. We need a solution that is firmly based on science and one that establishes a clear set of principles for releasing water from the coalmines into the river system in a way that ensures that current environmental values are maintained and in particular protects the water quality values in Rockhampton.

Our view is that we can establish a salinity trading system in the Fitzroy Basin similar to the model that exists in the Hunter Valley in New South Wales, which has operated there successfully for a number of years. The Hunter scheme is based on releases of mine water when the river flow can absorb a salt load without impacting on the environment.

The Australia Day floods in Central Queensland provided the opportunity for us to initiate the first pilot releases into the Fitzroy Basin. The releases were heavily monitored to provide us with the data to make assessments about those releases and their impacts—assessments that were not possible in the past because the previous government failed to deal with this problem. Detailed water-quality monitoring has been undertaken by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines and the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection during the flood event. This is independent of and additional to the rigorous water-quality monitoring and reporting requirements imposed on the mines themselves.

Information from the flood event is currently being analysed by our departments and that information will be made publicly available, as I promised the people of Rockhampton that it would be. By the time the floods started to recede at Rockhampton, about 5½ thousand gigalitres had flowed out of the Fitzroy River. In comparison, the volume of water released from all Fitzroy Basin mines during the flood event was approximately 10 gigalitres or 0.19 per cent of the total flow. Throughout the event the electrical conductivity at all monitoring sites was in the normal range for the Fitzroy and well below cease release trigger levels, which had been set as part of the pilot scheme. Those trigger levels were put in place to ensure the protection of water quality for irrigation, drinking and the environment.

I am sure that the results of this analysis will demonstrate that claims being made about the environmental impacts associated with mine water releases are not based on sound scientific evidence and are nothing more than an ongoing scare campaign that will fail. These claims have been aimed at doing nothing more than alarming the people of the Fitzroy Basin. Our government will act responsibly to address this issue that was totally ignored by the former government, but is critical to the Queensland economy, critical to everyone who lives in Central Queensland, critical to everyone who lives in Rockhampton and critical to every Queenslanders.

Minerals Resource Rent Tax

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade) (9.50 am): The state's right to levy the resources found in Queensland is long accepted and inalienable. Section 91 of Australia's Constitution makes it very clear that all minerals, including coal, oil and gas, are the property of the state in which they are found. Section 114 of the Constitution is equally clear: the Commonwealth shall not impose any tax on property of any kind belonging to a state. This is why any attack on a state's right to change its royalty regime must be seen for what it is: an attack on that state's sovereignty and an attack on the state's rights.

It is extremely disappointing to hear talk coming out of Canberra that the Gillard government may once again attack Queensland's right to receive a fair return for the resources owned by the people of this great state in order to pay for their mistakes. The minerals resource rent tax should be seen for what it is: a poorly designed, poorly implemented, bad tax that is failing to produce the billions promised by Wayne Swan and Julia Gillard—in short, a political fix following the decapitation of Kevin Rudd. The tax has only collected \$126 million, while companies have reportedly racked up billions in future concessions, and that is even before the Commonwealth's administration and transaction costs are taken into account.

The MRRT will be added to federal Labor's long list of failed schemes and unfunded promises. The Gillard government spent the revenue from the MRRT before it was collected. The tax was virtually hypothecated to pay for several initiatives and now they will have to go further into debt to fund the shortfall—the typical Labor story. And true to form, the Gillard government will not rule out bending to the Greens and their crazy demands. As they work to keep the Greens and Independents onside, Julia Gillard and Wayne Swan are blaming the states for their mistakes, expecting Western Australia, NSW and Queensland to fix their problems.

Often royalties are criticised as being inefficient. In an academic economic theory sense that might be right, but the states deserve a return for each tonne of non-renewable resource removed from the state regardless of the profitability of a particular company. Put simply, royalties are the sale price for a resource that is non-renewable and will not be coming back. In our case royalties predominantly are funded from coal. Royalty rates on a sliding scale, similar to income tax rates, capture the increasing value of the price of resources in the global marketplace. As the price increases in a world market, the people of Queensland ought to receive a share of that benefit. Any action to penalise the states by winding back GST payments as a penalty would be childish and unfair, not to mention a breach of the agreement with the mining companies. More importantly, it would lead to a complete loss of faith in federal-state relations. Any attempt to claw back state royalties would be another attack on state rights—and the federation of Australia—by a Labor government which has already shown a propensity for megaphone diplomacy.

Our position remains that the mining assessment within the GST calculations is flawed. Resource rich states deserve a fairer share of the GST that major projects generate—a position that governments in Queensland have held for decades. State governments that are responsible for delivering costly infrastructure that facilitates the country's wealth-generating resource projects end up retaining less revenue per capita than non-resource states following equalisation. Effectively, every other state and territory in the federation, except for Western Australia, gets more mining revenue from Queensland's coal than Queensland does. Despite doing much of the heavy lifting, Queensland missed out on any new funding in phase 1 of the Regional Infrastructure Fund, valued at \$916 million, which was meant to be paid for by the MRRT—a federal Treasurer from Queensland leaving Queensland off the list.

To federal Labor let me say this: this government has no intention of surrendering any sovereignty over its royalties. We will fight tooth and nail any attempt by the federal government to use state royalties as a scapegoat for its failed minerals resource rent tax. The miners may have out-negotiated the federal government, but we will not let the federal government dictate down to us. Unlike Mr Swan and the Labor government in Canberra, the Newman government will always act in the best interests of Queenslanders who deserve to get a fair return for their mineral resources.

Obesity

 **Hon. LJ SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—LNP) (Minister for Health) (9.55 am): There are 2.2 million Queenslanders who are overweight or obese. In Queensland 57.7 per cent of adults are overweight or obese. This is the highest of all states and territories. This is not a statistic that I am proud of, nor should any Queenslanders be, and is a statistic we need to change. I am also distressed that more than

a quarter of children in Queensland are overweight or obese. This is the second highest of all Australian states and territories. High body mass has now exceeded smoking as the largest single risk factor contributing to the burden of disease in Queensland. The projected prevalence of adults who are overweight or obese in 2017 is about 63 per cent. This statistic is not only frightening but also is one that I am not prepared to accept. We need to take action now to ensure that this statistic is not realised.

Obesity was estimated at a cost of \$391 million to the health system in Queensland in 2008. That does not include the cost to the community and the economic cost overall. However, it is not only the costs we need to consider. The health problems as a consequence of being overweight or obese are many and varied, including cardiovascular disease, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, sleep apnoea and musculoskeletal problems. Many of these problems are preventable through a healthy and active lifestyle. Obesity reduces life expectancy. Median survival for obese people was reduced by two to four years and for the severely obese it was reduced by eight to 10 years. Rates of obesity are about 70 per cent higher in disadvantaged areas than in advantaged areas, 40 to 50 per cent higher in remote and very remote areas—that is, areas outside of our major cities—and 30 to 35 per cent higher in inner and outer regional areas. Obesity rates in Indigenous Australians were nearly double the non-Indigenous rates.

Today I am announcing that the government will commence a public awareness campaign on obesity. This campaign will aim to stem the rising obesity rates in Queensland and will cost between \$7.5 million and \$8.5 million over the next three years. The television commercials are highly graphic and will be classified as parental guidance recommended—that is PG—and cannot be screened in general viewing timeslots. It is important that we do something about this epidemic. The Newman government is absolutely determined to turn around what is a significant and growing problem.

MOTIONS

Amendments to Standing Orders

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (9.58 am), by leave, without notice: I move that—

The amendments to schedule 6 of Standing Orders Rules and Orders circulated in my name be agreed to, effective immediately.

1. Schedule 6—Portfolio Committees

Column 2—Area of Responsibility, 'Local Government

Omit, insert

'Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience'

Column 3—Ministers, 'Minister for Local Government'—

Omit, insert

'Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience'

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Portfolio Committees, Reporting Dates

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (9.59 am), by leave, without notice: I move that—

- (1) The report date for the Finance and Administration Committee's inquiry into the operation of Queensland's workers compensation scheme be extended to 23 May 2013.
- (2) That the Health and Community Services Committee's inquiry into palliative care and home community care services be extended to 28 March 2013.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Order of Business

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (9.59 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That, notwithstanding anything contained in the Standing and Sessional Orders, General Business Notice of Motion—House to take note of committee reports—notice no. 5 be postponed to a later day.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Report

 **Mr RUTHENBERG** (Kallangur—LNP) (9.59 am): I table the Health and Community Services Committee's report No. 16: *Report on subordinate legislation tabled between 30 October and 30 November 2012*.

Tabled paper: Health and Community Services Committee: Report No. 16—Report on Subordinate Legislation tabled between 30 October and 30 November 2012 [[2083](#)].

AGRICULTURE, RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Report

 **Mr RICKUSS** (Lockyer—LNP) (10.00 am): I table the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee's report No. 16: *Report on subordinate legislation tabled between 12 September and 27 November 2012*.

Tabled paper: Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee: Report No. 16—Subordinate legislation tabled between 12 September 2012 and 27 November 2012 [[2084](#)].

TRANSPORT, HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

Report

 **Mr HOBBS** (Warrego—LNP) (10.00 am): I table report No. 18 of the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee: *Subordinate legislation tabled between 30 October 2012 and 13 November 2012*. I commend the report to the House.

Tabled paper: Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee: Report No. 18—Subordinate legislation tabled between 30 October 2012 and 13 November 2012 [[2085](#)].

LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report

 **Mr BERRY** (Ipswich—LNP) (10.00 am): I lay upon the table of the House the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee's report No. 21: *Subordinate legislation tabled between 22 August 2012 and 27 November 2012*. The committee is satisfied that there are no significant issues arising in relation to the lawfulness and the application of fundamental legislative principles. I commend the report to the House.

Tabled paper: Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee: Report No. 21—Subordinate legislation tabled between 22 August 2012 and 27 November 2012 [[2086](#)].

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Report

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (10.01 am): I lay upon the table of the House—

A government member: Wolfman!

Mr CRANDON: The ladies like it! Happy Valentine's Day, everyone. I lay upon the table of the House report No. 24 of the Finance and Administration Committee. This report covers the portfolio subordinate legislation tabled between 11 September 2012 and 15 November 2012 considered by the committee. The subordinate legislation has disallowance dates of 7 March 2013 and 21 March 2013. The committee did not identify any significant issues regarding consistence with fundamental legislative principles or the lawfulness of the subordinate legislation. I commend the report to the House.

Tabled paper: Finance and Administration Committee: Report No. 24—Portfolio subordinate legislation tabled between 11 September 2012 and 15 November 2012 [[2087](#)].

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Madam SPEAKER: Question time will go until 11.02 am.

Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (10.02 am): My question is to the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts. I refer to reports in the *Courier-Mail* today, and I ask: will the minister explain why several meetings in her office with influential LNP lobbyist Sallyanne Atkinson were not considered contacts with a lobbyist and not entered into her contact with lobbyists register?

Ms BATES: I thank the member opposite for the question. I am happy to answer this again, as I did yesterday. Any lobbying activity undertaken is recorded in the lobbyists register, end of story. Sallyanne Atkinson is a former Lord Mayor of the great City of Brisbane and is someone I have known for many years. Yesterday, I tabled correspondence from the Integrity Commissioner regarding the recording of contacts with lobbyists. That correspondence detailed the definition of 'lobby'. I have fully complied with the law and, yet again, these matters have been dealt with. However, given the interest of the opposition in my whereabouts and with whom I meet, I am happy to take the opportunity to talk to the House about what I have been doing.

Yesterday I gave a ministerial statement that, obviously, some of those opposite did not anticipate was going to be given. During the floods, what my department did was quite extraordinary. Often the staff of Smart Service Queensland are the unsung heroes of things such as floods. I took the time to go out and meet with the staff. In fact, initially I was going out to congratulate one of our unsung heroes from Cyclone Yasi for all the work that he did and to present him with a certificate of appreciation. However, while I was there I had the opportunity to sit down with the call centre staff and listen to some of the calls that they were taking. Some of those calls were quite extraordinary.

During the floods, my colleague Minister Davis and her Department of Communities had to deal with an awful lot of tragedy. In his own electorate, the Deputy Premier had to deal with things that were quite stark and confronting. The call centre staff also deal with those sorts of issues. Whilst I was there, a young lady told me of a call from a blocked number that she took in the height of the floods. It was from an 85-year-old gentleman in a wheelchair. He was in his home, he was in a wheelchair and he was up to his waist in water. The young operator was trying to get details from him, but in the end he said to her, 'Don't worry about me, love. I'm 85. You go and save someone else,' and he hung up. That young woman had no idea whether the gentleman survived. I am happy to say that, yes, he did; he was rescued.

Those are the human stories that come out of floods for the people who work in my department. I have nothing but praise for how they handle those calls. As I said yesterday, the calls outnumbered those for Cyclone Yasi and the community calls were quite extraordinary. I would like to thank those staff.

Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts

Ms PALASZCZUK: My question is to the minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts. I refer to a redacted entry in the minister's diary with influential LNP lobbyist Sallyanne Atkinson on 12 April last year. I ask: will the minister reveal what was discussed at that meeting and, in particular, were board appointments discussed?

Ms BATES: I thank the member opposite for the question. That was a personal meeting with Sallyanne. As I mentioned earlier, she is a life member of the LNP. She was taking the opportunity to congratulate me on my appointment. Again, I am the minister responsible for information technology, the arts, science and innovation. I meet with people all the time. I have had no conversation with anybody, particularly Sallyanne, about board appointments. The Premier has made it very clear that any lobbyist will not be appointed to boards.

Mr Nicholls interjected.

Ms BATES: I take the interjection from the Treasurer. Let us move on. Obviously, the opposition is continuing along in the vein of 2012, but we are in 2013 and I am getting on with the job. One of the things that the opposition never talks to me about is IT. Did members know that when you type 'Labor' and 'payroll' into Google, you get nearly 27 million results? For the benefit of the House, I will share some of those titles: 'Labor's health payroll debacle continues'; 'Secret cabinet documents emerge as Labor tries to fend off inquiry'; 'The day Queensland Labor detonated a political time bomb'.

When it comes to payroll systems, Labor was the problem and this government is getting on with the solution. I have made no secret of the fact that we will go to the market and ask business to provide us with the most efficient and cost-effective solutions for delivering shared services. This government will not compete with the private sector with a government-knows-best attitude, but any suggestion like yesterday's that public sector employees will lose their conditions of employment as a result of outsourcing is just wrong. Do colleagues know why it is wrong? Because they are protected by law! If the members opposite

were not so busy worrying about the people mover that I shared to travel between a few meetings, they might have noticed some things. They might have noticed things such as the federal Labor government introducing the Fair Work Amendment (Transfer of Business) Bill. For the benefit of those opposite, that bill is there for all of to read.

I am getting on with the job. I will be meeting with industry people. I will be meeting with telecommunications people. I have to deal with the wireless network. If Labor had regained power, we would have been left with a \$500 million bill. Certainly we are looking at ways to source for the G20 and the Commonwealth Games. Of course I will be talking to telecommunications companies. Of course I will be talking to Telstra, Optus, Motorola and anybody I need to talk to, to get the solution right.

(Time expired)

Australia Day II

Mr BENNETT: My question without notice is to the Premier. Can the Premier expand on his ministerial statement and inform the House about the Australian Day II plans for Bundaberg and any other events to be held in the communities affected by the recent natural disasters?

Mr NEWMAN: I thank the member for Burnett for his question. As we all know, at the moment the recovery effort is very practically based on the clean-up. It is about cleaning homes, businesses and schools, repairing the infrastructure of cities and towns, getting the water supply sorted out and all the sewage treatment plants working again and getting businesses back on their feet.

One thing we cannot lose sight of is the human element. I am very concerned about the morale of people in Bundaberg and indeed other places that have been flood affected. I think we really need to do more than just deal with the bricks and mortar; we have to deal with the needs of people.

I think there is a real opportunity coming up very shortly with Australia Day II. I am pleased to announce that on 23 February there will be some celebrations in Bundaberg. We are going to have a big community barbecue and live music and special guests. I cannot wait to get up there again and see how the recovery effort is going and particularly talk to people. Of course, we want to have an opportunity to thank the volunteers and workers who have done it very tough—as have the residents—in that relief effort and shared the stresses and strains of the last few weeks. I know that the member for Burnett and the member for Bundaberg will be keen to get right behind this event. I know Mayor Mal Forman and his councillors are very keen to make it happen. That is what we will do on 23 February.

I am also pleased to announce that I am starting discussions with mayors from other parts of Queensland that have been flood affected and been through the disaster to talk about what we can do in their communities. What I envisage is a series of events, programs—cultural and artistic—family barbecues and the like to bring together communities, families, emergency services staff and volunteers. It will be an opportunity for people to get together to have fun, relax, swap stories and capture that important community spirit.

One of the exciting things we have been working on is actually using the Queensland Music Festival to do this. I have personally been talking to the artistic director, James Morrison, about this. He is coming up with a concept that we can take into regional Queensland. The Minister for the Arts, whom the opposition has spent two days asking really quite sorrowful questions of, is also involved. They could have been asking the Minister for the Arts what she is doing to try to get some arts and culture into these communities as part of this morale building effort. She is working hard, as I am, to support people in the disaster affected areas.

Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts

Mr MULHERIN: My question without notice is to the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts. I refer the minister to her office's reported discussion on board appointments with influential LNP lobbyist Sallyanne Atkinson. Will the minister table the list and were any of these board appointments subsequently made by her government?

Madam SPEAKER: Order! There were a lot of interruptions during the question. I am going to ask the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to please repeat it. Please members be quiet while questions are being asked.

Mr MULHERIN: I refer the minister to her office's reported discussion on board appointments with influential LNP lobbyist Sallyanne Atkinson. Will the minister table the list and were any of these board appointments subsequently made by her government?

Ms BATES: I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for the question. I cannot table any of those because the discussions never occurred. Let us just move on. I think the Minister for Transport and Main Roads might need to do a lot of repairs to the roads because the Labor Party are still in the gutter.

I refer to what the Premier just said. It would be great if those opposite actually asked me about what we have been doing in this portfolio to make sure that we can bring arts to all Queenslanders, particularly those in regional Queensland who have been devastated by the recent floods. The Premier knows full well that the heart of a community is in the arts. That is why we are going to make sure that we have these functions that the Premier has been talking about. My department and I have certainly been working on some.

It does give me great pleasure to update the House on the Newman government's Arts for all Queenslanders policy. We are working hard to ensure that every single Queensland, no matter which corner of this great state they live in, has access to arts in their own backyard. We are delivering on our promise to double the amount of touring to regional Queensland. That means world-class performances staged everywhere from Cape York to Coolangatta.

We recently opened our Boost to Touring Fund and already we have seen some fantastic applications come in. The response has been truly overwhelming. I am really proud of the Queensland government's achievements in delivering one of the most flexible, responsive and streamlined touring funds in Australia. We are providing \$3 million over four years. By listening to industry we have ensured our Arts for all Queenslanders policy is all encompassing.

In 2013 towns like Cooktown, Mount Isa, Longreach, Quilpie, Roma Winton, Cloncurry, Richmond and Goondiwindi will enjoy touring productions. But we will not be stopping there. We are determined to do much more. We want communities to see the productions they want to see, where they want to see them. This approach also supports our major state companies with their goal of touring more regularly.

On another note, we have just opened our consultation on the new arts investment framework that will take the sector forward. This means that artists and organisations across the state can shape the future direction of arts grants in Queensland. We want to hear from people from Cairns and Townsville and Mackay and Rockhampton and Gladstone and Bundaberg and everywhere else in between. Do members know why? Because we are going to listen to the needs of the regions and ensure that arts grants are easy to access.

I am proud to be part of a government that has finally given the regional arts sector a loud voice. There are some wonderful announcements coming up in the near future and I look forward to updating the House on them.

Natural Disaster Events of 2013, Recovery Assistance

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, how will agricultural producers in the Burnett region, recovering from Tropical Cyclone Oswald, benefit from NDRRA category D measures for which we are awaiting approval from the Commonwealth?

Mr SEENEY: I thank the member for Nanango for the question because it is an issue that affects the lives of so many Queenslanders. I cannot help but note that as this parliament meets for the first week after a natural disaster that affected the lives of so many Queenslanders, the opposition has come in here for two days and has not asked one single question about that event or the government's response or the recovery efforts or the assistance that is so badly needed by so many Queenslanders—not one single question. There is no interest from the opposition in the events that wrecked the lives of so many Queenslanders. There is no interest from the opposition in the recovery efforts or the assistance that is so badly needed.

The question that the member for Nanango asked goes to the heart of the economic recovery of the Burnett region and goes to the heart of the government's challenge to maintain the employment of so many Queenslanders, and the opposition is not interested. They are not interested. So thank you member for Nanango for the question.

Category D assistance measures are fifty-fifty funded by the state and the Commonwealth. We have put forward a proposition to the Commonwealth government that will ensure that the employment levels in the intensive agricultural industries in the Burnett region can be maintained. That is to the benefit of the economy of the whole region. Just as happened in the case of Cyclone Yasi in North Queensland when the agricultural industries were devastated, the problem that must be confronted is maintaining the employment levels in what are and always will be labour intensive primary industries.

In the Burnett, and in the Central Burnett particularly, that is the citrus industry. Citrus orchards employ large numbers of people. It is not unusual for a single orchard to employ 200 or 300 people at different times of the year. There is a permanent workforce and an itinerant workforce, but all of those workers provide an enormous economic benefit to the community, to every business in the town, whether it be the caravan parks where they stay, the coffee shops they frequent, the pubs, the stores. All of those businesses benefit from those levels of employment.

So our category D assistance measures will be aimed at maintaining those employment levels. They will also be aimed at ensuring that those producers have the financial advice and the industry support to rebuild those industries and to ensure that their communities are rebuilt. They are the things that our government is interested in. They are the things that this parliament should be considering this week and they are the things that the opposition in this place has comprehensively ignored.

Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts

Mr PITT: My question is to the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts. I note that the minister has experience as a former lobbyist with Entree Vous. Will the minister explain to the House the role that lobbyists play in relation to her portfolio, especially ICT contracts, and how she plans to manage any risks?

Mr STEVENS: Madam Speaker, I rise to a point of order in relation to standing order 112. The member has asked for an opinion and that question should be ruled out of order.

Madam SPEAKER: I am going to allow the question on the basis that it is asking how the minister is managing risks in her portfolio.

Ms BATES: I thank the member opposite for the question. Again, I tabled correspondence from the Integrity Commissioner regarding recording of contacts with lobbyists.

That correspondence detailed the definition of 'lobbying'. I have fully complied with the law. These matters have been dealt with. Of course I am going to meet with industry contacts. I have told those opposite already that I will continue to speak with stakeholders, particularly in the IT industry. It is the biggest black hole, apart from the Health payroll, that the Labor government has left this state.

It is no surprise that I meet with telcos, that I meet with IT companies, because guess what? I am the minister for IT. Minister Mander is the Minister for Public Works. I, with Minister Mander, make sure that the policy surrounding procurement is above reproach, that there is governance and that there is probity around any dealings with any purchases that are made in relation to IT. But the ultimate decision and the ultimate decision makers are in Public Works. Public Works are the experts in procurement. They are experts in procuring computers and pens and anything else like that.

My job is to make sure that I go out and I speak with every industry group that I possibly can so that we can formulate great policy to take this great state forward, unlike those opposite who obviously did not consult with anybody or took little jaunts for instance. I do not think those opposite in the Labor Party have remembered that the way our government is structured and the way our portfolios are structured is that I am the minister for IT but I am not the minister for procurement. I think the member for South Brisbane is now very well aware of that.

I am proud of our local industry. Our local ICT industry offers really great alternative approaches which we need to work with—for example, the alternative approach, as I mentioned yesterday, of Suncorp, with their payroll system for 17,000 staff. It is provided as a service for an annual fee. We need to look at things differently. We are not going to try to build it. We are not going to try to own it. We are not going to try to maintain it. We are not going to patch it. We are not going to upgrade it because, like Suncorp, they recognised it was not their core business and that there were smarter and better ways to do things.

We will continue to go out to the market. We will continue to consult with them because we have been left with black holes like the \$1.25 billion Health payroll courtesy of the Labor Party and the IDES system that was bleeding \$25 million a year out of CITEC. We are looking for alternatives and we will consult.

Unemployment

Mr DILLAWAY: My question without notice is to the Treasurer and Minister for Trade. Can the Treasurer inform the House of the latest Queensland unemployment data?

Mr NICHOLLS: I thank the member for Bulimba for his question. Indeed, it was a pleasure to attend a chamber of commerce breakfast last week with the member for Bulimba. I think the member for Chatsworth was there. The member for Mansfield was there. The member for Greenslopes was there. We also had Dr Bill Glasson, the candidate in that part of the world, who came along. What a great candidate he will be—someone with practical experience who speaks a language that people do understand.

I also have a confession to make. There was someone there who might be engaged in lobbying activity—that is, of course, the former member for Bulimba whose strategic relations firm was also in attendance there. So I make that disclosure. I was also there in the presence of about 150 small businesses who may, of course, have some interest in the small business portfolio. So I make that declaration as well in order that no-one is under any misapprehension that I do of course engage with the small business community and tell them what the government is doing, unlike those opposite who believe we should be hermetically sealed in a vacuum jar and speak to no-one about anything at any time. Madam Speaker, if you head down that way, you end up putting out the policies that the former government used to put out about increasing debt, increasing taxes, increasing fees, increasing charges and, of course, not dealing with unemployment.

In the last 10 days or so there has been good news which seems to have slipped under the radar of our august reporting organs—the record of journal, the *Courier-Mail*, which would otherwise seem to have a great deal of fun talking about the employment figures. The unemployment numbers from the ABS last

week in fact showed a drop in the unemployment rate by over half a per cent, down to 5.5 per cent on a seasonally adjusted basis, and a drop in the trend figure as well to below six per cent, down to 5.9 per cent. Those numbers showed that more than 30,000 jobs had been created in Queensland.

Unlike those opposite, I do not claim the credit for those jobs. We did not employ all those people. What we did is we put in place the parameters and the framework that make it easier for the private sector to go out and do the work, and that is what we have done. As we continue to head down that path, I am hopeful that we will see improving figures in terms of employment, but they are volatile figures and, as I indicated, the Queensland economy will take a hit from the floods that we have just experienced. But we are seeing, I think, positive growth and confidence coming through.

Yesterday I recounted the impacts and the reports of those market watchers about the Queensland economy. I was of course pleased to receive an early Valentine's present from the Leader of the Opposition on Tuesday on 4BC when she indicated that the 'Treasurer is in fact doing a very good job,' if I can use her quote there. I was expecting a card from her today but I am still waiting.

(Time expired)

Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts

Mr BYRNE: My question is to the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts. Will the minister release all communications—

Government members interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Will the member resume his seat. I call the member for Rockhampton.

Mr BYRNE: Will the minister release all communications between her office and the Premier's office regarding her request last year to seek a second taxpayer funded trip to the United States which included a personal holiday?

Ms BATES: I thank the member opposite for the question. Obviously, part of my role is to consult with IT industries wherever they are. At this stage it is very obvious that I have not gone anywhere, but there was a certain member for Rockhampton I recall in the last government who took a fully paid jaunt somewhere to Germany to speak with SAP about our Health payroll. So yet again it is the other side of the House—

Government members interjected.

Ms BATES: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, I thank the Labor Party for the opportunity to talk about my portfolio. I am not sure what the shadow minister actually shadows over there, because as with most Labor Party members we never get a question about our portfolios. We have been in government since March last year and I have been a minister since April last year, and it took those opposite some seven months to even ask me about IT. No-one has asked me about what we have been doing in Science, particularly around the time of the floods.

My science department was very busy with flood monitoring. It has been conducting water quality monitoring as part of the government's response to the impacts of the 2013 floods along the east coast of Queensland. My department conducts water quality monitoring that focuses on sampling rivers affected by large rain events. It monitors pollution from the land including amounts of sediment, nutrients and in some areas pesticides. This monitoring has been occurring at 15 sites in South-East Queensland—in South-East Queensland rivers that particularly discharge to Moreton Bay and at 25 other sites in rivers that discharge into the Great Barrier Reef. This monitoring occurred throughout the recent floods. In response to a request by the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, sampling also occurred in the Gladstone Harbour and the Boyne and Calliope estuaries after the 2013 flood peak in Gladstone.

A government member interjected.

Ms BATES: I take the interjection from the minister. The results will be made publicly available on the website of the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection. We have continued to work closely with the Department of Natural Resources and Mines. We will continue to work with our scientific colleagues at James Cook University to ensure that monitoring of the Bundaberg flood plain for sediments, nutrients and pesticides occurs in a timely manner. We are getting on with the job, so let us get on with it.

(Time expired)

Natural Disasters of 2013, Dam Management

Mr BERRY: My question without notice is to the Premier. Can the Premier inform the House about the Queensland government's proactive management of the dams in South-East Queensland during the recent floods?

Mr NEWMAN: I thank the honourable member for the question. There has been a lot of talk about the management of the dam. I want to say upfront that some of it has already gone into territory that is not actually the case. The dam ultimately was run by the professionals at Seqwater. But what I do say is that as a government, we—particularly the minister and I—were not prepared to sit back and let the dams just be run by remote control. We took a great interest in what was going on. We have taken a great interest in the management of the dams since we came to office. In fact, we took a particular interest from the start of the wet season.

Before Christmas we were getting information from the Bureau of Meteorology and the experts at Seqwater, and we were taking a very keen interest in how they were approaching that wet season. So it is the case that prior to the event itself we were talking about dropping the designated full supply level. On 25 February in the morning, as I recall, that decision was formally made by the minister with the appropriate gazettal. But we had clearly indicated our views to Seqwater in the days leading up to that. So we saw the full supply level for water supply purposes being dropped from 100 per cent to 88 per cent, because we were determined to ensure that we had the greatest possible buffer storage available. We entered that very big rain event with ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald with the dam essentially at that 88 per cent level. So we got the water out, had it at 88 per cent but we also had the maximum possible buffer.

When I talk about the guidance Seqwater was given, it is indeed guidance. There are very strict rules under the legislation for the operation of the dam. There were no directions given to people other than the setting of the FSL, but we clearly provided political guidance, saying, for example, that we were not at this time concerned about—surprise, surprise—water supply issues. We were also able to give them guidance that we were not concerned about a discharge that saw downstream road crossings being closed and inconveniencing people for a couple of days. We thought that was a small price to pay.

I hope that gives members some of the facts in relation to how we approached the operation of the management of the dams. I think we did see a better result because of that action, but I particularly pay tribute to the professionals who did that. Lastly, I quote Mayor Paul Pisasale, who did say that he would kiss me. That is why I will be staying away from Ipswich, particularly on Valentine's Day.

Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts

Mrs MILLER: My question is to the Minister for Science—

Mr Rickuss: Jo, were you happy with the way the dam was handled?

Madam SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Lockyer under standing order 253A. I have been warning members about interjecting on members when they are asking questions. I call the member for Bundamba.

Mrs MILLER: My question is to the Minister for Science, IT, Innovation and the Arts. Will the minister explain to the House why she insists on booking rooms with a view and a balcony when she travels on ministerial trips?

Ms BATES: I thank the member opposite for the question.

Mr STEVENS: Madam Speaker, under standing order 112 that question is a statement of fact when we do not know that is a statement of fact.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! I am going to allow the minister to answer the question.

Ms BATES: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, we have another wasted question from those opposite. Instead of colleagues asking about really important issues for Queenslanders, this is all the Labor Party has got. Again, I am pretty sure it is the same question that was asked of my office about three weeks ago by the *Courier-Mail*. Again, they cannot ask an original question. It is absolutely extraordinary.

In my travels I also like a door and a window, and I appreciate a bed. It is quite extraordinary that these are the issues that are dogging the Labor Party and how much time wasting is occurring on this. Why are we not talking about some really exciting things? Again, I have shadow ministers who do not ask me any questions on my portfolio. But it does give me a fantastic opportunity to talk about my portfolio, ladies and gentlemen, so I hope you have reserved every question for me today. I really hope every one of them is for me.

It gives me great pleasure to update the House on the progress of the Newman government's Super Star Fund. It is a fantastic opportunity for Queenslanders. Queenslanders, get ready to welcome some of the world's top artists to our stage. I think they might want a room and a bed, too, while they are here. Since opening in December we have had nine applications to the Super Star Fund. Obviously I cannot reveal too much because they are still classified as commercial-in-confidence, but I can say this: the applications are really exciting and could spell big things for Queensland. They include proposals around dance, music and theatre. They cover a wide range of contemporary, traditional and pop cultures, and they deliver on our Arts for all Queenslanders policy including both metropolitan and regional propositions.

We are providing \$3 million over four years to put Queensland on the international stage. At the same time we are giving Queensland artists a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to work with and learn from some of the best in the business. We are helping to create performances that are exclusive to Queensland whilst attracting a global audience. I am really excited about the opportunities that lie ahead. I look forward to making some major announcements in the very near future.

Health, Federal Funding

Mrs OSTAPOVITCH: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. I refer the minister to the recent decision by the federal Labor government to cut health grants to Queensland by \$113 million this year alone—federal cuts that amount to the salaries of 1,000 to 2,000 nurses. Will the minister outline any updates on the federal government's sleight of hand?

Mr SPRINGBORG: I thank the honourable member for the question. I know the honourable member, like most honourable members, would have been amazed last year when the Labor Party in this parliament were complicit in supporting Wayne Swan in his brutalisation of the Queensland health system. This year \$103 million will be ripped out of the Queensland health system, and another \$280 million will be ripped out over the next three years. Because this is happening midyear, it is equivalent to 2,000 health jobs. These are the difficulties that our hospital and health boards have in Queensland as they seek to address this brutalisation.

Fresh from being the first Labor Treasurer in the history of the world to be unable to successfully implement a brand-new tax, Wayne Swan is at it again because his sleight of hand goes even further. We have been suggesting for some time that the figures he has been relying upon have been absolutely bodgey, and now we have absolute, complete and irrefutable evidence. In November last year, all of the health ministers gathered together and put out a memo calling on the Commonwealth Treasurer to reverse this terrible attack on our state health systems. These were not just coalition or LNP ministers; these were all the health ministers across Australia.

It is interesting to note that the Commonwealth statistician wrote to the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport to advise them that by using proper ABS data the population rate in Queensland has actually increased from 4.46 million Queenslanders to 4.513 million Queenslanders. That is an increase of 67,000 Queenslanders in the particular reporting period, and that is using absolutely accurate figures. However, we have Wayne Swan using outdated, pre-ABS, pre-census figures to calculate that our population has actually decreased from 4,548,000 Queenslanders to 4,513,000 Queenslanders—a decrease of 35,000. So the anomaly is in the vicinity of 102,000 Queenslanders. The accurate figure is an increase of 67,000, but Wayne Swan is relying on figures that say there has been a reduction of 35,000. That is why the Queensland health system has been completely and absolutely brutalised by Wayne Swan.

Mary Valley Tenant Purchase Scheme

Mr WELLINGTON: My question is to the Deputy Premier. I refer the Deputy Premier to the Mary Valley tenant purchase scheme and note the following: that many of the properties have had no investment of infrastructure on the property since the commencement of the lease, that many of the leases are at less than market rental and that the state has a significant debt that needs to be reduced. Will the government amend the Mary Valley tenant purchase scheme so that tenants are notified that the land will be sold on the open market and if they are not successful in purchasing the property the lease may be brought to a head to facilitate a property sale?

Mr SEENEY: I am delighted to get a question, albeit from a member up in the back corner, because I never get questions from the opposition. I am delighted to get a question especially about an issue that represents a problem that has to be solved. The issue with the Mary Valley was one of the most terrible legacies of the former Labor government, and it is worth noting that that Labor government was supported by the member for Nicklin. In fact, he rushed across here to support them to put them into power, so he too must bear some of the responsibility for the legacy.

That government left a terrible legacy with what happened in the Mary Valley. The communities in the Mary Valley were destroyed. The impact on people's lives was profound. Most of all, the impact on the state budget was something that should never be forgotten. Almost \$500 million was spent purchasing land in the Mary Valley, and that is \$500 million that will never be recovered. It is impossible to ever foresee a situation where we will recover anything but a fraction of the amount of money that the former government spent acquiring that land in the Mary Valley. Of course that was only a small part of the money they wasted on the Traveston Dam proposal—a proposal that was introduced for purely political purposes by a Premier who was in all sorts of trouble facing the water crisis.

While we deal with a whole range of legacies from the Traveston Dam debacle, some things have been high on our list of priorities—dealing with the Mary Valley, restoring life to the Mary Valley and restoring life to the communities of the Mary Valley. We have consulted closely with the people of the Mary Valley and the people of Gympie. The member for Gympie in particular has played a major role in trying to

find a solution to a problem that is foremost among the terrible legacies of the former Labor government. We will be addressing that problem through a range of initiatives. We have sought to access major agricultural enterprises and rebuild the economic base within the Mary Valley. We will then deal with re-establishing the communities, re-establishing the value of the properties within those communities, ensuring that the people who hold the leases that were entered into by the former government are treated fairly and ensuring that the tenants on some of those properties in the Mary Valley are treated fairly. I invite the member for Nicklin and every other member in the House to be part of the solution. The member for Nicklin was part of the problem and now he needs to be part of the solution.

Mr WELLINGTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member is misleading the House. I find those words offensive. They are untrue. They are incorrect. I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: If the member finds those comments offensive, he can write to the Speaker.

Mr WELLINGTON: Mr Deputy Speaker—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Deputy Premier has been asked to withdraw.

Mr SEENEY: I withdraw, even though I do not think it was a personal reflection. But I withdraw—

Mr WELLINGTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, that is a conditional withdrawal.

Mr SEENEY: No, it is not.

Mr WELLINGTON: I asked for an unequivocal withdrawal because the words are incorrect and they deserve rectification.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Nicklin will resume his seat. The Deputy Premier has withdrawn.

Mr SEENEY: I withdraw unconditionally. We will continue to work with the member for Gympie and the communities of the Mary Valley to address the terrible legacy of the former Labor government, which the member for Nicklin supported.

Mr Wellington interjected.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Oil Shale Industry

Mrs MENKENS: My question without notice is to the Premier. Can the Premier advise the House of the economic benefits of commencing an oil shale industry in Queensland and advise of any comments on this announcement?

Mr NEWMAN: I am delighted to answer the question from the honourable member because this government is all about creating jobs and getting Queensland's economy going. We have talked about our four-pillar economic plan, and that is exactly what the announcement about a change of policy on oil shale is all about. This industry has the potential to generate thousands of jobs and many, many billions of dollars in royalties over the years to come, and obviously there will be a whole lot of other benefits in terms of state taxes and charges. In particular, I am focusing on the jobs for Queenslanders.

The point that we have been making is that we are going to do this properly. There has been a pilot plant operating for some time now in Gladstone, and it is quite different from the technology that was used in the plant on the previous go at this. All of the feedback we have had from the community—particularly from the Independent member for Gladstone—is that it has been working well. There has also been proper scientific work done for the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection.

What we have seen so far works. The environmental impacts are not there. Therefore, we should allow the industry to proceed so long as it can continue to demonstrate that it works and does not affect the environment. It is all about jobs; I stress that. What are the Labor Party saying these days? They are all over the shop. I note with some interest commentary in the media today that their reaction yesterday was 'hysterical'. Yes, indeed, it was, but it is more than that; it is the typical flip-flopping and craven political stance—

Mr Nicholls: Cowardice.

Mr NEWMAN:—or cowardice that we see. Who actually gave the approval for this pilot plan? That is right; it was the Australian Labor Party government a few years ago. They announced a moratorium on the McFarlane deposit at Proserpine. We agree with that. That will be maintained. Because it is a pristine area we believe it should be protected. In relation to the plan that they approved, if it was working what was their intention? To have a plan and then to not allow anything to happen? What nonsense! What did the former minister say? In 2008 Geoff Wilson said—

The government will review the technology and if it stacks up economically, technologically and environmentally we will work with industry to see if it could have a broader application further down the track.

What did Peter Beattie say? On 14 August 2010 he said—

One energy source that may require a rethink is shale-oil production.

... Australia could find itself with a clean shale-oil industry employing 6000 people and adding \$30 billion to the economy over the next 20 years. It has the potential to sit alongside clean coal, geothermal, coal seam gas, biofuels, solar and wind in a realistic future global energy mix.

I could not have said it better myself.

(Time expired)

Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts

Ms TRAD: My question without notice is to the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts. I refer the minister to her answer to an earlier question. Will the minister now guarantee that no government workers will lose their job as a result of her outsourcing a reported \$7 billion of government IT services?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. Yet again the Labor Party continues to ask me questions that were answered yesterday. On top of that we had the shadow minister for—

Ms TRAD: I rise to a point of order. The question I asked was in relation to a question she answered earlier today. She is misleading the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member will resume her seat. The minister is answering the question. The minister has the call.

Ms BATES: Again, I reiterate that I answered the question yesterday. The minister can go back and check *Hansard*. I have answered it again this morning. Here we go again; the Labor Party does not have an original thought on anything. I can see that the member for South Brisbane has been trawling through the pages of newspapers to get her ideas. Just once it would be nice to be surprised with a question that actually puts Queenslanders first instead of grubby political point scoring.

As the arts minister, I have travelled far and wide. I have met with many constituents in the arts sector. The one thing that I have noticed, no matter where I go, is the complete and utter absence of the shadow minister. I have actually been listening to the arts community and I am going to continue to listen to them.

Just last week I introduced Queensland's first-ever Arts Investment Advisory Board. Together we are going to streamline the processes, we are going to cut the red tape and we are going to make sure that everyone has access to grants. Arts grants will be much easier to access. We are not going to have pages and pages of applications. We are not going to have a huge pool of grants whereby people try to put square pegs into round holes in order to apply for many different little pots of grants. The people who are on the Arts Investment Advisory Board are leaders in the arts industry and in business. They are going to make sure that no longer will arts groups have to draft their applications to suit a grant that would not even help them at all. I have asked the arts community for feedback on our arts investment framework.

As I said, we are reinvigorating the funding process and we are going to do that to ensure that we have transparency so that all Queenslanders are getting bang for their buck. We are going to check on previous years to ensure that the funding that was applied has been well utilised. We are going to continue to do that. We are going to be open, transparent and honest. I will be making some pretty exciting announcements in the coming months around the investment board, around the Super Star Fund and also about the arts touring fund.

As I mentioned earlier, the boost for touring is getting plenty of attention. Organisations across the state are applying and they are very excited. Together we are going to deliver arts to all Queenslanders—something that the Labor Party never did. We will ensure that every Queenslanders—no matter from which part of this great state—will have access to arts in their own backyard.

(Time expired)

Natural Disasters of 2013

Mr YOUNG: My question without notice is to the Minister for Police and Community Safety. Can the minister inform the House about any outstanding acts of resilience or bravery in response to the floods in Central Queensland?

Mr DEMPSEY: I thank the member for Keppel for his question. Emergency service workers do not do what they do for recognition or fame; they do it for the safety and wellbeing of the communities they serve. During the recent floods we heard tales of amazing courage, both of the community and of our emergency workers. There are hundreds of these stories, many of which we will never hear about.

Today I would like to mention a few instances that stick out in my mind and really highlight the Queensland spirit, such as the story of Marty Dahlstrom, an aircrewman with Emergency Management

Queensland. Marty joined EMQ only a few weeks before the floods and is one of the crew members involved in rescuing hundreds of people from North Bundaberg residences while rapidly rising floodwaters encroached their properties. For Marty, the Bundaberg assignment was truly a baptism of fire because, until then, he had never carried out even one aerial winch of a person. As the floodwaters began pushing homes from their foundations, Marty and his fellow crew members began the mammoth task of lifting men, women and children to higher ground. Over an intense 12-hour shift Marty went from zero winches under his belt to saving the lives of 50 people.

Similarly, I would like to mention firefighter Brett Williams, a swift water rescue technician who entered raging floodwaters near Rockhampton to save a 14-year-old boy. As the boy clung for his life to a lone tree, floodwaters carrying sharp and dangerous debris flowed around him. It was here that firefighter Williams geared up and entered the torrent supported by his crew. While keeping an eye out for life-threatening debris, firefighter Williams reached the boy and hauled him to safety. As the boy reached safe ground, officer Williams himself was dragged downstream but luckily he too made it to safety. In fact, I called shortly afterwards to thank firefighter Williams only to be told that he was again involved in another rescue. Police Inspector Kev Gutheridge is another standout who entered isolated areas and did an amazing job of ensuring that these communities could be resupplied, commence the recovery and get people's lives back on track.

Finally, I would just like to extend a special Valentine's Day congratulations to Bundaberg bride Casey Franks, who walks down the aisle in Bundaberg today. Casey and her groom, Steven Fletcher, have forged ahead with their special day despite the floods doing everything possible to spoil it. Casey helped clean up the East Bundaberg Sports Club after the floods but realised the reception venue would never be ready in time. But in typical fashion, the Bundaberg community rallied round this young couple who will marry in the community gardens at the Salvation Army's Tom Quinn Community Centre.

It is stories such as these that best sum up the 'never say die' spirit of the Queensland community. This spirit has to live on and we have to make sure we show the love of all fellow Queenslanders. I appeal to all honourable members and members of the community to ensure they keep donating to the 2013 flood appeal.

Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts

Mrs SCOTT: My question is to the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts. I refer to the government's six-month action plan released last month and the absence of any mention of IT initiatives, and I ask: will the minister explain the policy vacuum?

Ms BATES: I have to take a deep breath before I answer this question because it is just so absurd. Talk about a policy vacuum! We have not seen one policy from those opposite since we have taken government—not one—let alone a question. It is like walking into a brick wall. Let us talk about the Labor government and IT. We have, as I have mentioned before, done the first comprehensive IT audit across the whole of government. I have led this audit and I certainly know how, as I mentioned yesterday—

Mrs SCOTT: I rise to a point of order. May I table the document for the information of the minister?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Yes, you may table the document. I note, though, that the minister is answering the question and the minister has the call.

Tabled paper: Department of the Premier and Cabinet: January-June 2013 Six-month action plan [\[2088\]](#).

Ms BATES: I thank the member opposite, but I think I am pretty sure I know what is in my six-month action plan and I am pretty sure it is on the web for everybody to see. Then again, you would have to know how to get on the internet to do that! Secondly, my charter letter on the government website clearly shows exactly what my responsibilities are. As I have mentioned before, it is the Labor government that has left us with a mess that was going to cost Queenslanders—if we continued on the same track as it did—between \$3 billion and \$7 billion. We cannot afford that. We are going out to industry. It takes time. Those opposite who were in cabinet understand these types of initiatives that we are looking at—the future of Shared Services, of CITEC, of storage and going to the cloud for email and going to the cloud for storage. We have been left with issues like trying to consolidate 27 data centres around the CBD which are costing an absolute arm and a leg.

These things do not happen overnight. They require submissions to cabinet. They require CBRC submissions, and that is what I am doing. I am getting on with the job. I am not going to make the same mistakes that those opposite made. I am not going to make a knee-jerk reaction and send someone over to replace a Health payroll system that was not broken in the first place. I am not going to turn off any systems before I know that everything actually works. We are going to make sure that we do things right. I have also led the planning for the new government wireless network—an initiative, as I said, that had stalled under the last government. It wanted to continue on the same way. We had to scrap IDES. How many times have I talked about the mess that the Labor government left us in, and it has taken all of this time to get a

question from those opposite! We have a big problem to solve. I am working with my team, I am working with my colleagues and we are going to get it right. I am going to make sure—

A government member interjected.

Ms BATES: Yes, exactly. I am going to make sure that we get things right, and it will take time.

(Time expired)

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I call the member for Logan. There is one minute on the clock.

Natural Disaster Events of 2013, Recovery Assistance

Mr PUCCI: My question without notice is to the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection. Can the minister please outline the proactive and practical steps the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection is taking to help the Queensland community recover from ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The time for question time has expired. Before the Clerk reads the next order of the day, I want to acknowledge in the gallery students from John Paul College in Daisy Hill. We welcome you.

TRANSPORT, HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr HOBBS** (Warrego—LNP) (11.03 am): On behalf of the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee, I present the committee's report No. 13, *Review of the Retirement Villages Act 1999*. The committee has consulted widely and gathered evidence from key industry groups including retirement villages, scheme operators, residents, industry participants and relevant experts. I want to acknowledge those who have briefed the committee and provided submissions and others who informed the committee's deliberations through participation in the inquiry process. Many issues were identified during the inquiry, including those relating to the exit fee model provided by the act, the quality of the current public information document and the need for some fundamental principles to guide retirement villages' decision making and relationships within villages. One of the particularly important recommendations that we have made is that residents' contracts include the detailed formulas that will be used to calculate exit fees, one of the major issues we dealt with. A number of inquiry participants noted the complexity associated with navigating the act and their understanding of what it means for them. So the committee has recommended the development of a series of fact sheets to be written in plain English to assist prospective, current and former residents, their families and operators at key times where access to clear information could prove invaluable. I thank the committee secretariat and the Education and Innovation Committee secretariat for their support and assistance throughout this inquiry process. I commend the report to the House. I move—

That the House take note of report No. 13 of the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee tabled on 29 November 2012.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

STATE DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND INDUSTRY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

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

AGRICULTURE, RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr RICKUSS** (Lockyer—LNP) (11.06 am): I move—

That the House take note of report No. 13 of the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee tabled on 30 November 2012.

On 7 June last year the House referred an inquiry to the committee to look at ways to reduce the regulatory requirements impacting on the state's resources and agricultural industries while also promoting economic development and balancing environmental concerns. Report No. 13 is from that inquiry. When the Newman government came to power, there were over 72,000 pages of primary and subordinate legislation in force in Queensland. In the state's agricultural sector, farmers were struggling under the burden of 55 separate acts and regulations. Not surprisingly, the Newman government, which is sensitive

to the plight of rural producers and other industries, committed to reduce the burden of regulation in Queensland by 20 per cent over six years. For our inquiry the committee published an issues paper, called for public submissions and received expert briefings from government agencies, peak industry bodies and tested the evidence presented at public hearings. We thank the submitters and others who assisted with this work.

Good regulation is a hallmark of good government and a strong economy. Good regulation strikes the right balance between economic objectives and other objectives such as consumer protection, public health and safety, law and order, and the protection of the environment. The regulation framework composed by government creates costs for businesses and industries. In today's tough economic environment, we in the House need to regulate sparingly. We need to be careful that the laws we pass are not too broad in their coverage and do not impose excessive reporting or recording requirements on our businesses, particularly small businesses. We also need to be sure that definitions used in legislation are sensible and consistent and to check from time to time that laws are still needed and that different acts do not impose overlapping regulatory requirements. Most importantly, where possible, we need to ensure that legislation is written in plain English that everyone can understand.

In our inquiry the committee noted a range of methods governments can use to lighten the regulatory burdens imposed on businesses, including those within the state's agricultural resources industry. Many of these are already happening in Queensland. The committee welcomed the establishment of the Office of Best Practice Regulation within the Queensland Competition Authority to drive the regulatory review process across the government. We also noted comments by submitters about the importance of government engaging effectively with stakeholders during policy development processes as a method to reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens. Getting stakeholders involved at the very beginning is one of the most important parts of the regulatory process. Unfortunately, previously this had rarely happened. We hope to see this change. We want real consultation with stakeholders.

Our report endorsed the proposal by the Queensland Competition Authority to formalise stakeholder consultation as a permanent feature of the regulatory process in Queensland. In our report the committee supported the Office of Best Practice's proposals to measure regulatory requirements based on the periodic survey method used in the British Columbia in Canada.

We also noted the importance of regulatory impact statements to good regulation. The culture of regulation must change to a more balanced approach, particularly in the agriculture, resources and environment portfolios. The submitters to our inquiry expressed a range of conflicting views about identifying and balancing the competing economic and environmental considerations in regulatory proposals. Given the complexity of many environmental considerations, we concluded that there may be a role for a further independent forum or panel of experts in addition to the Queensland Competition Authority to consider contentious regulatory proposals. We also concluded that any assessment of the costs and benefits of environmental regulations must reflect long-term impacts.

Our report noted the special role of local government in achieving better regulations for the state's resources and agricultural industries. There is also a need for better consultation between state and local governments to deal with inefficient and unnecessary regulatory burdens.

The committee made four main recommendations to the inquiry: having real consultation at the outset with people who would be affected by the regulations and considering all non-regulatory options; examining the need for an independent forum or expert panels to consider contentious regulatory proposals with competing environmental and economic implications; regular contact between departments and local governments about implementing regulations and reducing duplication; and considering the use of a single dedicated act to govern the state's growing aquaculture industry to reduce the regulatory burdens while balancing environmental protections.

I would also like to thank the committee and also the staff who worked extremely hard on this report. I commend it to the House.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

TRANSPORT, HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr HOBBS** (Warrego—LNP) (11.11 am): On behalf of the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee, I am pleased to present the committee's report No. 14 titled *Inquiry into the operation and performance of the Queensland Building Services Authority 2012*.

Throughout the inquiry the committee consulted widely and gathered evidence from key consumer and industry groups as well as numerous individual consumers and builders. I would like to acknowledge

those who have briefed the committee, provided written submissions and others who have informed the committee's deliberations through their participation in the inquiry process. The committee is particularly appreciative of the effort made by many individual homeowners and contractors who have made the effort to provide evidence, even though it has taken considerable energy to experience again what for many has been an emotionally and financially distressing experience. As one submitter noted, building or renovating a house is often one of the most expensive and emotionally charged experiences in a consumer's life.

The committee notes in general that the construction industry in Queensland is overwhelmingly compliant, with a high percentage of builders completing projects to an acceptable standard and that relatively few residential building projects end in dispute. This is evidenced by the figures for 2011-12. There was a total of 73,256 insurable building contracts, with 4,726 complaints received by the QBSA and 896 directions to rectify issued. However, the committee is also very aware—very, very aware—that for the small percentage of homeowners who are in dispute with a building contractor and who proceed to claim it is often a very stressful experience, both emotionally and financially.

Given the limited time frame for the inquiry, the committee received a significant amount of detailed evidence from submitters and witnesses. The committee has taken a strategic approach to the evidence and has recommended changes to the current building services framework and functions, which it believes will help to alleviate some of the issues raised by making the process more straightforward and transparent. The committee has also referred a number of issues to the Minister for Housing and Public Works to undertake further examination in consultation with industry and consumers.

Overall, the committee made 41 recommendations, but I would like to deal with two of them. The committee recommended that, in the interests of improved confidence and transparency, the one-stop shop model for the provision of Queensland government building services be discontinued and that the Queensland Building Services Authority be disbanded as soon as alternative mechanisms for delivering its functions can be established. The committee also recommended that the Minister for Housing and Public Works restructure the building services currently provided by the QBSA so that there is a clear and transparent divide between the roles of licensing, the management of directions to rectify and complete work, and the management of the limited home warranty scheme.

I wish to thank the members of the committee for their dedicated consideration of the issues covered by the inquiry. I thank the committee secretariat for their support and assistance throughout the inquiry process. I commend the report to the House. I move—

That the House take note of report No. 14 of the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee tabled on 30 November 2012.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

CLASSIFICATION OF COMPUTER GAMES AND IMAGES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 31 October 2012 (see p. 2298).

Second Reading



Hon. JP BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (11.15 am): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I thank the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee for its consideration of the Classification of Computer Games and Images and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. I note that the committee tabled its report on the bill on 4 February 2013 and I table a government response to that committee report.

Tabled paper: Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee: Report No. 20—Classification of Computer Games and Images and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, government response [\[2089\]](#).

The committee made four recommendations. The committee's first recommendation, that the Classification of Computer Games and Images and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 be passed, is quite welcome. Recommendation 2 is that the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, after liaising with relevant ministers, update the Legislative Assembly on the status of the government's consideration of strategies for determining the effect of violent computer games on youth violence and continue to monitor the effects of violent computer games post the introduction of the R18+ classification and report to the Legislative Assembly in 24 months on its findings.

On 27 August 2010, the former government tabled the Queensland government's response to the final report on the Law, Safety and Justice Committee's inquiry into alcohol related violence. Recommendation 2 of that report was that the government consider strategies for determining the effect of

violent video games on youth violence, including literature reviews, case studies and investigation. The response of the former government stated that the then department of communities will utilise and build upon work undertaken at the Commonwealth level in the development of strategies responding to youth violent offending. This will include analysis of existing literature and case studies on the effect of violent video games on youth violence.

In that same year, at the request of the ministers of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General, the Commonwealth Attorney-General's department prepared a comprehensive literature review on the impact of playing violent video games on aggression. The purpose of the review was to assist the ministers in considering whether the national classification scheme should be amended to include the R18+ classification for computer games. The review concluded that research into the effects of violent video games on aggression is contested and inconclusive. The government is of the view that the 2010 Commonwealth literature review fulfils the recommendation for analysis of existing literature on the effects of violent video games.

In relation to the recommendation for future monitoring, the Queensland government does not support that recommendation. Research solely on the effects of violent computer games would be problematic as this is the only one possible causal factor leading to youth violence. It would be extremely difficult to develop a rigorous research methodology that would allow research to isolate the effect of one possible causal factor from the many other causal factors that may impact on youth violence, for example, child neglect and abuse, family violence, alcohol and drug misuse.

Recommendation 3 is that the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice consider what information relating to the ongoing operation of the arrangement entered into by the chief executive are intended to be released by the government under the open data initiative, which was announced in 2012. I can advise that the following information will appear on the Queensland government e-tender website upon announcement of the successful tender: one, tender documents relating to the invitation to offer for recording and transcription services; two, the number of offers sought by government; three, the evaluation criteria and weighting set by the government; four, an overview of the contract entered into with the successful tenderer, the form of the contract with the successful tender, the deliverables that are expected of the successful tenderer under the contract, the contract milestones and how the contract performance is proposed to be managed by the government

Recommendation 4 is that the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice consider a suitable mechanism for controlling the price of providing transcripts be implemented as part of the outsourcing arrangements. The outsourcing arrangements are not yet settled. The government will give consideration to including a suitable mechanism for controlling the price of transcripts. I can state, however, that it is not intended to control the price of transcripts produced by a private provider by regulation.

I would like to foreshadow that I intend to propose a number of amendments to the bill, all relating to the Recording of Evidence Act 1962, during the consideration in detail of the bill. These amendments have been, if not will be, circulated in my name. The amendments will address concerns raised by the Bar Association of Queensland in its submission to the committee. The purpose of the bill's amendments to the Recording of Evidence Act is to enable the outsourcing of the State Reporting Bureau's functions of recording and transcribing legal proceedings in Queensland. Arbitration, inquiries and examinations are not recorded or transcribed by the State Reporting Bureau and are not intended to be the subject of the outsourcing arrangements. The amendments will make special provision for the recording and transcribing of inquiry and examination proceedings by way of permitting inquiries and examiners to opt to make their own arrangements rather than require them to make contract with the provider with whom the state will contract for the work in the courts and tribunals. This will reflect current arrangements and will ensure no disruption to inquiries and examinations on foot. It does not preclude arrangements being made for the state contracted provider to undertake work in those types of proceedings should that be appropriate and prove convenient. This will ensure that current arrangements for inquiries and examinations can continue without disruption and with maximum convenience whilst maintaining that these proceedings are subject to the Recording of Evidence Act.

The amendments will also remove the arbitration proceedings from the ambit of the Recording of Evidence Act. This is being done to reflect what is effectively the current practice—that is, that parties make private arrangements for recording and transcribing—and to overcome the issues outlined by the president of the Bar Association of Queensland in his submission to the committee. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of others who have made submissions on this bill to the committee.

In closing I would like to take this opportunity to deal with one final matter arising from the introduction of the R18+ category for computer games. The new regime has resulted in the separation of the previous Guidelines for the Classification of Films and Computer Games 2008 into two separate guidelines: the Guidelines for the Classification of Computer Games 2012, which I tabled on 31 October 2012, and the new Guidelines for the Classification of Films 2012, which were gazetted by the

Commonwealth government on 19 December 2012. In accordance with the Intergovernmental Agreement on Censorship, I will now table the Guidelines for the Classification of Films 2012.

Tabled paper: Guidelines for the Classification of Films 2012 [2090].

I look forward to the debate that will commence and I look forward to the consideration from the many gamers we have in the parliament. Particularly I am looking forward to the member for Brisbane Central's contribution because I know that he is a keen gamer in the scheme of things.

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.22 am): The opposition will be supporting the majority of the Classification of Computer Games and Images and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I wish to place on record the opposition's particular support for the R18+ classification of computer games as it offers families better guidance with respect to determining their children's computer and console game usage. It is worth noting that the process to introduce an R18+ classification for computer games began in 2009 when the then federal Attorney-General released a discussion paper. The paper received more than 58,000 responses, with the overwhelming majority supporting the R18+ classification regime. At the time Labor was in government in Queensland and gave in-principle support for the introduction of this particular classification. During the past couple of years a period of consultation between the states and the federal government has followed, resulting in the federal parliament passing legislation to classify computer games as R18+. This law came into effect on 1 January 2013.

As part of the consultation process, the states agreed to also introduce complementary legislation to enable enforcement of an R18+ classification for games. The agreement meant this was to take effect on 1 January 2013. I am aware that most of the states have met the 1 January timeline. However, we are debating it today at the first opportunity in the sitting and I think members would agree that we do thoroughly support the intent of what the federal government has done and we do want to make sure that we are in line with it.

I acknowledge that there have been concerns expressed about the content of computer games likely to be classified as R18+. The former South Australian Attorney-General Michael Atkinson has said—

I am concerned about the level of violence in society and the widespread acceptance of simulated violence as a form of entertainment. I am particularly concerned about the impact of this extreme content on children and vulnerable adults.

The main areas of concern for the groups opposed to the R18+ classification are the protection of young people from violent content, difficulties for parents preventing their children from accessing inappropriate material, violent video games promoting violent behaviour and damaging depictions of women in video games. The main objections to an R18+ classification relate to the protection of children and the impact of media violence on the young. Many submissions to the discussion paper released by the Attorney-General cited research that video games can promote aggressive and antisocial behaviour in game players. Almost a year after the discussion paper was released, the department released a literature review into whether there is a link between playing violent computer games and aggressive behaviour. The overall conclusion of this 50-page publication was that research into the effect of violent video games on aggression is contested and inconclusive. The games that are of concern are very few in number and we should keep it in perspective. In 2011-12 the Classification Board made 827 commercial computer game classification decisions. The number of classification decisions was highest in the G and PG categories, with 395 and 229 decisions respectively. In contrast, decisions in the M and MA15+ categories were substantially lower: 109 and 91 decisions respectively. Only three commercial computer games were refused classification, rated RC, in 2011-12. Each of these three computer games received the RC classification because, under the National Classification Code, the games were deemed unsuitable for a minor to see or play.

Protection of children from unsuitable material is an important aspect of the classification scheme. Governments from all jurisdictions need to remain vigilant that the guidelines we are putting in place provide that protection. Under the National Classification Scheme the states and territories are responsible for the enforcement of classification decisions. The responsibility of the Queensland government in this context is to ensure that adequate resources are available to carry out that enforcement responsibility. I would like to ask the Attorney-General to please give his guarantee to this parliament and to all the members of this House that there will be no reduction in funding to the inspectors to carry out this important work.

While there are elements of this bill that will be supported by the opposition, there is one particular section that we will not support. I inform the House that the opposition will be opposing Part 8 of this bill, the section that enables the outsourcing of court recording and transcription services. The opposition has a number of very serious concerns about the outsourcing of court reporting services. We have previously raised concerns about the protection and integrity of confidential information and have sought assurances in relation to the timeliness and accuracy of court transcriptions in Queensland. Unfortunately, when I raised these issues at estimates last year the Attorney-General simply dismissed me and stated, 'The

member ought not be concerned about those issues.' The Attorney-General fails to acknowledge that these valid concerns are real and are shared by large sections of our community.

To illustrate I would like to bring to the attention of the House a letter written to the Attorney-General by Spark & Cannon Australasia Pty Ltd. The letter was written to inform the Attorney-General that Spark & Cannon would not be submitting a response to the invitation to tender for the outsourcing of court transcription services. Viewing the website of Spark & Cannon one can see that they have been supplying court recording and transcription services for 47 years and supply state and federal governments with recording and transcription services. Clearly this is a company that has a long history in providing these types of services and has detailed knowledge of the industry. When a company with so much experience writes to the Attorney-General to tell him, 'We feel the ITO does not represent an achievable request with its rigid timelines for any company currently in the industry,' alarm bells should be ringing.

To be fair, at estimates the Attorney-General did make mention of seeing 'Peter from Auscript' when he was shadow Attorney-General and subsequently met with him when he was the minister, I believe on 13 June 2012. I do not know—and perhaps the Attorney can clarify—whether it was during one of those discussions that the Attorney-General formed the view that outsourcing Queensland court reporting was achievable.

During estimates, the Attorney-General also indicated he received complaints about the transcription services provided by the State Reporting Bureau. Presumably, this was one of the justifications for embarking on this program of outsourcing. After taking on notice the question of how many written complaints he received, the Attorney was able to indicate that the number of written complaints was three. The opposition submitted a right of information request for any documents relating to Queensland's court reporting and transcription services and/or the possible outsourcing of those sources. The time period was 3 April to the present. One can imagine the opposition's surprise when the RTI was returned stating that any documents, including these mysterious letters, were either non-existent or unlocatable. We can confirm that at least one letter has now been sent to the Attorney-General, the letter from Spark & Cannon. To receive such a detailed letter of complaint from such a senior member of the industry, which points out the many shortcomings of the Attorney's plan before the tender has been awarded, must ring alarm bells for those opposite who have actual business experience.

The first thing that the Attorney-General needs to understand is that, despite his comments at estimates that I 'ought not be concerned about those issues', I am concerned and I am quite sure that others are just as concerned. The Attorney-General needs to let the House know if a probity advisor was appointed to this project from the outset to oversee the process. The Attorney needs to inform the House how many businesses submitted a response to the invitation to offer. He then needs to let the House know how many of those tenders were deemed compliant. Queenslanders needs to be assured that the plan put forward by the Attorney-General at least represents value for money and was awarded on a competitive basis, otherwise the LNP is just outsourcing court reporting services to a private monopoly, which will see costs blow out into the future. In the interests of transparency and accountability, the former employees of the State Reporting Bureau deserve to understand how the tender was awarded.

The letter sent to the Attorney-General raises some of the potential issues with the tender process and the plan to outsource court recording and transcription services in Queensland. The letter states—

There are too many unanswered questions resulting in the respondent make assumptions and accordingly costs in these assumptions. The risks involved with this is unacceptable to Spark & Cannon and we feel should be a serious concern to all users covered by the ITO.

If there are limited companies submitting compliant bids, how is this cost being controlled and managed? The ITO looks like a rush job. I understand that the companies responding to the ITO had, effectively, 13 working days to investigate the opportunity and respond to the ITO following the briefing session due to the Christmas break. If a company had a head start, it might have been able to submit a concise and fully costed bid. However, Spark & Cannon believe that—

Due to the Christmas period we are limited to only 13 working days to accumulate all pricing information and transition information from third parties and in our opinion this significantly increases risk with rushed and potentially incomplete decisions. Spark & Cannon was not prepared to either inflate our prices, to estimate the costs, or alternatively accept the risk to underestimate rates in any proposal.

I can only hope that the other companies submitting bids had that much integrity.

With over 40 years in the industry, Spark & Cannon has 'not experienced a more rigid timeframe, both from the respondent's point of view and that of the panel responsible for assessing the tender'. The letter indicates that this is 'by far the biggest single contract to be let in the industry' and that the 'contract will be provided to only one company' and a panel of providers would not be considered which, as members would be aware, is considered normal business practice for other large government contracts.

I understand the notice given to set up the technical demonstration was just two days when the industry expects five days notice. This makes it very difficult to assess the companies, unless they were prepared in advance of the notice. While we are talking about the technical demonstration, I must inform the House that the 'respondent is required to supply all the hardware, software, networks and personnel to provide the services'. Given the very strict time line to have the court reporting system operational, I am sure that the Attorney would be aware that—

There is no current contract in the industry which requires services over such a wide expanse to be delivered in such a rigid transition period. There is significant risk involved to both the respondent and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General with this approach.

The risk is exacerbated when 'detailed court plans or cable diagrams are not available' when requested by Spark & Cannon. Spark & Cannon believes there is a greater risk to the companies involved and also to the Queensland courts. They repeatedly spell out, in chapter and verse, as well as provide detailed examples of other projects and clearly state why the timeframe associated with the technical infrastructure build and information technology requirements pose such a risk. The Attorney-General needs to outline who provided the advice in relation to the information technology requirements of this ITO.

At the 2012 estimates, in response to question on notice No. 11, the Attorney-General indicated that 750 jobs in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General had been abolished. Further risks identified included the geographical expanse of Queensland, the lack of detailed information relating to 130 courthouses, including basic information such as cabling plans, and the lack of information relating to the heritage listed buildings across the state that house many of our courtrooms. The risks, as assessed by Spark & Cannon, also include 'not achieving the time frames and the imposition of liquidated damages was considered unacceptable'.

Strangely, 'The ITO details that current equipment infrastructure and accommodation will not be available for the successful respondent to use.' What is happening to all of the equipment that the department has already in place? Spark & Cannon believes that these issues would add 'significant costs to our hourly recording and transcription services, to the extent that value for money to the Department of Justice and Attorney-General was a concern'. They 'estimate that this would have added between 30 and 50 per cent to our fees'. The fact a company would have to increase its price by 30 to 50 per cent because of a rushed and ill-thought-out process has its own problems associated with it. Both the Bar Association of Queensland and the Queensland Law Society have provided warnings in relation to rising costs associated with this plan, which will be passed on to the clients. I doubt that any client, including businesses in Queensland, would be prepared to pay an extra 30 to 50 per cent because all of these issues have not been thoroughly considered and thought through as part of the tender.

Some of these rights and protections in the context of court reporting and transcription services have potentially life-threatening consequences and breaches of trust have the potential to derail significant criminal investigations, especially in the context of closed hearings that deal with confidential or sensitive matters. I raised these concerns at estimates and voiced concern about the tender process in New South Wales where people with convictions for serious criminal offences and who are under investigation by ICAC were awarded contracts. The Attorney's response to me simply was, 'The member ought not be concerned about those issues.' I am afraid that the Queensland Law Society is also worried. It states 'that courts and the government will not have the same level of assurance of confidentiality of control over transcript management as it did when transcript services were managed by the State Reporting Bureau'. I ask the Attorney-General to give his assurance during his address in reply and not just dismiss my question that the confidentiality in court transcription services will be upheld and maintained.

In light of the concerns raised about the process, I would like the Attorney-General to explain the inspection regime and the enforcement mechanisms available to him should the rollout not go to the strict time line or, on a worst-case scenario, the integrity of the process is questioned. We should bear in mind that, in serious criminal matters or those involving protected witnesses or covert operations, lives could be put at risk. Some of the members opposite, especially those more qualified in both the legal and business areas, must be beginning to have similar concerns.

I now draw the attention of the House to the concerns of Spark & Cannon in relation to the requirements of the Fair Work Amendment Act. Spark & Cannon has sought advice and believes that it could not recruit current employees of the State Reporting Bureau until three months after their employment is terminated. That means the company that wins the bid will have to provide or train its own workforce, while a well trained, competent and experienced workforce sits by the sidelines.

The vice-president of the Australasian Court Reporting Industry Association states—

The timeframe to undertake this recruiting process is beyond the ability of any company in the industry without jeopardising quality and delivery of service to the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

I question whether the staff can be adequately trained in time to provide the same level of service that the courts and other stakeholders have previously been able to rely on, with the service expertly provided by the State Reporting Bureau.

Given the fact that staff who have been sacked by this government should be able to have a legitimate expectation of being able to work in the area in which they are trained and have considerable experience and expertise, why would this expertise not be able to be utilised by the successful tenderer? The Attorney-General must outline how he will ensure the winning bidder complies with every requirement of the Fair Work Amendment Act and if he agrees with Spark & Cannon that this will add significant cost to the tender and add additional recruiting risks.

The successful respondent will be able to sell transcripts it transcribes during civil hearings. The ITO has no control over the price of these transcripts. The recommendations of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee's report highlight concerns over these costs—concerns that have also been raised by Spark & Cannon, the Queensland Law Society and the Bar Association of Queensland. Some control over the price is needed to ensure that members of the community are not priced out of the justice system which, I have been informed, has been the complaint of other states that have already gone down this path.

We should also be concerned about a process that sets up a private company to operate a monopoly business in Queensland. That is one of the chief criticisms, that:

The ITO, once decided, will effectively create a monopoly in Queensland. At the end of the contract period, the infrastructure costs required by the new supplier would be prohibitive and add significantly to any offer. The incumbent would not have to provide for these in their prices in future tenders. It has the potential to increase costs accordingly to all users of the services.

The opposition supports the part of the bill relating to the introduction of an R18+ classification system. However, as far as the court transcription services are concerned, we do not believe that they should have been put out to tender and there have been insufficient guarantees and safeguards around the process to permit the opposition to support just this part of the bill. We are not convinced that the outsourcing of these services is warranted nor that it will provide better services or better value for money for the government and consumers of these services.

The only other matter I wanted to raise is that the Attorney-General foreshadowed that he would be moving a number of amendments. It would be helpful if the Attorney would give consideration to giving my office a briefing on those amendments over the lunch break. From what he outlined, I did not see any real problems with them. I seek his guidance in relation to that matter.

 **Mr BERRY** (Ipswich—LNP) (11.42 am): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Classification of Computer Games and Images and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. I support the passage of the bill through the Legislative Assembly and will outline my reasons for doing so. There are two issues for this House to debate. The provisions relating to classification of computer games and images and changes to the Recording of Evidence Act are the issues primarily to be dealt with in this bill.

The passing of the amendments to the Classification of Computer Games and Images Act 1995 has this state adopt a statutory position which aligns Queensland with the Commonwealth and other states. As globalism has taken hold through various conduits, of which the internet is a major influence, it is expected that the federal government and other states adopt a uniform approach. Queensland will join in the passing of this legislation because, in this instance, uniformity must prevail.

Queensland does not have a rating for computer games where the content is not suitable for people under the age of 18 years. Parliament is now required to consider that question. The development of the legislative process to make these amendments has long been in the making, and this bill crystallises that development. The time taken to develop and implement this reform for Queenslanders is certainty through uniformity.

Not to include an R18+ classification undoubtedly causes a hiatus for law enforcement in this state. The consequence may be that very simply we do not have a classification so distributors in Queensland cannot sell their adult computer games. Objectors may consider this to be a desirable outcome. Games with some level of violence may fit within an existing MA15+—that is, not suitable for people under 15 years. Other games may be unable to squeeze into this category.

Australians are more mobile than they have ever been before, particularly young people. It follows logically that it takes little effort for a consumer to attend another state, where the classification exists, and purchase the game which may be illegal to purchase in Queensland. The option to purchase through the mail also exists. Given people's mobility, travelling interstate is simply so easy. It is trite for us to suggest that this will not happen when experience has told us that this has happened previously. In past years X-rated DVDs and VCR videos were purchased through the mail in circumstances where one state legalised it and another state did not. The precedent is there for all to consider. That, of course, does not take into account the internet, as I have said previously, and the fact that it is now so easy and so comfortable for young people to obtain material, games and so forth over the internet.

The effect will be for R18+ to be sold to people in Queensland over which law enforcement will have no control and therefore there cannot be a deterrent. By enacting this R18+ classification the position will be that the consumer will have the ability to be able to sample and purchase computer games and images in Queensland through retailers who will have a proper understanding of the classifications and do the right thing. It will never affect those people who sell illegally. It will be an offence. That is the point of the legislation. The fact is that there will always be a proper retail market and an illegal market. That is the essence of allowing law enforcement to be able to enforce the laws that we have, of which this will be one pillar. We work on the fact that our laws have a basic tenet of deterrence.

Fortifying the passing of this legislation, the Commonwealth Attorney-General's department published the results of 58,437 valid submissions directly relating to R18+ classification, of which 98 per cent supported its introduction. I make the additional submission that it is only a general community value. Such surveys of submissions show a number of reasons as to why there may be overlobbying relating to small sections of the Australian community. The percentage in favour is so overwhelming and the logic is there. The logic is overwhelming for our state to embrace change by adopting the extra classification thus accepting the pragmatic position of allowing our law enforcement agencies to take as much control as they can, having regard to resources available including expanding detection resources as they become available.

The scope of the amendment is indeed wide enough to be able to control the showing of computer game images to people under 18 years of age. These amendments allow for the control of labelling and advertising; prohibiting private demonstrations; prohibiting the sale to minors; prohibiting the sale or delivery without classification which, if it had one, would be R18+; and prohibiting the public demonstration of MA15+ or R18+ classifications except where the markings of the displayed game are previously displayed.

The range of penalties are indeed of a deterring effect. The maximum penalties range from 40 penalty units for lesser evils to 100 penalty units for the ones who have the greater influence on our young people. For uniformity, there is an alignment of definitions with the Commonwealth legislation. The net effect of it is that uniformity is paramount for this system to work.

There is an argument from submitters who oppose the passing of this legislation to advocate that, if the R18+ category becomes law, then strict guidelines must be enacted so that the classification of guidelines should be implemented to give maximum protection to people under the age of 18 years. I would respectfully say that that will be done. Again, I emphasise the need for uniformity in the classification of categories. To do otherwise defeats the purpose of the intent of the legislation.

The guidelines have been reviewed, and now all state and territory ministers who are responsible for this legislation have agreed to the guidelines as revised. The essence of this legislation is to give parents an educative guidance on what is inappropriate for their children and simultaneously controlling the demonstration, sale, delivery and advertising of games with a complementary enforcement regime by creating these new offences.

The Recording of Evidence Act 1962 is amended by this bill, the effect of which is the outsourcing of the recording and transcribing of legal proceedings in Queensland. It is not disputed that the State Reporting Bureau has played an integral part in the maintenance of justice in this state. This is also from my own personal knowledge. I have had the experience of interacting with the State Reporting Bureau. I remember Mr Earle Rawlings, a former director of that organisation, who ran it with impeccable integrity. However, times pass on. A system of recording and transcription using modern systems and new-age technologies at a reduced cost and applying, at least to some degree, a user-pays principle must be an improvement.

This legislative change is not novel. In other states and the Commonwealth such a course has already been adopted. We are not reinventing the wheel. Queensland courts are, for the most part, public institutions. Citizens are entitled to be spectators at hearings and of course it is an element of democracy, and with that democracy there is a price to pay. This price perhaps ought to be shared in some way with not only Queenslanders but those who use the courts. To suggest a part user-pays principle is not errant. It is a reasonable approach.

There are other matters to consider. Consultation with the judiciary has indicated that the judiciary has concerns in relation to various matters such as privacy, confidentiality, archiving, storage and so forth. Not much will change in relation to that, but clearly these are matters which will be taken into account, as the judicial officers know what is required for their courts to run efficiently.

Again, with the advent of new technologies and the uptake of those technologies in this digital revolution, there is now greater competition, with new players in the market, new software and new management types with an ever-changing employment market, which now we should take advantage of by having organisations tender in a cost-effective way for the recording and transcription of evidence.

I take nothing away from the men and women of the State Reporting Bureau. They certainly fulfilled their role in a timely way. But it must be said that the only constant in a modern global economy is change. This state, as with all private enterprises, will compete by embracing that change and moving with the times. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mrs RICE** (Mount Coot-tha—LNP) (11.53 am): I rise in support of the Classification of Computer Games and Images and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. The bill makes several amendments, as we have heard this morning, to establish the regulatory system in Queensland for a new R18+ classification category. The bill also amends the Classification of Films Act 1981 to transfer to the director of the Commonwealth Classification Board the function of granting exemptions to enable the exhibition of unclassified films at specified events, such as films festivals; the Neighbourhood Disputes Resolution Act 2011 to amend the short title of the act; and the Recording of Evidence Act 1962 to enable the outsourcing of the recording and transcribing of legal proceedings in Queensland.

The bill also makes miscellaneous amendments to the Classification of Publications Act 1991 consistent with the computer game and film classification legislation to provide protection against criminal liability for officials; amendments to the Criminal Code consequential to the amendments to the Classification of Computer Games and Images Act 1995 in relation to defences for offences relating to child exploitation; and consequential or minor amendments to a range of other acts listed in the schedules to the bill.

Computer games, films and certain publications must be classified before they can be legally sold or exhibited for the public, which is regulated by the Commonwealth and states and territories under the National Classification Scheme. In particular, the bill makes amendments to the Classification of Computer Games and Images Act 1995 to prohibit the public demonstration, or attempted demonstration, of an R18+ computer game in the presence of a minor; to prohibit the private demonstration of an R18+ computer game in the presence of a minor unless the person demonstrating the game is the parent or guardian or has the consent of a parent or guardian; to prohibit the sale or delivery of an R18+ computer game to a minor; to prohibit the sale or delivery of computer games which, if classified, would be classified as R18+; and to prohibit the public demonstration of a computer game classified as MA15+ or R18+ unless the determined markings for the game are displayed before the game is demonstrated.

On 26 September 2012, the Commonwealth gazetted new stand-alone guidelines for the classification of computer games. These provide for the new R18+ classification that will sit between the MA15+ classification and games which are refused classification. There was extensive public debate surrounding the Commonwealth's legislation and opinions were widely and deeply held. There are two distinct viewpoints: those that are concerned that the classification will expose more violent content to children and those who believe the classification will in fact protect children.

Like the member for Ipswich, I note that the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee published the results of the consultation in November 2010 by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department. It stated that the department received 58,437 valid submissions from both individuals and groups in response to the direct question: 'Should the Australian National Classification Scheme include an R18+ classification category for computer games?' Of those submissions 98 per cent supported the introduction of an R18+ classification, with only two per cent opposing the new category. A total of 13,680 submissions were received from respondents in Queensland.

The stricter classification criteria under the new guidelines for computer games and proper regulation of the demonstration, sale, delivery and advertising of R18+ games in Queensland means that computer games which exceed the MA15+ classification are less likely to be watered down to meet the MA15+ classification category.

As I was considering the provisions of this bill and discussing its components with the Attorney-General and colleagues, I actually found that a number of my colleagues are in fact gamers themselves. Of course I am sure that this is alongside their children, but nevertheless I understand that there is a degree of concern about the content of some games. But the introduction of the R18+ category is designed to give greater confidence to consumers about that content. Of course, it will be up to parents to ultimately ensure that they know what computer games their children are playing and purchase games according to the appropriate rating. So these amendments will bring Queensland into line with the Commonwealth scheme and give adult gamers the opportunity to make their own decision when it comes to purchasing and playing a computer game. It is ultimately about having the most accurate classification scheme so that informed choice can be made.

It is important to note that this bill clearly sets out a penalty scheme to manage the introduction of the new classification category, and the Classification Board under the Commonwealth is responsible for making classification decisions. I support the bill because, as outlined in the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report, it increases the maximum penalties to deter the sale or delivery of an MA15+ game to a minor and the sale of unclassified games which, if they were classified, would be rated MA15+ or potentially even higher.

I am a proud aunt to six nephews and two nieces and the eldest boys certainly enjoy playing computer games. I have considered the possible effects this legislation might have on children in Queensland and across Australia. And I support the introduction of an R18+ classification—again, so that parents and consumers have confidence in these ratings and can therefore make informed choice. I congratulate the Attorney-General on this bill and I commend the bill to the House.

 **Miss BARTON** (Broadwater—LNP) (11.59 am): It gives me great pleasure to rise today to contribute to the debate on the Classification of Computer Games and Images and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. I want to start by thanking the very hard workers on the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee secretariat, my colleagues on the committee, those who took the time to write submissions and particularly those officials from the department who made time in their very busy schedules to give us a public briefing on this bill.

This bill will provide for the demonstration, sale, supply and advertisement of computer games classified as R18+ in Queensland and will bring Queensland's classification laws in line with those in other jurisdictions around the country. It will also enable the outsourcing of court recording and transcription services.

At its heart, the crux of this bill is about the classification of computer games in this state. I preface my comments on this bill by saying that, as someone who believes in upholding liberal and conservative values in the traditions of John Stuart Mill and Edmund Burke, it warms the cockles of my heart to be able to stand here today in this House and say simply: this is about freedom. We as a country believe that an 18-year-old is an adult. We believe they are able to fight in wars to protect our way of life and freedoms, and we believe they are able to actively participate in politics and to have a say in who forms our governments. If we trust them with something as important as the vote, then surely we should trust them with games of their choice on a computer.

It is important to note that there are significant caveats where content includes actual sexual activity, explicit depictions, simulated sexual activity, implied sexual violence that is visually depicted, interactive and not justified by context or related to incentives or rewards, or interactive illicit drug use. These will not be permitted in such games and will continue to be refused classification.

I appreciate that there are some people who are concerned that the increased availability of these games may lead to an increase in violence in our communities. I do not see that there is evidence to this effect. Those who wish to play these games are responsible adults and respectable members of our society. Indeed, some of our colleagues in this House are fans of gaming in those rare moments where they have free time that is not committed to their very hard work in their electorates. The inclusion of an R18+ classification will potentially see games that have previously fallen into lower classifications having increased restrictions placed on their availability, ensuring protection of the young in our society.

One of the other main tenets of this bill is to ensure the outsourcing of court recording and transcription services in Queensland. This will ensure that Queenslanders have value for money while maintaining quality transcription and recording services in our courts. Western Australia went to the market in mid-2012 with a similar plan and has been outsourcing these services for a significant period of time. The experiences of Western Australia indicate that it is indeed possible to ensure accurate services and timely provision of transcripts. I feel very confident that our government's plan will ensure quality and value for money for the state of Queensland.

The state of Queensland has been left with significant amounts of debt as a result of years of failed Labor government, and we have an obligation to ensure that we do all that we can to return our budget to surplus. This includes making a range of savings across the state. It has been indicated that there will be significant and tight key performance indicators that the people of Queensland can take confidence in.

As I said, we have an obligation to find savings across the whole of government where we can, and people in my community would certainly expect nothing less so that we might ensure more police on the beat, more doctors and nurses in our hospitals and teachers in our schools. I note the opposition's concerns, but would suggest to them that they should fear not the private sector but embrace its opportunities and fresh approach and consider how governments can best work with the private sector to ensure quality services for all of Queensland.

I will finish my brief remarks on this bill by returning to my earlier comments on freedom and leave my colleagues with a quote from John Stuart Mill on liberty—

The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it. Each is the proper guardian of his own health, whether bodily, or mental or spiritual. Mankind are greater gainers by suffering each other to live as seems good to themselves, than by compelling each to live as seems good to the rest.

I support this bill because I support freedom, and I implore all of my colleagues in this House to do so also. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (12.05 pm): I thank the government for the opportunity to speak early. There are two issues that are covered in the honourable Attorney-General's bill—that is, the classification of computer games and the outsourcing or privatisation of the transcribing service to the District Court, the Supreme Court, the Magistrates Court, the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal, the Queensland Industrial Court, the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission, the Children's Court, the Coroners Court, the Planning and Environment Court, the Land Court, the Land Appeal Court and the Mental Health Court. I will deal with the classification of computer games first.

I personally would like to see anything that is violent or sexually explicit not available at all. That is my personal point of view. But I do acknowledge there are many in the community who find some enjoyment in particularly explicit violent games. I have a letter from a constituent whom I will just refer to as 'Nik' which states—

As an adult who plays Video Games in my leisure time I am frustrated that the Queensland Parliament has still not passed its R18+ Legislation for Video Games. Last year every other State, Territory and Federal Government in Australia agreed on and passed R18+ Legislation for Video Games. Queensland however still has not passed it into law. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Video Games are protected by Free Speech, as Australia has Free Speech Laws I feel it is wrong for any Government to block access to content that is appropriately labelled as being for adults.

Two of the games that are rated R18+ as of today are already on the shelves in Queensland under the old classification guidelines MA15+ because they were resubmitted to the Classification Board with minor updates after January 1. Two more of the games are sequels to games that were rated MA15+ and would likely have been given an MA15+ rating if the Classification rules were not changed on January 1.

I know when it comes to violent media many people are worried that it will end up in the hands of children and that is one of the things the Queensland Parliament is looking at. To those people that are concerned I say treat R18+ content like alcohol, require proof of age and don't allow parents to give R18+ content to children (including Movies and TV Shows as well as Games).

The average age of games in Australia is currently 32 years old according to a Bond University study. Under the old Classification system every time a game was Refused Classification it felt like the Government was treating us older gamers like children, not capable of rational thinking. Now all the other Governments in Australia have stopped treating us like children but the Queensland Government still does.

Thank you for your time, Nik.

I do not like violence and sexually explicit material. I do believe that it has a psychological and emotional impact on people—even adults—who view and engage in entertainment of that sort. However, I am aware that this matter will pass through the parliament. With quite a number of people in my electorate supporting that, I will not be opposing it.

In relation to the privatisation of recording and transcribing of courts—and the list is quite extensive, as I presented earlier—I do have some concerns. The Leader of the Opposition raised some matters, and I will be very interested in the Attorney-General's responses. To date when governments have privatised these sorts of services, the job security for workers in the government has been poorly protected. At best, they are given one or two years of protection and after that there can be job losses—and quite significant job losses. So I will be interested in the Attorney-General's response.

At the moment, if there is a problem with the service that is provided, I would certainly be interested to know that. I know that our recording service here is amazing. They make sense out of some diction that is very difficult to follow—and I am talking historically, not currently, members. They do an amazing job and I would not like to see the provision of services here under threat. I feel equally about services to these other jurisdictions. I do hold some concerns in relation to this proposal and I will be listening to the Attorney-General's response and the comments by the opposition in relation to these matters. I may not support that part of the legislation. I look forward, as I said, to the contribution from the Attorney-General in his summing-up.

 **Mr CHOAT** (Ipswich West—LNP) (12.10 pm): I too rise to contribute to today's debate on the Classification of Computer Games and Images and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. As a member of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, I am pleased to do so. As the father of teenage and younger children, I feel a responsibility to contribute some perspective also. The primary role of the bill is to amend the Classification of Computer Games and Images Act 1995 so as to ensure the responsible demonstration, sale, supply and advertisement of computer games and other materials classified as R18+ in Queensland, and my contribution today will focus on that. This is an important thing, as computer games of all descriptions have become such a major part of popular culture, particularly for younger people in our community. I occasionally have played computer games myself but definitely not those of the nature that this legislation is focused on. I am a product of the 1980s, so Space Invaders, Donkey Kong and Pacman are more my style.

Mr Costigan: You are not alone.

Mr Minnikin: Now you're talking.

Mr CHOAT: That is right. My wife, Nicky, has introduced me to Spider Solitaire and we often battle over the family iPad to see who can have it the longest. Please indulge me while I take this opportunity to wish her a happy St Valentine's Day. I certainly understand that she enjoyed those lovely roses she picked up from my electorate office this morning.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr CHOAT: I will take those interjections, but let us thank God that the *Hansard* does not record singing. My kids have a Wii to show their abilities at wearing down their father. The Wii is not so bad in the views of a member of generation X, as at least the kids are out of their chairs doing something physical. Seriously though, I know that computer games bring a lot of joy to members of the community and they are another example of advances in technology and the creative skills of some very talented programmers—who are most likely those people that the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts will be talking to as part of her ongoing consultation.

As a common-sense measure, computer games, movies and certain publications must be classified before they can be sold or exhibited to the public. Under the National Classification Scheme, the NCS, the Commonwealth Classification Board primarily makes the classification decisions and the states and territories enforce them. The NCS is a working strategy between Commonwealth, state and territory governments underpinned by an intergovernmental agreement on censorship and supported by a legislative framework comprising a number of acts and regulations. In July-August 2011, the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General agreed in principle to introduce an R18+ classification for computer games. This is important to me as I want to know that there are checks and balances to ensure there is every possibility that our young people are being protected from exposure to inappropriate material that may cause distress or other negative outcomes, such as desensitisation to overly-graphic violence or other disturbing content.

To enable the scheme to operate nationally, amendments must be made to Queensland's complementary legislation via this bill. The Commonwealth registered new guidelines for the classification of computer games on 26 September 2012 on the Federal Register of Legislative Instruments. The games guidelines thus incorporate the new adults-only R18+ classification. R18+ content is permitted to include material with high impact violence provided it is not, in context, frequently gratuitous, exploitative or offensive to a reasonable adult member of our community. Content that includes depiction of actual sexual activity, explicit depictions of simulated sexual activity, implied sexual violence that is visually depicted, interactive and not justified by context or related to incentives or rewards, or interactive illicit drug use will not be permitted in R18+ games and will continue to be refused classification. I must say that personally I am very pleased about that. Computer games with refused classification category content—or RC as it is known—cannot be legally sold in any Australian jurisdiction. There has been significant community consultation at a national level about the introduction of the R18+ classification for computer games. This is important as we need to ensure the expectations of the wider community are both acknowledged and reflected in regulations such as this.

I know this legislation is not without its critics. I know there are some in our community who are opposed to any forms of censorship, but having been shown examples of content that will be available under the R18+ classification, I can say that the content available is certainly not overly infringed upon. Some of it is confronting and a little graphic for my taste, but I respect that others have no issue with this. I am confident that the restrictions put forward through the refused classification category are responsible, fair and reasonable. I believe that in some circumstances the availability of such material as is currently banned has the potential to cause real harm.

We all know that it can be difficult to control what children have access to in the home. An M15+ label on a DVD or game case, for example, is not always an effective barrier for an inquisitive 12-year-old when a parent or guardian is not close by. Classification is not a fail-safe measure but it does provide a realistic opportunity for members of our community to make informed decisions and take action they feel appropriate to avoid being confronted by material which they might find disturbing or to protect others from similar exposure. On that note, I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr DILLAWAY** (Bulimba—LNP) (12.16 pm): I rise today to talk on the Classification of Computer Games and Images and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. I would like to congratulate the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice on the introduction of this bill to the House following the decision made in mid 2011 by censorship ministers to introduce an R18+ category for computer games. As a new member of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, I acknowledge the dedicated and hard work of the committee and the research team who have thoroughly examined this bill and the submissions received.

The primary purpose of this bill is to bring the classification of computer games into line with the regime for films by introducing an R18+ category. The bill amends the complementary Classification of Computer Games and Images Act 1995 to enable the scheme to operate nationally, as Queensland legislation will be aligned with national and other state and territory laws.

The National Classification Scheme—the classification of computer games, films and publications—is jointly regulated by the Commonwealth and the states and territories. Commonwealth legislation establishes the Classification Board, which is responsible for making the classification decisions, whilst the states and territories enforce these decisions. They regulate the sale, supply and advertisement of material in their respective jurisdictions. Up until now, the classification ratings that applied to computer games have differed to those that are generally for films in that there was no R18+ category applicable to games. Commonwealth legislation was passed last year and came into effect on 31 December 2012 which introduced this category to the National Classification Scheme. As this legislation is now in force, it is our responsibility as a state to introduce subsequent legislation to recognise the changes and the implications it entails. This bill creates a range of new offences similar to the enforcement regime for films. The Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department has proposed a new rating of R18+—not suitable for people under 18—that will apply to computer games that are considered to contain high impact violence or themes.

The bill makes amendments to do the following: prohibit the public demonstration or attempted demonstration of an R18+ computer game in the presence of a minor; prohibit the private demonstration of an R18+ computer game in the presence of a minor, unless the person demonstrating the game is the parent or guardian or has the consent of a parent or guardian; prohibit the sale or delivery of an R18+ computer game to a minor; prohibit the sale or delivery of computer games which, if classified, would be classified as R18+ to a minor; and prohibit the public demonstration of a computer game classified as MA15 or R18+ unless the determined markings for the game are displayed before the game is demonstrated. Material that exceeds the R18+ category will be refused classification and will not be able to be sold legally anywhere in Australia.

Extensive public consultation has occurred on this initiative over a period of three years beginning in late 2009 with the release of the Commonwealth discussion paper and, on 17 November 2009, a Queensland online e-petition. There has been an overwhelming volume of support for this bill at both a state and a federal level. Of the almost 60,000 submissions received on the consultation, 98 per cent supported the introduction of the R18+ classification. As a parent of three young children, I think the submission made to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee by Family Voice Australia reflected many of the concerns I share when it comes to computer games. They raised the point that violent computer games can have a range of detrimental effects on players. Researchers demonstrated that violent computer games are significantly associated with increased aggressive behaviour, thought and effect; increased psychological arousal; and decreased prosocial behaviour. They raised the valid point that in many cases the effects of violence in computer games are greater than that of viewing a film. This is because, in playing a computer game, the player often identifies with the aggressor and often actively rehearses the whole sequence of aggression over and over again. By introducing an R18+ category we will be able to legally postpone a teenager's exposure to high levels of violence in computer games until they are an adult and are considered to have reached a maturity level where they can recognise the difference between the virtual computer world and reality.

I recently had my own reality check. Not that I am or have been deemed or referred to as a gamer, such as the Attorney-General suggested, but I do remember getting my first computer back in 1984.

Mr Bleijie: Was it *Donkey Kong*?

Mr DILLAWAY: No, this was a computer.

Mr Minnikin: Commodore 64?

Mr DILLAWAY: No, it was an Amstrad CPC464 that had a cassette tape drive. I remember being greatly disappointed when my parents bought that for me because all my friends at the time had either an Atari 5200, a Commodore 64 or a Tandy colour computer with a 5¼-inch floppy disk drive. Why was I disappointed? In the context of time, they had better graphics and they were faster. Using my computer I could not only go and make a cup of coffee I could almost make a toasted sandwich before the game loaded. We have come a long way since then and our laws relating to computer games need to be in line with today's technology and that has the ability to make the virtual world more like reality.

To sum up, the importance of this bill lies both in the principle and in practice. Protecting our youth from inappropriate exposure and associated violence until they are at a proper age and providing guidance to parents as to what is suitable for respective age groups is the ultimate purpose of introducing an R18+ category. Practically, this bill must be passed to align Queensland with other Australian jurisdictions and to enforce Commonwealth legislation. It will also create consistency between film and computer game classifications.

I once again congratulate the Attorney-General on the introduction of this bill and I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr WOODFORTH** (Nudgee—LNP) (12.23 pm): I rise today to make a brief contribution in support of the Classification of Computer Games and Images and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. The main purpose of this bill is to amend the Classification of Computer Games and Images Act 1995 to provide for

the demonstration, sale, supply and advertisement of computer games classified as R18+ in Queensland. In the middle of 2011 the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General agreed in principle to introduce the R18+ classification for computer games. To enable this to operate throughout the country, all states and territories must make amendments to their legislation. This bill is another example of aligning Queensland with other states and territories around the country to ensure that we are all on the same page.

Enabling the sale of computer games with an R18+ classification allows the monitoring of the sale and distribution of these items to ensure that they are not distributed illegally throughout the state and the country. It also prohibits the sale of these games to someone under the age of 18. By restricting the sale of these computer games to those over 18 years of age it enables adults to play the games they choose. As adults are already allowed to watch movies that are rated R18+ I believe it is illogical that computer games have not had the same rating until now.

The bill also sets out to amend the Classification of Films Act 1991 to enable the Director of the Commonwealth Classification Board to grant exemptions to enable the exhibition of unclassified films. This is currently done by the Queensland government, and again we are the only state or territory that does this. The others have legislated the Director of the Classification Board to be the sole decision maker for giving exemptions. This will streamline the process for event organisers wishing to obtain exemptions for festivals and screening. For the people of Queensland, it will remove the burden of having to review applications when many have already been reviewed by the Commonwealth. This bill is a perfect example of the Newman government living up to its promises of removing legislative red tape and reducing costs. When we have legislation that is already being handled by the Commonwealth it is a waste of taxpayers' money and time to be doing it again for ourselves. We need to continue to remove these double-ups of legislation and align ourselves with the other states and territories to ensure that processes are effective and efficient.

Before closing, I must say that it is a pity that somehow, in some way, we cannot place such controls on the Internet and protect our young and vulnerable from being able to easily view or download such violent and sexually explicit games, but we can only do what we can do. I, too, am a product of the Atari generation—along with *Asteroids*, *Pac-Man* and everything that goes with it. We certainly did not have these problems in my day.

I thank the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice for introducing this bill. I am pleased to commend this bill to the House.

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (12.25 pm): I rise to support the Classification of Computer Games and Images and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The bill amends the Classification of Computer Games and Images Act 1995 to provide for the demonstration, sale, supply and advertisement of computer games classified as R18+. As a parent I might say that it would be incredibly helpful for these kinds of ratings to be available to parents. I think this is a good change. Further, the bill will also change the Classification of Films Act 1991 to transfer to the Director of the Commonwealth Classification Board the function of granting exemptions to enable the exhibition of unclassified films at special events such as film festivals. With the ability of people to use the internet to show films and other things, I think it is highly appropriate there be one governing body looking after that. I certainly support that.

The bill will also amend the short title of the Neighbourhood Disputes Resolution Act 2011 for clarification. The final part is the amendment of the Recording of Evidence Act 1962 to enable the outsourcing of recording and transcribing of legal proceedings.

Let us go to the main objective of the bill, which is to amend the classification of computer games so that they are clearly marked as R18+. I think it is very important that we understand that technology is completely integrated into our lives these days. When my children are watching things online or playing games online they can be connected to anybody not just in Australia but also in other parts of the world. I have a 13-year-old-boy and 14- and 15-year-old girls who will often tell me when they are playing a game, 'It is fine, Dad. It is okay. It is age appropriate.' Without having a classification label it can sometimes be very difficult for parents. To be honest, I find many of the games that are available online and in the shops violent and sexually explicit, and I certainly would not recommend them for my children. Having a classification at least means I can rule that out in a very short space of time.

Last year the ministers responsible for censorship agreed to introduce this R18+ category for computer games to ensure we have consistency across the states. This was done after extensive public consultation. Over 50,000 submissions were received and 98 per cent supported this classification. The key part of having this classification—and I thank the Attorney-General for it—is that not only is it clear for a parent to be able to see what is classified and whether it is age appropriate, but also there are some severe punishments—and appropriately so—for people who might find themselves on the wrong side of this legislation.

For example, I am pleased to see the strong punishment for an offence under this bill—a maximum penalty of 100 penalty points—for selling or delivering or attempting to sell or deliver an R18+ computer game to a minor. That is an \$11,000 penalty and that should mean that anybody who is looking to sell this

stuff to minors and looking to try to make a profit out of it would only need to be caught once to destroy a large percentage of the profit that they might otherwise have made by preying on young minds. I certainly support that part of the legislation. Up Until 31 December the classification ratings that applied to computer games differed to those that are generally recognised for films. As I said before, there was no R18+ category in Queensland. The ratings were G, very mild impact; PG or parental guidance recommended, mild impact; M or recommended for mature audiences, moderate impact; MA15+—and I might say my 13-year-old always wants to watch MA15+—one not suitable for people under 15, strong impact, and that is always helpful when we are having the discussion; and refused classification or RC. Having an R18+ category, as is proposed by this bill—not suitable for people under 18, high impact—makes it very clear who is supposed to be watching or playing both films and games in this category.

There are a couple of other penalties in the bill that are worth noting. The bill prohibits the public demonstration of a computer game classified MA15+ or R18+ unless the determined markings for the game are displayed before the game is demonstrated. That carries a penalty of 40 penalty points or just over \$4,000. In today's world where computers are found in shop windows and there are many opportunities for public display, it is very important that we have these punishments in place. With the introduction of the R18+ classification for computer games, I think it would be timely for the government to continue its work in the area and possibly in conjunction with the Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Guardian to monitor the possible effects that violent video games might be having on our youth. I might add that violent video games do not have any effect on me, because I am absolutely rubbish at them and I usually get killed in about the first 10 seconds. So I find it incredibly boring trying to play them.

The committee recommended that the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, after liaising with relevant ministers, update the Legislative Assembly on the status of the government's consideration of strategies for determining the effect of violent computer games on youth and continued monitoring violent computer games. I agree with the committee's recommendation. I know the Attorney-General said he feels that this might be redundant in that there might be others looking into parts of this, but I would encourage him to bring back to this Assembly some information in relation to this area. As we know, violence around the world is often reported and there is speculation as to whether these kinds of games and interactions have added to that violence. Having some independent Queensland based information on what is happening in our state would be very useful to us. I recommend that the Attorney-General consider this.

I turn now to a couple of other parts of the bill. With regard to the Neighbourhood Disputes Resolution Act, it is a simple name change to make sure that it is clearly identified that it deals with fences and trees. With regard to the Recording of Evidence Act—and I heard the Leader of the Opposition talk about this—this really just goes to a different political philosophy. Outsourcing the recording of evidence and other things is something that can often be done by an organisation and a company that specialises in those things and I support the government looking at that if it makes savings for the taxpayers of Queensland. I certainly would encourage people to outsource. Certainly if they want to—

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr WATTS: Union officials do do that; I take that interjection. If anybody who is considering looking at this wants to base themselves in Toowoomba, there is always a good opportunity for people to come to Toowoomba and set up businesses such as that.

I want to place on record my thanks to the team of researchers and other staff at the secretariat who support the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee. They do a great job for us. I also thank my parliamentary colleagues who work on this committee with me. This bill will assist in protecting our children from inappropriate material and, more importantly, it has some strong punishments that I support for those who will try to profit from such practices. I would encourage that we ensure that those who are policing that are well resourced so that the punishments can be appropriately handed out if someone finds themselves on the wrong side of this legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (12.35 pm): I rise in this chamber to make a small contribution to debate on the Classification of Computer Games and Images and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I note that the main purpose of the Classification of Computer Games and Images and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is to amend the Classification of Computer Games and Images Act 1995 to provide for the demonstration, sale, supply and advertisement of computer games classified as R18+ in Queensland. The bill also amends the Classification of Films Act 1991 to transfer to the director of the Commonwealth Classification Board the function of granting exemptions to enable the exhibition of unclassified films at specified events such as film festivals. Further amendments that this bill introduces pertain to the Neighbourhood Disputes Resolution Act 2011 to amend the short title of that act and the Recording of Evidence Act 1962 to enable the outsourcing of the recording and transcribing of legal proceedings in Queensland. Importantly though, the bill also makes miscellaneous amendments to the Classification of Publications Act 1991 consistent with the computer game and film classification legislation to provide

protection against criminal liability for officials and amendments to the Criminal Code consequential to the amendments to the Classification of Computer Games and Images Act 1995. There are also consequential or minor amendments to a range of other acts listed in the schedules to the bill.

In speaking to the Classification of Computer Games and Images and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, I want to specifically concentrate on the amendments to allow the introduction of R18+ classified computer games. I note from my background research into this bill that in around July-August 2011 the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General, SCAG, agreed in principle to introduce an R18+ classification for computer games. The amendments to the Commonwealth act to provide for an R18+ classification for computer games have been passed and commenced on 1 January this year. To enable the scheme to operate nationally, amendments must be made to the complementary state and territory legislation, which is what we are doing. Last year on 26 September the Commonwealth registered the new guidelines for the classification of computer games on the federal register of legislative instruments and gazetted them on that same day. Under the intergovernmental agreement on censorship, states and territories must table the guidelines in their respective parliaments within 30 sitting days of their gazettal by the Commonwealth.

Importantly, the games guidelines incorporate the new adults only R18+ classification. R18+ content is permitted to include material with high-impact violence provided it is not, in context, frequently gratuitous, exploitative or offensive to a reasonable adult. The introduction of the R18+ classification of computer games seeks to strike the right balance and an appropriate balance between the rights of adults who want to see and hear what they would like and the protection of minors from unsuitable material. Jeremy Bentham, the famous British philosopher, jurist, social reformer and founder of modern utilitarianism, once stated—

As to the evil which results from a censorship, it is impossible to measure it, for it is impossible to tell where it ends.

The LNP has at its very core the essential elements of liberalism and pragmatic conservatism. Adults in Queensland should not be denied the opportunity to play R18+ games on current generation consoles such as the Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 or high-gaming content PCs. I note with interest that clause 5 amends section 4 to take account of the fact that the definition of 'computer game' under the act is being amended to align it with the definition adopted by the Commonwealth and all other states and territories. This is indeed consistent and sensible. As a father of two sons, I am very much aware how the computer-gaming industry has matured over the last decade as I have followed the rise of the humble Xbox from the first generation black console to the current Xbox 360, complete with 250 gigabyte hard disk and in-built wi-fi.

Indeed, as many members in this House would be aware, whenever there is an uplift in the hardware platforms of the various gaming companies such as Microsoft and Sony there is a consequential improvement in the quality of the gaming software. Here is the rub: the quality of some of the latest gaming titles when viewed on current large-screen plasma or LED televisions is akin to watching a movie. The modern screen definition panel allows games such as *Call of Duty—Black Ops*, *Halo 4* and *Gears of War 3* to be portrayed in extreme graphic detail. It is a far cry from the days of my misspent youth pushing 20c coins into the old Taito *Space Invaders* console, with pixelated, grainy martians crawling ever so slowly down to the bottom of the screen to inevitably overrun my base station.

It is my understanding that the gaming industry has matured so rapidly over the last decade that earnings from this area of entertainment now equal or surpass that of the movie box office. Furthermore, the demographic of the average user has also matured—quite literally—from a predominantly teenage market a decade or so ago to someone now in their late 20s or early 30s, or, like some of the members in this hallowed chamber, in their 40s or 50s. Whilst I am a passionate believer in states' rights and the notion of competitive federalism, there will always be a need to have a sensible and consistent approach to various issues that traverse state boundaries. That is the case with this bill, which amends the definition of 'computer game' to align it with the definition adopted by the Commonwealth and all the other states and territories.

There is an absolute need for the introduction of a new consistent adults only R18+ classification in Queensland, as it respects the right of consenting adults to play games that are not suitable for minors and protects the interests of all concerned. I thoroughly commend this bill to the House.

 **Mr DAVIES** (Capalaba—LNP) (12.41 pm): I rise to also contribute to the debate on the Classification of Computer Games and Images and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. The main purpose of this bill is to amend the Classification of Computer Games and Images Act 1995 to enable the sale, supply and advertisement of R18+ computer games in Queensland. Currently, the classification of computer games, films and publications is jointly regulated by the Commonwealth and the states and territories. The Commonwealth legislation outlines how material is to be classified and establishes the Classification Board, which makes the classification decisions for territories and states, such as Queensland, and then enforces the classification decisions and regulates the sale and supply and advertisement of R18+ material.

Unlike many here, I am proud enough to say—or ashamed enough, probably—that I am a gamer. I have played them for many years. In fact, I am a computer geek at times. I even dabbled for a little while with a game called *World of Warcraft*, which is called crack for geeks. I grew up in the 1970s and I would have to say that I am a child of the computer game age. Like the member for Chatsworth, I can still remember my first exposure to a computer game. It was Christmas, 1976. It was a very pixelated black-and-white tennis game called *Pong* that was played on my best mate's Atari console and his black-and-white Rank Arena TV. That very simple induction to the world of computer games was soon enhanced by archaic games such as *Space Invaders*, *Galaxian* and *Pacman*. I must say that I was a bit of a computer game wizard down at the old arcade. *Galaxian* was my favourite game and I had many records.

These very simple games of some 30 years ago are a far cry from the hyper-realistic game experience of 2013. Whether it is PC, Xbox, PlayStation 3, or Nintendo, today's interactive and immersed gaming experiences would have been unimaginable to the young Steve Davies and David Petronio huddled around the old Rank Arena so many years ago. Today's technology means that games often feature and demand that players participate in repetitive, photorealistic depictions of death, sexuality and violence that only 10 or 15 years ago would not have been seen even in the most goriest slasher flick. Although it may be appropriate for an adult to view these things, no-one can seriously suggest that it is at all healthy for a child to view, let alone participate virtually in, many of the scenarios played out in much of the current what is called computer entertainment. Today, the gaming entertainment industry rivals the movie business for income and participation, with the incredible success of games such as *Call of Duty 3* and *Modern Warfare*, which became the fastest entertainment property to hit the \$1 billion earned milestone globally, eclipsing the previous record set in 2009 by the film *Avatar*. That is only one example of the trend of computer games outearning movie blockbusters.

According to a recent survey undertaken by Bond University, the average age of the Australian gamer is now 32 and 75 per cent of all gamers are aged 18 or older. Even so, younger people are well represented, with 94 per cent of children aged between six and 15 playing computer games regularly. Ninety-five per cent of Australian homes have at least one device used for playing games. One interesting outcome of this study was that women now make up 47 per cent of all gamers. That percentage goes some way to explain why today women are upset about the depiction of women in games and it has become such a talked about issue.

The success and extraordinary growth of this new world of entertainment has forced governments around the world to look at how they regulate and classify games to enable adults the freedom to play appropriate content while protecting our young from adult content. Let us be very blunt here: some of the content currently available to young people would make most mum and dads very, very uncomfortable. I think if they knew what their child was participating in they would be mortified. Popular but extremely violent games such as *Hitman* and *Grand Theft Auto* are often a staple part of young people's entertainment and, under the regime set out in this bill, would no doubt qualify for the R18+ category.

In light of the growth in both technology and participation in the gaming sector, it is important that we as legislators make sure that we provide the appropriate safeguards to inform and empower our parents and protect our children. In my mind, this bill, along with the supporting federal legislation, is way overdue. The R18+ classification of games proposed in this bill empowers both parents and retailers and gives them the ability to restrict young people's ability to access games that have mature content. I congratulate both the federal government and the Attorney-General for putting our young people first. I heartily commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr SYMES** (Lytton—LNP) (12.47 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Attorney-General's amendment bill. Over the past several months issues surrounding the regulation and subsequent classification of images, videos and/or computer games has been raised by my constituents of the Lytton electorate. For example, in the middle of 2012 I was contacted by a concerned mother of a young girl, who had picked up her young daughter from a local school and had gone down to her local shop to pick up a few items before going home. As the mother was at the counter of the shop the daughter was looking at an item that seemed to be Hello Kitty clothing apparel. As the mother and daughter were walking to the car, the daughter asked her mother why the clothing had a certain phrase on it, which I will not repeat in this honourable House.

Mr Choat: Thank you.

Mr SYMES: My pleasure. The mother was horrified that her innocent child was subjected to such an offensive statement on view in that shop. On behalf of the family, I corresponded with the business director and the item was removed from public sight. My point is that, as an elected representative and as a government, we must make legislation that is responsible and benefits the wider community as well as protects the most vulnerable and innocent members of our community, who are Queensland children. However, as a government we must strike a fair balance between protecting vulnerable children from inappropriate material, such as violent computer games and sexually explicit material, and providing the ability for adults to be granted the freedom of choice in what they play, view and read.

As the Attorney-General highlighted in his introductory speech, the current act needs to be amended owing to the federal government's change to classifications, which will introduce R18+ classifications of certain computer games, bringing them into line with classifications given to films, books and magazines. This will allow some games that were previously not allowed in Queensland nor Australia to be purchased by gamers. This freedom of choice will actually improve the industry of gaming within Queensland as it will provide the appropriate regulation to give parents an informed ability to make a decision to buy certain games for their children or themselves. For example, when I was younger—

Mr Bleijie: When you were younger? What do you mean when you were younger?

Mr SYMES: A couple of years ago. I remember going to a friend's birthday party where we were playing PlayStation until the early hours of the following morning. At the time *Resident Evil* was a very controversial game. It was a very rainy day and night and we got scared. Maybe it was not the best choice of game that night. Some games, such as *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* have been allowed to be released under the classification MA15+ or have been edited due to sexual scenes and/or violence.

My view is that gamers should be given the ability to make their own decision about which game they purchase to enjoy in their own home. However, I would hope both game sellers and parents would make responsible decisions in relation young people purchasing specific games. For example, I would hope parents would not go out and purchase a game such as *50 Cent: Bulletproof* to give to their six-year-old child for their birthday due to its graphic sexual nature, drug use and violence. On the contrary, I would hope that an adult seeking to purchase the exact same game or currently banned titles such as *Soldier of Fortune: Payback*, or any other of those on the banned list, be given that option. As a gamer and an adult, I would hope that a government would not dictate to me what I can and cannot view. I think that is a form of communism and I, for one, do not remember Queensland being like North Korea.

In conclusion, the gaming industry welcomes this amendment as it will allow adult gamers to have more choices to play once-restricted titles. The inclusion of the R18+ classification will help strengthen the market, help parents make more informed decisions when purchasing games for their children, whilst at the same time providing an avenue to responsibly protect young children from graphic sexual and violent content in some computer games. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (12.52 pm): I rise today to place on record my support for the Classification of Computer Games and Images and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. Last year the Commonwealth government introduced an R18+ category for computer games following strong community support for the higher classification. This legislation came into effect on 1 January 2013. This bill creates the framework for three new offences regarding the demonstration and sale of R18+ computer games, decreasing the likelihood of children under 18 being exposed to realistic simulations of sexual activity and gratuitous violence.

This legislation provides for an area of classification that has been missing for some time: that of a classification for material that is intended for adults who have more experience and maturity for dealing with the sorts of material that this category will cover. As parents of four boys, Melinda and I have responsibly monitored our own kids' use and consumption of video and computer games but this has not been without its challenges. The fertile hearts and imaginations of our children and young people are more and more coming under siege, and I am not referring simply to the battles that occur in *Mortal Kombat* or *Call of Duty* or those battles that my sons and I enjoy on the upstairs couch as they flog me in just about every game that we ever play. Sadly, the makers of Xbox, Nintendo, PlayStation and the plethora of new games and devices flooding the market are more focused on increased profits than the wellbeing of our families or societal values. As computers and devices become faster and more accessible, as the ever-increasing range of games becomes more graphic, more violent, more sexually explicit and higher in impact, governments must intervene to protect our most vulnerable children and their innocence from those organisations and businesses who opportunistically obsess about larger and larger profits regardless of the social cost or impact on our children, families and society.

While the introduction of this new category R18+ for computer games is an important move forward, it would be a mistake for parents to see this as an opportunity to relax or become less vigilant. Rather, it provides greater clarity and awareness in respect of the many options and choices available in the market. As a father and Assistant Minister for Child Safety, I would prefer that these reforms were not necessary. I would rather that our society had no such appetite for the kind of material that this new R18+ classification will cover. There is far too much of this material flooding into our homes, our state and our nation. I, for one, would prefer a society with less graphic violence and less promotion of such inappropriate sexualised behaviours evident in many of the games that will no doubt fall under this new R18+ category. In the absence of such values and in the interests of freedom of choice and freedom of speech, I do, however, cautiously and soberly welcome the Classification of Computer Games and Images and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 and the somewhat limited protections this bill affords to the children of Queensland by the adding of this new classification to the rating system for computer games.

As elected representatives we should be doing all that we can to protect our kids. We need to be making distinctions as to what is suitable material for the young people of Queensland, but once again I must stress that this bill is by no means a way for parents to absolve themselves from the responsibility of being parents. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (12.56 pm), in reply: I thank honourable members for their contributions to the debate on the Classification of Computer Games and Images and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. The amendments to the Classification of Computer Games and Images (Interim) Act 1995 is to allow the sale and supply of R18+ computer games in Queensland. These reforms have support from both the wider community and the computer games industry. These are important for several reasons. Firstly, they give adult gamers the right to make informed choices about what they want to see and hear. For many years in Queensland adults have been able to make choices in relation to films with adult content and themes. It will not become a free-for-all. Material which is deemed too offensive to anyone will continue to be placed in the refused classification category and will not be able to be legally sold or distributed anywhere in Queensland or Australia. While the bill increases freedom of choice for adults, it also puts in place a strong regulatory regime to protect children from material that may disturb or harm them. The sale and distribution of R18+ games to minors will be prohibited. The new classification will provide clear and unambiguous information to parents about what material is suitable for minors to access.

The Recording of Evidence Act amendments will enable implementation of the government's policy to outsource the recording and transcribing of legal proceedings in Queensland as announced in last year's budget. This policy will ensure a better service for courts and tribunals and people who use them and will assist in creating savings for the government.

The bill also has a small amendment with respect to the Neighbourhood Disputes Resolution Act 2011. When I was the shadow Attorney I had a particular discomfort with the fact that the bill was called the Neighbourhood Disputes Resolution Bill when, in fact, all it dealt with was neighbourhood disputes with respect to trees and dividing fences. I moved an amendment at the time, living in a fairytale world thinking that the Attorney at the time and the Labor Party would agree to my amendment. No such luck. It is my immense pleasure to introduce this small technical amendment which will change the Neighbourhood Disputes Resolution Act to the Neighbourhood Disputes Resolution (Dividing Fence and Tree) Act. That is the difference between opposition and government, you see.

A government member: Common sense.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection.

Mr Rickuss: You mean good government.

Mr BLEIJIE: We were a good opposition, but we are a better government. It makes sense because people who have these types of disputes can now clearly see that it is a neighbourhood dispute with respect to a dividing fence or trees.

If I can turn to the contributions of all honourable members, I wish, in the spirit of gaming in Queensland, all honourable gentlemen and ladies a happy Valentine's Day. There are games out there with respect to Valentine's Day, although they have an R18+ classification so we ought not talk about it today. I want to pay some attention at a later stage to particular contributions, particularly the contribution from my good friend the member for Lytton, who confessed to the House that he had *Resident Evil* as a computer game, he watched it at night and became quite scared. I have watched the series of the movie *Resident Evil*. I do not know whether the honourable member has gone from the computer game to actually watching the movie, but if he has he would be more scared than what he was in the computer game. Thank you for the contribution.

Debate, on motion of Mr Bleijie, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.30 pm.

ETHICS COMMITTEE

Report

 **Mr DOWLING** (Redlands—LNP) (2.30 pm), by leave: I table report No. 128 of the Ethics Committee titled *Report on a right of reply No. 24*. I commend the report and the committee's recommendation to the House.

Tabled paper: Ethics Committee Report No. 128: Report on a right of reply No. 24 [[2091](#)].

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Eastern State Emergency Service Group

 **Mr DILLAWAY** (Bulimba—LNP) (2.30 pm): This afternoon I rise in the House to congratulate and thank the dedicated volunteers of the Eastern State Emergency Service group based in Morningside within the Bulimba electorate. With the recent storm event over the Australia Day weekend, those dedicated volunteers once again took up arms and faced ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald head-on. Although it could be said that the south-eastern region that I represent fortunately dodged a bullet with the extreme weather, the Eastern SES group still played their part in the emergency work to ensure localised damage was addressed quickly and effectively to comfort those who were at greatest risk. In addition to their local work, the Eastern SES group also deployed crews to Bundaberg to help where possible in restoring normality to the lives of those who have lost everything. I congratulate the team of volunteers who embarked on this deployment and, on behalf of all Queenslanders, I thank you.

That is why on Monday evening I arranged for a thankyou barbecue to be held at the Eastern SES group headquarters at Morningside. It was a thank you on behalf of the entire Bulimba community for the hours that those individuals train and then apply that training in the community's time of need. We had over 60 of the group's SES volunteers enjoy a steak burger and a drink before they again undertook a night of training and debriefing. They were also inducting 22 new volunteers to ensure that this volunteer base is never short of trained operators. I would like to personally thank Paul, the group leader, and Johnny and Danny, the deputy group leaders, for their leadership of the Eastern SES team.

After several days of 14-hour shifts over the Australia Day long weekend, many were back at their Monday-to-Friday jobs the very next day. Across Bulimba and right across Queensland, we see time and time again the true meaning of volunteerism and community spirit. So I put the call out to Joe, the president of the local Balmoral Rotary, and asked if he and his team would be willing to dust off their barbecue trailer and join with me on Monday night. Joe and his team jumped at the chance to support this gesture. However, as I am sure members in this House know, community spirit and participation go beyond just volunteering one's time.

Some great local businesses, without hesitation, agreed to donate the food and drinks for the night. Those local business champions included the team at Australian Country Choice, which donated 70 very delicious and just butchered rib fillet steaks. The Crusty Devil Bakery at Kmart Cannon Hill was only too keen to donate 70 freshly baked bread rolls. Dan and Andy from the Hawthorne Garage donated the lettuce, onions and tomatoes and the team at Morningside Woolworths donated all the drinks for the night. Thank you one and all! Their willingness to show their appreciation in this way is a true reflection of the community spirit shown right across Queensland during times of natural disasters.

I also take this opportunity to thank the local QPS at Morningside and Carina stations. Lawrie and Barry kept me updated on local issues throughout the entire Australia Day weekend, which I could then transmit to the broader community, as many had lost their power and relied on their mobile phones to keep up to date with local damage information.

Kawana Electorate

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (2.33 pm): It is an immense pleasure to be able to speak about some Kawana events of late. I thank the Meridan State College leaders whom I met the other day. Those young men and women are fine leaders and outstanding role models. On that topic, I welcome back all Kawana electorate schools and wish them a great 2013: Siena, Chancellor, Buddina, Kawana, Talara, Meridan, Pacific Lutheran College and Montessori. I wish students and staff all the best for a great 2013.

Tomorrow is an important night for seven young people from my local area. It is the Lake Currimundi Kawana Lions Youth of the Year quest, which I was involved in back in 1999. I thank Josh Williams, Madeline Pitman, Nic Anning, Katelyn Townsend, Ryan Kertai, Ellen Lynch and James Milligan, who are all in the running to be crowned the Lake Currimundi Kawana Lions Youth of the Year tomorrow night. It has been my pleasure to meet those outstanding young citizens and I look forward to hearing the outcome of the very tough job they have ahead of them tomorrow night, when they will deliver prepared and impromptu speeches.

Last week I had the immense pleasure of attending the opening of John Pearson Consulting at Bokarina. JPC specialises in developing and implementing Indigenous employment strategies and programs for mainstream business. I am delighted that JPC now has a presence in my electorate.

It has been almost a month since the devastating floods of 2013 and I thank all the Kawana people who have put their hands in their pockets for the Red Cross appeal. I thank all the mud armies. Members may know that my grandparents' home in North Bundaberg was flooded. I thank my family and all the Sunshine Coast residents who have really helped our fellow Queenslanders in their times of trouble and need. As we always say, if you can afford to give anything, even a dollar, to the Red Cross appeal for the flood victims, please do so.

Finally, Bike Week 2013 is kicking off this Saturday. It is timely to consider, member for Noosa, the importance of adding some extra exercise into our daily routines. In conjunction with the Sunshine Coast Regional Council, the Queensland government recently opened the Sippy Downs drive-cycle facilities.

Mr Emerson: When was the last time you were on a bike, Attorney-General?

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the honourable minister. This week I brought my gym gear but, unfortunately, I left my joggers at home. I am waiting for the next sitting of parliament to get fully into my new routine to fulfil my new year's resolution. I will borrow the minister's bike. These facilities will allow people in the Kawana community to get to where they need to go safely and efficiently, whilst doing something positive for their health, just as the member for Noosa will do in 2013. I am pleased that the government could work with the Sunshine Coast Regional Council to provide this excellent addition to the Kawana electorate infrastructure.

Manly Boat Harbour

 **Mr SYMES** (Lytton—LNP) (2.36 pm): A little over a week before Christmas, I had the pleasure of welcoming the Premier and the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to the world-famous Manly Boat Harbour to give the Queensland boating community an early Christmas present under the \$120 million marine infrastructure project, which was a commitment of the Newman government at the 2012 election. The Manly harbour will prosper from this announcement, with three projects being delivered under the program. I own a boat licence and talk regularly to the boating community, which is a large proportion of the Lytton electorate. We in the Newman government recognise that recreational fishing and boating is vital to the state's tourism industry and to the local small business community, especially in the Manly harbour shopping village and surrounds.

It was another sunny day in Manly when we set sail from the Darling Point Sailing Squadron with Royal Queensland Yacht Squadron Commodore Greg Clarke, travelling to the public ramp situated next to RQYS. Under the funding arrangement, the Newman government will widen and improve the public boat ramps in Manly harbour, as well as install a new pontoon in the harbour to assist in reducing congestion. This announcement will have a knock-on effect in more boat sales and more people visiting the harbour, which will strengthen the local economy in Manly and Wynnum. This year work will begin to install a new floating walkway on the northern and southern boat ramps, as well as widening both ramps.

The announcement rolled on the back of the new agreement brokered with the Moreton Bay Trailer Boat Club and the Department of Transport and Main Roads, which gives club members confidence that their club will remain at Manly, run by locals for locals. Unlike the former member for Lytton and Labor, I am getting on with the job of improving marine infrastructure for the Lytton electorate and empowering the boating community, which was severely disadvantaged under the Beattie-Bligh Labor governments.

Glenala State High School

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.39 pm): I want to share today a remarkable story of transformation and success—a story that I hope will also stand as an inspiration for generations to come. It involves a group of teenagers on the verge of adulthood, a school badly in need of a facelift, a student body in need of a champion and a teaching professional who entered this world and delivered both.

Glenala State High School in my electorate of Inala is truly the little school that could. Just two short years ago Glenala was in need of a major renovation after years of falling victim to ongoing vandalism and graffiti. Rescue came in the form of a \$15 million Queensland government State Schools of Tomorrow grant—a program designed to provide the best available facilities and ensure today's children have the best resources for tomorrow's future. From the complete makeover of their hall to a new fitness centre and upgrades to classrooms, Glenala State High School has seen a complete physical turnaround. But cosmetic changes are not the only transformation Glenala has undergone.

In 2011, Corrine McMillan arrived as the principal and has set about systematically changing the very culture of the school. Ms McMillan strictly enforced the school uniform policy, banned mobile phones and cracked down on tardiness and school assignments. These may seem like simple changes, but together they have given the students a sense of respect for their school and respect for their community.

The proof is in Glenala's recent OP results. Every single OP eligible student achieved an OP between one and 15—a 42 per cent increase on the previous year. In addition, almost 40 per cent of those students are continuing their studies in higher education. Two years ago that figure was less than five per cent. With enrolments at the school up 20 per cent this year for the new intake of year 8s, word is clearly getting out.

The school's successes have been praised by the Prime Minister, who paid tribute to Ms McMillan and her leadership. Julia Gillard said the school 'continues to show what can be achieved with a culture of high expectations and a focus on evidence based learning'. QTU President, Kevin Bates, said the school was an outstanding result of what could be achieved with strong leadership, dedicated teachers and support staff and, critically, the additional necessary resources required to underpin this work.

To me Glenala State High School truly is a shining beacon. It is a beacon of hope and of inspiration. I know my local community has an immense sense of pride in what this school and its teachers and students have achieved. I am personally just as proud because these really are phenomenal results that have come from phenomenal dedication. I pay tribute to the spirit of this latest group of year 12s. The world now really is their oyster.

Walton, Mr C

 **Hon. JA STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games) (2.42 pm): On 23 December the Currumbin community lost a true friend, a pioneer of sustainable living, a family man and a visionary. Fifty-four-year-old Chris Walton's life was cruelly whisked away from him when an awning collapsed in James Street, Burleigh, as he was walking underneath it. This was no canvas awning, this was a solid metal verandah that, in a freak instance, tore loose without any warning and crushed Chris. His wife is up in the gallery with us today. Kerry, this is hard for me too. Despite efforts from countless bystanders who rushed to his aid, Chris could not be saved. It is widely said that Chris alerted others of the imminent accident and pushed them away, taking the brunt of the blow himself when the awning collapsed.

Chris's full and active life was celebrated by family, friends and business colleagues at a deeply moving ceremony held at our Currumbin RSL on the banks of Currumbin Creek on Friday, 4 January—a fitting meeting place to farewell a dear friend. Eulogies recalled the deep love he had for his wife, Kerry, and son, Fin, his zest for life and his reverence for the earth.

But in Currumbin Chris will be remembered most for creating the multiaward winning Ecovillage in our beloved Currumbin Valley and for immersing himself in all aspects of our community. Chris had a career in property development which, in some ways, was at odds with his obvious love of the land.

I remember meeting Chris and Kerry some 10 years ago, soon after they had secured land for this vision, the Ecovillage. They were holding open community consultation on site. This might sound normal, but it was a first for a private developer. I was immediately impressed by this inclusive nature and infectious enthusiasm to take the local community along with him on this journey to produce an extraordinary way of living in harmony with nature.

I have enjoyed my many visits over the years to witness the village's progress and the friendship I formed with Chris and Kerry. The subsequent development application for the Ecovillage was the largest ever submitted to the Gold Coast City Council. There were many challenges to face Chris along the way, but he never lost his passion or his vision. He ploughed on sourcing and storing used and recycled materials that fostered sustainable development every step of the way.

His close friend Martin Jackson summed it up: Chris modelled a zest for life with a boy scout's enthusiasm, an ability to be present and lead with his heart. He was the best friend a friend could have—loyal, engaged and generous.

As I said, the Ecovillage won a long list of prestigious awards, but all of these paled into insignificance compared to the adoration Chris had for his wife, Kerry, and son, Fin. May he live long in our memories and in our hearts. Today I say vale Chris Walton.

Seafood Industry

 **Hon. DF CRISAFULLI** (Mundingburra—LNP) (Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience) (2.44 pm): I rise in the next phase of my journey to try to do a good deed for our seafood industry in this state—that is to push, in this place, the opportunity to properly label seafood in our takeaway stores in Queensland. This is something that I believe is a win-win situation and can actually do some good for those hardworking people who have to compete with cheap imports. It is also an opportunity for consumers to know what it is they are eating.

In a country of this size with such a vast land mass and such a small population we will never be able to ban imports. It just would not be fair to our farmers. What we can do is give information to consumers so they can make an informed choice. If faced with a choice between a beautiful fresh piece of North Queensland barramundi or something farmed in substandard conditions overseas, I know which one—

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mr CRISAFULLI: No. I try to steer clear of the member for Gregory when I am out that way. He can be a bit cheeky and lead me astray.

Mr JOHNSON: I rise to a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Did he infer that I am a yellow belly?

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Cunningham): Order! Member for Gregory, I am sure he did not. I call the minister.

Mr CRISAFULLI: It is wonderful to be interjected on by someone who does have a true love for the land.

I know how passionate my part of the world is for this. They have seen what has happened to our seafood industry. It has been under siege. Those in it have been painted as some sort of mob of villains when the truth is that they have done some great work in terms of reaching that environmental stewardship that they pride themselves on.

I went to my constituents the other day and asked whether or not they would be prepared to pay an extra dollar at their local fish and chip shop if they could be guaranteed that it was fresh Australian fish. I had 100 per cent of people agree with that statement.

I believe we have an opportunity in this place to do some good and to push for laws to be put in place in this regard. I have formally written to the health minister about this. It is something that I intend to campaign on. I do not see this as red tape. It is more a piece of white chalk. It is a simple case of clearly defining whether a person supports the local industry or indeed takes the cheaper product.

It can be done. It has been done successfully in the Northern Territory. There is a campaign underway in South Australia at the moment to do just this. I think that we should beat them to the punch. I think if a state can benefit it is this one. If any region can it is my part of the world. I think we owe it to consumers to give them all of the knowledge to make an informed choice. I think we owe it to an industry under siege to support our fellow regional Queenslanders.

Meagher, Mr C

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (2.47 pm): It is with great regret that I report to the House the passing of a magnificent Queenslandeer by the name of Mr Colin Meagher AM. Col Meagher was a friend of mine for the past 30 years and I was deeply saddened to hear of his passing through the obituary column of the *Courier-Mail*. However, I am very thankful to the *Courier-Mail* because I can now pay due respect to his wonderful life through the people's forum of the Queensland parliament so that his great contribution to Queensland, particularly the equestrian fraternity, may be preserved for posterity in the annals of the parliamentary record.

Col was nature's gentleman personified and his dedication to the horse world came second only to his dedication to his lovely wife, Pat, and their children, Toby and Heidi, and their families. Col's curriculum vitae in the horse world includes ringmaster at the Ekka for 18 years before moving to the presidency of the RNA Queensland from 1997 to 2003. He was in the Equestrian Federation of Australia from 1969 to 1986 and vice-president of that association from 1973 to 1982.

He was patron of the Queensland Pony Club Association where he gave countless hours and days to nurturing young children with their riding and love of horses, and my daughter was one of those. He was manager of the 1984 Australian equestrian team which competed in the Los Angeles Olympic Games, and his business skills and acumen were recognised when he was made a trustee of the Parkland showgrounds and a member of the Jupiters Trust.

His roots were in the country and his dignified, calm demeanour endeared him to all and sundry who met Col right throughout Queensland. His wonderful dedication to the equine industry was recognised in 1988 when he was awarded an AM, a Member of the Order of Australia. There was further recognition in 2011 when he was inducted into the Australian Show Horse Hall of Fame for his contribution to the equestrian industry.

Col ran a very successful real estate business in Nerang, my home suburb, for many years and never stopped giving to the communities he involved himself with. Col Meagher's 81 years of life is a blueprint for all that is good with family, friends and community. He was riding almost up to the end of his life and was, as they say in riding circles, pretty to watch in the saddle. We will miss his engaging smile and laconic humour, but those of us lucky enough to have known Col Meagher will never forget him. My deepest sympathies go to his life's partner and best friend, Pat, and families and our thoughts are with you as you cope with your sad loss.

Sport and Recreation

 **Hon. TL MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works) (2.50 pm): I would like to congratulate the Minister for Health for his announcement this morning about his public awareness campaign against obesity. It is quite frightening to hear some of those statistics where a quarter of children in Queensland are rated as overweight or obese and the fact that this is an epidemic right throughout all demographics in our state which is costing us around \$391 million a year. We need to do something about this.

I was reading recently that we can take some simple steps to make sure that we can live in a more healthy manner and also reduce this debt that is on our state because of this. We can drink moderately, we can eat our fair share of fruit and vegetables and we can have our 30 minutes of activity everyday, and that is the point I wanted to make today—about being active.

My old school, Mitchie State High School, has the motto 'A sound mind in a sound body', and I agree with that edict very much. It reminds me of the number of sports that young people can play, and at this time of year it is very important as we have our sign-on days right across all of our electorates.

I also want to congratulate the Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing for his wonderful initiative called Get in the Game, which has been encouraging people who would not normally be able to afford club fees by giving them a subsidy of \$150 to enable them to join a sporting club. This has been a great success in my electorate. Fifteen clubs have signed up to this initiative and the reports I am getting back from them is that they are getting tens and tens of people coming in with their vouchers. So this initiative is encouraging people to be active and to be involved in sport, and it is incredibly important that we encourage our young people and children to lead a healthy and very active lifestyle.

I want to acknowledge some of those sporting clubs in my electorate. West Arana Hills had their sign-on day last week. West Arana Hills, the great Panthers, is my old club—a fantastic club with a fantastic tradition. West Arana Hills arch rivals are West Mitchie. I am now the patron of that club which is quite ironic. They had a great sign-on day last week as well. Mitchie soccer club has had hundreds and hundreds of young people sign up, and that is a great way to be active every week, going out on a Saturday morning to pay a game of soccer. Of course we also have hockey. A lot of ladies play hockey, as do the males.

Mr Dowling: It's football.

Mr MANDER: I take that interjection. To me it is soccer. The Albany Creek Brumbies had their sign-on day, as well as the Albany Creek Soccer Club. Also, the Albany Creek netball club had their sign-on day, where we saw tens and tens of young ladies sign up for a healthy and active lifestyle.

Dairy Industry

 **Mr MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (2.53 pm): We have been reflecting this week on a number of agricultural industries that were hit hard by the recent flooding including fruit and vegetable growers, citrus growers, pork producers, cane growers, graziers and the dairy industry. The Queensland Dairy Organisation has estimated the cost of the recent floods in terms of destroyed infrastructure, discarded milk and lost production in the range of \$40 million for this year. It is estimated that 50 per cent of dairy farmers in the North Burnett region were affected by flooding, with reports of entire herds being swept away. We have also heard tragic stories of dairy farmers having to pour gallons of good milk down the drain because tankers simply could not access flooded dairy farms because roads were cut.

The situation has been exacerbated because this comes just two years after the dairy industry was hit so hard by the summer of natural disasters. The dairy industry on the Darling Downs during the summer of natural disasters two years ago experienced supply chain issues resulting in \$15 million to \$25 million in losses to the industry. On top of this, the dairy industry has also been battling reduced incomes in recent years because of the supermarket price war.

This combination of factors has resulted in the dairy industry being severely affected, especially in the North Burnett region where there are concerns that the damage may result in more dairy farmers exiting the industry. This is a dire situation for the dairy farmers involved. But it will also result in increased costs for consumers as milk supplies on supermarket shelves diminish. Queensland may also be forced into a situation where we will have to transport fresh milk from southern states to make up for the short supply. This in the long term can only mean Queenslanders paying more for fresh milk.

I urge Woolworths and Coles to engage with the flood affected dairy farmers to discuss the long-term support and the pricing mechanisms that they give not only to the affected dairy farmers but to all Queensland dairy producers so that these producers can continue to participate in an industry they have committed so much of their lives to. It is also important for Coles and Woolworths to work with the Queensland government to get the message out that Queensland is open for business. Like all natural disasters, some areas will be more affected than others and there are still many producers wanting to get their product to market.

I would like to congratulate the leadership shown by the North Burnett Regional Council, particularly Mayor Don Waugh and Deputy Mayor Faye Whelan. The council is out there promoting the region, trying to attract people to come to this wonderful part of the state. Tourism is an important part of the economy out there, along with agriculture. It is a diverse agricultural base, supplying great Queensland produce not only to Queensland markets but to markets across Australia.

(Time expired)

Coomera Electorate, Australia Day Awards

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (2.57 pm): In keeping with Australia Day II being celebrated on 23 February, it gives me great pleasure to announce the Coomera electorate Australia Day dedicated commitment award winners. There are five categories. The young person award went to Fiona Row. Fiona is the school chaplain at Eagleby South State School. I think she is paid for three days a week—quite poorly, as we all know is the case with chaplains—but Fiona is involved with the community virtually 24 hours a day seven days a week.

The citizen of the year award went to Ann Livingstone. Mrs Livingstone has been an Ormeau Lions Club driver reviver site worker for approximately 16 years. The site opens at the beginning and end of each school holidays, every long weekend and Easter, Christmas and New Year holidays. They are open for 69 days a year, and she spends about 36, four-hour shifts there and she has been doing that for the last 16 years, serving around 100 cups of tee or coffee each shift. So good on her for her hard work and congratulations to her.

I coined the term OBE for the next recipient—OBE meaning 'over blinking eighty'. Frank Barnes is the senior citizen Australia Day awardee for the Coomera electorate. Frank has worked in and around the community for the last 35 years. In fact, he was the first chaplain, I would suggest, in Queensland. He was certainly the first chaplain in our area. He does an absolutely magnificent job. He is 86 years young now. Congratulations to Frank.

We also have two organisation awards. One is for a non-government or not-for-profit organisation, and that is for MAD—they really are mad—Mothers Against Drugs. The program they run is Smart Arts. Smart Arts has this year recruited mentors for 151 Coomera young people aged 11 to 18 years. They have done a wonderful job with those young people and they are to be congratulated.

Finally, the community group of the year is the Twin Rivers Lions Club. The Twin Rivers Lions Club serves the community in the Albert and Logan rivers area around Beenleigh. I congratulate all nominees and look forward to hosting them at my electorate on the 21st at morning tea.

Emergency Services Volunteers

 **Mr MALONE** (Mirani—LNP) (3.00 pm): As the Assistant Minister for Emergency Volunteers, I would like to talk about the role our emergency volunteers play in our community and the great work they do with very little payment and quite often putting themselves at risk. I particularly want to talk about the SES—the guys in the orange uniform with the RACQ sponsorship badge on the side—and the training and the work they do and the dedication they have to their communities.

Under the stress of cyclones and floods, they come from all over Queensland to help their friends and their comrades in the SES to help in communities that are badly affected. Rural fire brigade volunteers under normal circumstances fight fires. In recent years where there is a cyclone or a flood or any other disaster around Queensland, the yellow trucks with the pumps and the guys with their yellow uniforms turn out to help communities. Again, without any recompense they put their lives at risk and quite often spend a number of days, sometimes weeks, away from home helping out communities that are far removed from where they live. For instance, we had people from as far away as Cairns come to Bundaberg to help out with rural fires. That is absolutely brilliant.

We are seeing surf-lifesavers, whom you would normally associate with skimpy uniforms, hats, surf skis et cetera, helping out in the floods and cyclones taking on a different role altogether with emergency first aid posts to support groups in the community and making up the numbers in the mud armies that go around helping out in those very desperate circumstances. I would like to congratulate all of those emergency service volunteers. I have not even mentioned the people who work for the Red Cross and all of the other volunteers who worked right across Queensland in those very difficult times.

As the ministerial appointee looking at a review of the Rural Fire Services, I would like to say that it is all on track. We have close on 250 submissions. Some of those submissions are up to 80 pages long. We have met with 1,500 volunteers in 13 different locations across Queensland. At just about every one of those meetings every one of those volunteers gave us a very clear indication that they supported their local paid staff and, indeed, they would like more.

Broadwater Electorate, Australia Day Awards

 **Miss BARTON** (Broadwater—LNP) (3.03 pm): It gives me great pleasure to rise today to acknowledge some of the brilliant people that we have in our community of Broadwater, although of course every single person in my electorate is brilliant because they live in the best electorate in Queensland.

Government members interjected.

Miss BARTON: I will take that as assent from my colleagues. I would like to take a moment to recognise a few who were acknowledged by the Gold Coast community in our annual Australia Day awards. It was very heart-warming to see so many acknowledgements that came from our community. In

the category of community awards, it was very heartening to see that Fred Woodley, who is a man who has given more than 40 years dedication and volunteer time to local community groups across the Gold Coast, was acknowledged as a finalist in this category. Fred is currently the president of, or on the board of, six volunteer organisations at the moment. As the member for Coomera would say, he is entirely deserving of an OBE because he is indeed 'over blooming eighty' himself.

I would also like to acknowledge Senior Sergeant Murray Underwood of the Runaway Bay Police Station, who is also a finalist in this category. Murray has been the long-serving officer in charge of the local police station. He is well known by everyone in our community and not because he is arresting them, but because he is always showing support for groups like Neighbourhood Watch and the local community consultative committee, and he was instrumental in helping set up the Paradise Point Youth Committee and Youth Centre.

We also have a fantastic Labrador Men's Shed that was set up in 2010 with 14 members. Now, a mere 2½ years later, it has in excess of 100 members. The president and the secretary of the committee—Frank Law and Len Thompson—were also finalists in the community service category. I did want to take a moment today to acknowledge them and the great service that they give to our community in Broadwater.

It is not just the community sector where people in my community excel. Barbara Knight was acknowledged as a finalist in the environment category for the great work that she does with the beach care group. She has been working with them for many years. The Gold Coast young citizen of the year was Evange Epa. He was the school captain of Coombabah State High School in my electorate of Broadwater last year. I have very proudly written him a reference as he hopes to be the youth member for Broadwater in the YMCA Queensland Youth Parliament for 2013.

I would like to thank my colleagues for endorsing the fact that Broadwater is the best electorate in Queensland and that we do have some fantastic people with great community spirit in my electorate. I commend all of those people and those who work so very hard across the electorate.

Fitzroy River, Water Quality

 **Mr BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (3.06 pm): WC Fields was once quoted as saying, 'I don't drink water because fish fornicate in it.' On that basis, drinking water out of the Fitzroy should be fine because there is not much fish fornication going on in there these days. They are dead in the hundreds of thousands. Unfortunately, the majority of people in Rockhampton and the adjoining areas do not have a choice in the matter.

My point of reference regarding this issue was the final report of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry. In the section on mining, there were some very revealing comments. In particular, the final report stated—

The commission has not conducted a comprehensive investigation into the mining industry in Queensland. The fact that only a limited number of recommendations are directed at mining companies should not, therefore, be interpreted as an endorsement of existing flood preparedness and response activities within that industry.

The fact that the environment minister and the mines minister, to my knowledge, have done nothing in this parliament to reflect on those comments should be a matter of some concern. Rather, the community has been made aware that this government had indeed been working closely with industry in such a tight embrace that I do not understand why the government even pretends to have regulatory responsibility. One has to wonder why this is so. In fact, there has been minimal consultation with Queenslanders and no independent, timely and accurate information. This issue of mine water is in an environment where the regulator has been ransacked and misdirected under the banner of small government while the government pursues its radical, rightist attack on green tape.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you can imagine my surprise when last Saturday the *Australian Financial Review* reported that eight mines owned by multinationals were under investigation by the department. What was this investigation about? It was about breaches of the guidelines for discharges. On the very same day the *Australian Financial Review* was reporting these breaches, the Deputy Premier was providing absolute written personal assurances regarding the quality of water in the Fitzroy River.

So what do we actually know? We know that this government cannot spell consultation. We know that the mines went flat out during the recent rain event. We know that there were very substantial and uncontrolled releases from highly problematic waters from Mount Morgan. We know, and it has been confirmed, that a large proportion of the mine's pumping breached its own environmental conditions. We know that there have been hundreds of thousands of fish killed along 40 kilometres of the Fitzroy River.

I make this point to the Deputy Premier, the mines minister and the environment minister: their government and individual ministers are responsible for this issue. Where were the local ministers who are in the government? Where is the transparency? Where is the data? Where is the full spectrum of analysis? Where is the testing? Where are the results? Where are the tests on the fish carcasses?

Logan Electorate, Volunteers

 **Mr PUCCI** (Logan—LNP) (3.09 pm): Over the past several days this House has heard heroic stories of volunteers whose tireless efforts to help their fellow man are beyond reproach. However, there is another kind of volunteer—the kind that day-in and day-out helps their community without favour or reward. Whether it is church organisations, sporting clubs, youth development organisations or community services, volunteers are the glue that holds the fabric of our community together. Volunteers are the very essence of our community and define our community spirit. It is sad to see some media all too often highlight the negative actions of a small few, yet when everyday Queenslanders are going the extra mile for their community, they rarely rate a mention.

My electorate of Logan is what it is today because of the people who define it—the volunteers. From one community group to another, the same passionate people want to better our community. As we prepare to celebrate 150 years of settlement in Logan Village in September, volunteers are the ones spearheading this important event on our community's calendar.

Volunteers also provide an essential community service. Citizens who serve as justices of the peace and commissioners for declarations assist so many—from certifying documents to assisting in the issuing of warrants for police officers. In recent weeks, I had the pleasure to present Keith Revell and George Kanka with certificates recognising 25 years of service to the community in their roles as Justices of the Peace and Commissioners for Declarations. This amazing achievement is an example for all Queenslanders to emulate. To give so much to the community yet ask for nothing in return is truly an honourable gesture that will be remembered by many and respected by all. I would like to thank and commend them and all JPs and CDs for their ongoing service to the community.

Governments do not drive communities, people do. Next week, our city will host the City of Choice Summit—an initiative announced by our honourable Premier and our mayor. Supported by all three levels of government, this summit will bring together key community leaders, local residents, government decision makers, community organisations and business representatives to identify priorities and opportunities related to the five themes of housing, employment, safety, education and social infrastructure. These themes are vital in planning for the future growth of our community. Regions that fall in my electorate are set to grow by hundreds of thousands of people over the next 20 years. This projected figure requires all community stakeholders to band together and plan for the future of our children.

The year 2013 will be a big year for my electorate of Logan. As many of us are still rebuilding and cleaning up after recent events, our community resilience will keep us moving onwards as a community. We will make the most of what will be a great year for our region. We are a great state with great opportunities. As a community, we can seize the opportunities that lie before us. Together we can make it happen.

Road Signs; Lights on the Hill

 **Mr RICKUSS** (Lockyer—LNP) (3.12 pm): I rise to revisit an issue that I mentioned during the debate on the Disaster Readiness Amendment Bill on 25 October 2011. At the time, I said—

I wonder if we could have a standard red sign and a standard orange sign. The orange sign is an advisory sign and any sign that is red and white is a stop sign. It is as simple as that. If it is a red and white sign saying 'road flooded' you stop. If it is an orange and black sign saying 'road needs repair' you can still drive on it.

For the benefit of members, I will table a photograph I took of some of the 'road closed' signs.

Tabled paper: Photograph of 'road closed' and 'water over road' signs [\[2092\]](#).

I am sure Deputy Speaker Cunningham, being an ex-councillor and mayor of a local area in Gladstone, would understand what I am talking about. The photo shows a 'road closed' sign that is yellow and black. It is a 'water over the road' sign that is yellow and black. There is no road past this sign. These are not advisory signs; they mean the road is closed. Unfortunately, most yellow and black signs are purely advisory signs. For example, we have all seen the big yellow and black arrows on roads. Let us use some common sense here and make all road signs which are stop signs red and white—'road closed'. If there is only six inches of water over the road, the sign can be yellow and black so you can drive through. If the road is closed, let us make it red and white. Let us stop the confusion.

Unfortunately, two young gentlemen drowned on the way to work. Appropriate signage like this would probably assist in that sort of matter. The police should be empowered to make sure they can fine people if they go past a red-and-white sign. We have red-and-white stop signs and red-and-white give-way signs, yet we have a 'road closed' sign which is yellow and black. It does not make sense to me. I think it is a logical change that should be made and it should be made shortly.

The only thing I would say about this is that the councils, the department and RoadTek have to then go around and collect the signs fairly quickly after the event. They could not let them sit there for a week after the flooded creeks have gone. That is one part of it. They get them out fairly quickly so I am sure they could take the responsibility to get them back in fairly quickly.

This is vitally important. You stop at the red signs because it means danger. The yellow signs, to my way of thinking, are more advisory signs. Let us put this in, because unfortunately some of Vaughan's mates in B-doubles want to drive around these signs.

Mr Johnson: My mates don't. It's all the cowboys who do.

Mr RICKUSS: Is it all the cowboys who do it? Maybe it is some blokes in four-wheel drives et cetera.

While I am on my feet, I would like to inform the House that the Lights on the Hill convoy will be on next Saturday, 23 February, at Gatton. That convoy will leave from Toowoomba and Rocklea, and then between 500 and 1,000 trucks will turn up in the Lockyer Valley. I am one of the patrons of that organisation. If anybody is near there and wants to see some nice trucks, please come and have a look.

Morayfield Electorate, Schools

 **Mr GRIMWADE** (Morayfield—LNP) (3.15 pm): On 28 November 2012, I rose in this place to talk about some of the exciting things that were happening in education in Queensland and around my Morayfield electorate. I spoke about the \$35,000 in kindergarten grants. I spoke about the \$86,112 in further funding for literacy and those sorts of areas around the local community. I also spoke about the \$160,000 that was given to every school to clean up their maintenance backlog. They are some of the exciting things I spoke about previously.

I rise today because 2013 brings great opportunities in Queensland for our education sector and for kids in my electorate, and I want to update honourable members and my community about further things we are doing. One of those things is happening at the Narangba Valley High School. This school in my electorate has been made one of the 26 schools in Queensland to become an independent public school. This is fantastic news for our local community. It gives them more power, brings more autonomy into the school and gives them greater decision-making powers. This can make this school into a great senior school and tertiary education school all in one, moving into the future as they go through. The principal of that school said this week—

This is a wonderful opportunity for all partners in our school community. It will enable us to explore a variety of creative services for students and their families, enhancing the learning outcomes of students even further.

He sees the autonomy and the value out of having that independent status into the school. It means they will get better learning outcomes for the kids.

One of the other things we are doing, along with the honourable member for Kallangur who is sitting next to me, is making a new kindergarten in our local school at Jinibara. This is fantastic news because 44 more kids will have places at that school in the kindergarten. That news is getting the thumbs up from the member for Kallangur, who sits next to me in parliament. This is great news for the Narangba area as there are lots of young families around here.

Mr Ruthenberg: A good educational outcome.

Mr GRIMWADE: I will take the interjection. It will be a good educational outcome because it is fantastic news for the young families.

The Morayfield East State School recently received some more funds, with \$26,578 going to that school to buy some more chairs for their hall. Again, this is further advancement and it will get some more resources into that school for educational outcomes.

Finally, it is that time of the year when honourable members go around to our schools and see the new leaders come through the schools. We will be doing this over the next period. Just recently, I visited a very special school in my electorate which is close to my heart—the Caboolture Special School. This is one of the largest special schools in Queensland, if not the largest. I want to make special mention of the leaders of that school—vice-captains Isabel Grieve and Kammrin Mitchell and school captains Madison Mills and James Memory. I awarded them their badges at a school ceremony and that event made the paper. I wish them all the very best in such a great school and all the very best for their future.

Queensland Economy

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (3.18 pm): Last Friday, the Reserve Bank released its Statement on Monetary Policy. The statement details that wages growth in Queensland is weaker, with anaemic employment growth and an elevated unemployment rate. It is an unemployment rate that is still at a trend rate of 5.9 per cent in January. These are levels not seen since the global financial crisis. This is a trend unemployment rate that has increased by nearly half a per cent under an LNP government. When the unemployment rate was at a trend rate of 5.5 per cent in January last year—with the economy growing at four per cent—the member for Clayfield, as the shadow Treasurer, declared Queensland to be an 'economic basket case'. When you look at the state's seasonally adjusted jobless rate in January of 5.5 per cent, you see it as the same as the rate just before the March 2012 election. In other words, this government has not moved one inch towards its four per cent unemployment promise.

Despite all of the Premier's and Treasurer's wild finger-pointing and bluster, the unemployment rate is not expected to improve, with Treasury projecting it to average 6¼ per cent this financial year and stay at six per cent next financial year. This unemployment rate is directly linked to government worker job cuts of up to 20,000 people. Independent Professor in Economics John Quiggin has said this as has the Commonwealth Bank's economics team. Anyone who asserts otherwise is telling an obvious and blatant mistruth. With an economy that was forecast prior to recent flooding to be growing slower at 3¾ per cent—and to slow further to 3½ per cent next financial year, the Treasurer tells us that it is 'great', that we are 'back on track'. He also tells us that with higher unemployment, slower economic growth and closures to TAFEs that Queenslanders will have 'great opportunities'.

It gets worse. In December the Premier said the job cuts were over. But by late January he was telling the *Australian Financial Review* that he would consider further government worker job cuts in an economy that has weakened. It is absurd logic to cut jobs and leave people with no other job to go to in order to supposedly create jobs, which led to unemployment nearing 10 per cent in Queensland under the LNP's last regime, the calamitous Borbidge-Sheldon government. It is the same absurd logic and twisted priorities that we see in the Newman government scrapping the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program—cutting the jobs of people who help others into jobs. It is no wonder that the RBA statement also confirms figures from the ABS and the projections of Queensland Treasury of very weak employment growth this financial year at around 1¼ per cent. That means we are facing a combination of a higher unemployment rate with fewer jobs being created in the economy. This has had an impact not only on jobs in the private sector but also on wages and, subsequently, the cost of living for Queensland families.

The RBA statement further detailed that the Treasurer's rhetoric about his first home owners construction grant is just hot air. The statement details large falls in housing loan approvals for first home buyers in Queensland following the removal of the grant for existing homes. However, we see the greatest creativity from the Treasurer when he talks about debt. The RBA's statement outlines that Queensland's credit rating 'did not have a material impact on the state's ability to access wholesale debt markets, nor the prices at which such debt is issued'. That is a long way from the ridiculous LNP claims of a 'power dive into the abyss' or debt crises that were repeated ad nauseum last year by the Premier and the Treasurer. Even now this government does not understand the fact that if you cannot meet the cost of living because you have no job because the government has sacked you along with—

(Time expired)

Cleveland Railway Station, Accident

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (3.21 pm): The train crash at Cleveland Railway Station on the morning of Thursday, 31 January was a complete shock to the residents of Cleveland. Commuters, QR staff and onlookers experienced something that, to my knowledge, has never happened before in Cleveland: the train overshooting the line and crashing through the station building. The train travelling from Ormiston station to Cleveland overshot the stop block of the station and careered into the Cleveland station building, damaging and destroying a significant portion of the recently upgraded facilities.

Within minutes the police were present, and ambulance officers and other emergency services personnel came and immediately secured the area and tended to the injured. Police established that all people were accounted for and that no-one was hidden within the wreckage or the building. It was a relief to all when ambulance officers could establish that no-one was badly hurt. While the damage to the station was extensive, no-one seriously hurt or killed and for that we are truly grateful. People were attended to and initially treated on site and 10 were taken to the Redland Hospital emergency department with minor injuries. Fortunately, no-one on the station was in the path of the train or, more specifically, in the toilets that took the major force of the impact. However, a Victoria Point teenager Brendan Hawxwell, 16 and an apprentice plasterer, was about to enter the men's toilet when the train crashed into it. A text message from his mum, Belinda Hawxwell, had diverted his attention and when he stopped to read it the train crashed into the toilet.

The recovery work was undertaken in a prompt manner. I had two inspections of the damage and recovery. The recovery and demolition team worked hard on Thursday, Friday and around the clock on Saturday night to remove the train, the stop block and broken overhead lines. The demolition team removed all of the debris and broken material. It was anticipated that it could take up to seven days before the line could reopen. Yet by Sunday morning—that is 2½ days later—trains were back on schedule. While the recovery stage is now complete, the rebuilding continues.

As the local MP, I want to thank all those who played an important part during the incident and directly after. The following people were involved by being there on site, contacting me to assist, helping the injured, providing safety, working on reopening the station or in other ways. I want to thank my staff who were at the office, Sue Hanlon and Tracey Sepecan; the Treasurer; the transport minister and his staff; QR staff, particularly Avtar and Grace; TMR staff; the mayor; federal member Andrew Laming; QPS

officers, particularly Superintendent Jim Keogh; the QAS officers and any other emergency service personnel; Redland Hospital staff, doctors and nurses; and anyone else who assisted. I thank them all. Cleveland is a great community and everyone came together to help and support each other through this incident.

Multicultural and Dragon Boat Festival

 **Mr SHORTEN** (Algeester—LNP) (3.24 pm): I rise to speak about a wonderful community group and a great event that they organise and run in the Algeester electorate. The group I speak of is the Hakka Association of Queensland and the event is the Multicultural and Dragon Boat Festival, which is held on and around the lake at Forest Lake in my wonderful electorate of Algeester. I have been very fortunate to have been able to attend the festival for the last number of years—and last year for the first time as the member for Algeester.

The dragon boat festival is organised and hosted by the Hakka Association, this year under the leadership of Florence Day. Florence and her hardworking and dedicated members make by hand anywhere up to 5,000 rice dumplings for the day. Rice dumplings are intrinsically tied into the dragon boat festival and I should probably explain to the House how that came about. It began 2,000 years ago when statesman and poet Chu Yuan threw himself into the Mi Lo River to protest against corruption within his kingdom. On hearing the news local villagers raced out in their boats in an urgent attempt to save him. In an attempt to stop him being eaten by water dragons and fish, they created noise by beating drums and throwing rice dumplings into the water. So today the rice dumplings are eaten to symbolise the offerings made on behalf of Chu Yuan.

The dragon boat festival grows larger every year and I suspect this year will be no different. I had the honour recently of hosting the President of the Hakka Association of Queensland, Ms Florence Day, and a member of the association, Dulcia Luo, at my office to discuss this year's festival and Hakka's participation in the inaugural Algeester Queensland Day celebration to be held on 8 June. Florence presented to me a wonderful Hakka dragon boat T-shirt that I promised I would wear this year to the event.

I put my thanks on record to Florence Day for her leadership and the 300-odd members of the Hakka Association of Queensland for their continued organisation and support of the dragon boat festival. If fellow MPs have no commitments on 2 June I would urge them to make their way to Forest Lake and experience the vibrant sights and sounds of this year's 2013 dragon boat festival.

Justices of the Peace

 **Mr RUTHENBERG** (Kallangur—LNP) (3.27 pm): I rise to speak this afternoon about justices of the peace and the services they can offer to the community. I want to encourage all of the 800 justices of the peace and commissioners of declaration in my electorate to register and attend a training day that my office is hosting next week. Already we have 100 who have nominated to attend this professional training morning. I am very pleased to announce that the Hon. Jarrod Bleijie will be attending this event and speaking to the attendees, and I am sure they will be very encouraged by what he wishes to share with them. At this important event we will also be awarding certificates for service to 22 attendees: one for 50 years service, five for 40 years service and 16 for 25 years service. I am very proud of these outstanding people and their service to our community.

Further, I want to bring to the attention of the House and my community the new JP services in our community that have been opened this week at the Kallangur library. In conjunction with the office of my good friend Darren Grimwade, the member for Morayfield, JP services will begin at the Narangba library next week. JP services will be offered two days a week at both of these new locations. I thank my staff member Judy in my office for her tenacious work to get this program in place for the benefit of our community.

These new services are part of the JPs in the Community program. This allows JPs and commissioners of declaration to volunteer their services at community venues across the state. Our society has become so complex that thousands of formal documents have to be signed each day and a host of legal procedures have to be carried out. For this to happen we need a system that is quick, cheap, reliable and does not place a greater burden on legal practitioners and court officers.

By dealing with routine matters, JPs free lawyers and the courts to concentrate on cases that require professional legal training. I know how many people come into my office each day to have documents witnessed and signed. I strongly encourage all JPs to get involved in this important community service program. I want to assure those who can volunteer that by participating in the JPs in the Community program they will be covered by the Queensland government's liability insurance and be provided with a range of materials that can help them.

Hervey Bay Electorate, *Sunrise*

 **Mr SORENSEN** (Hervey Bay—LNP) (3.29 pm): The very best of Hervey Bay has been broadcast nationally in recent days on Channel 7's *Sunrise* morning show. Grant Denyer, who is a great personality and is very keen about everything that is fast and different, had to have a go at the new Flyboard. This is a new leisure thrill ride allowing you to hover above the water, getting to great heights, in a jet pack situation all powered by a jet ski and sea water. The Flyboard lets you zoom in and out of the water like a human dolphin and you can stand and hover in the air up some metres. You can even perform backflips. Hervey Bay provides the perfect water conditions to do this. Larry Burch from Aquavue Cafe Watersports is promoting the new leisure thrill ride and it will be up and running for everyone to have a go at very soon. Larry and his team will be running training of the use of the Flyboard. People will be able to become professionals in no time at all. I imagine that now that it has been on TV there will be much interest in the Flyboard.

Sunrise also went to the World Heritage listed Fraser Island to showcase its wonderful and rugged wilderness, rolling beaches and great weather. Local aviation icon Gerry Geltch was also doing fly-bys over the beach. That is a great sight. Gerry has done an estimated 4,000 landings on the beach and has flown me over to Fraser Island on a number of occasions. Grant Denyer also talked a lot about the features of the island, especially the perched lakes, the rainforest and many of the island's other attractions. I am happy to say that the weather over the three days that *Sunrise* aired was wonderful. It was a great coup for the Fraser Coast and will hopefully bring visitors from all over the nation to come and enjoy Hervey Bay. This has been a great opportunity since the floods and the weather conditions that we have experienced recently. I thank Minister Jann Stuckey and also thank Pip Close, head of Tourism Fraser Coast, for everything that she has done. It was sad to hear today that she has resigned, because she has done a wonderful job over the last eight months. She will be sadly missed. The number of tourists have increased greatly since she has been the head of that tourism bureau. I thank Pip for all of the hard work that she has done and wish her all of the best for the future.

QCoal Community Dental Service

 **Mrs MENKENS** (Burdekin—LNP) (3.32 pm): All too often we hear about the negatives associated with the mining industry. I rise to inform the House of a positive pioneering partnership, the QCoal Community Dental Service, which I recently attended the official launch of in Collinsville. I can assure members that in the heartland of Queensland mining country and my old home town of Collinsville in the Burdekin electorate there is strong evidence of constructive partnerships between mining companies and the communities that are directly benefiting via mining jobs. The LNP state government's initiative of Royalties for the Regions with the associated spin-offs for families living in our hardworking mining towns will greatly benefit the regions in the future. As we all know, the Royal Flying Doctor Service is already providing vital healthcare services to people in rural and remote areas of the state. We also recently heard of the RFDS's assistance with evacuations during the floods. The QCoal Community Dental Service will be run on the ground—not in the air, as normally is the case with the Royal Flying Doctor Service. This new initiative will deliver high-quality oral health care to communities in Central Queensland—a no out-of-pocket expense service to eligible residents in towns such as Collinsville, Bowen, Blackall, Sapphire, Clermont, Moranbah, Greenvale, Hughenden, Winton, Richmond and Camooweal. The purpose-built semitrailer—and can I say it is a huge semitrailer—contains two dental surgeries equipped with state-of-the-art dental, X-ray and computer equipment.

Many communities in regional, rural and remote areas of Queensland lack access to oral health services. Some 80 per cent of all dental practitioners are located in major cities and less than one per cent work in rural and remote areas. It has been a very real issue. Waiting lists in the public system are up to 18 months in some regions, so this community dental service will have a significant impact on improving oral health. I want to congratulate all who have been associated with the introduction of this pioneering service. A privately owned Queensland mining company, QCoal has made a generous commitment to support the operating costs of this service for an initial period of three years at a cost of \$3 million and the Royal Flying Doctor Service commissioned and fitted out the impressive 18-wheel semitrailer at an overall cost of \$1.3 million, which included funding from the federal government. The community dental service is proof that mining companies are making invaluable contributions to the rural communities they have become an integral part of. This is a truly unique partnership between two organisations committed to the health and wellbeing of our rural and regional communities.

Mining Industry, Workforce

 **Mr YOUNG** (Keppel—LNP) (3.35 pm): As a former coalminer, last week I was asked to address a group of mothers who call themselves the Central Queensland Mining Support Group. The group's spokesperson asked if I could address the group to talk about the changes in mining from the five-day, three-shift panel to the current seven-day roster with two shifts of 12 hours. I note that the Standing Committee on Regional Australia has released its 18-month inquiry findings examining the impacts of fly-in

fly-out, drive-in drive-out on workforces and families. Griffith University also conducted a similar inquiry interviewing 2,500 miners and 1,900 partners. Yesterday I heard the member for Mount Isa discuss the impacts on smaller rural communities whose butcher and greengrocer had been lured by the big bucks mining offered and the demise of the township, losing services so vital to maintain population. As a former miner I witnessed the transition to the seven-day roster and ultimately eight-hour shifts move to 12-hour shifts. In Dysart the community had a series of meetings called Directions for Dysart which discussed the implications of these transitions.

You can understand the financial logic having a workforce working seven days a week given the huge capital investment in coalmining. I often reflect on how pleasant my life was having three little children and being home from work at 3.30 pm. Sporting groups abounded with a hive of activity. It did not matter whether it was rugby league, soccer, pony club, bowls or golf: everyone seemed to be involved. Dysart, like many mining communities, represented a healthy portrait of family and community values. The seven-day roster changed everything. Wives and children left to be nearer to the coast where children could access more opportunities in education and husbands would be at home every second week. Husbands moved out of their town houses and into mine camp accommodation and others made it home to an empty house at 3.30 to sit around without family. The logic began, 'If I'm out here without my family, I may as well be working,' and thus the 12-hour shift was born.

The downturn of the mid-nineties saw towns like Blackwater and Dysart almost become ghost towns. The fly-in fly-out, drive-in drive-out culture became the dominant percentage of the coalmining industry. Many mining communities believe the ratio should be one-third town residents and two-thirds mining camp accommodation. But as new mines come on line and older mines become nonviable because of the strip ratio to access coal and the current low prices for export coal, tragically the fly-in fly-out, drive-in drive-out workforce is here to stay. The recommendations of these inquiries—or at least some of them—should be implemented. I canvassed many long-term fly-in fly-out, drive-in drive-out miners and they generally are in favour of their work arrangements and have no desire to move back to mining towns.

Nanango Electorate, Art and Sports

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (3.38 pm): Today I rise to talk about the thriving arts and sports community within the Nanango electorate. While many people think that there are limited opportunities for artistic and sporting endeavours in regional areas, I want to give the House some great examples that this is not the case. On the night on the Australia Day floods I was happy to attend an event at the invitation of Bob and Linda Howe and the Moore art gallery. This event was a culmination of many months of planning for the Upper Brisbane Valley community, which includes Moore, Linville and Toogoolawah. This arts award and exhibition held in the tiny town was called In Pursuit of Excellence. It was created by locals and artists also came from all around Australia. It was a celebration of resilience following the 2011 floods and demonstrated that people who live in small towns and regions are able to overcome anything, get on with their daily lives and carry on coordinating high-quality social and cultural events. I was pleased to present Don Milner as the winner of best in show.

I would also like to talk about the young sports achievers in my electorate. In particular, Holly Ferling, a 17-year-old Kingaroy girl is currently playing for the Australian women's cricket team—not the juniors, the actual women's cricket team. At the moment she is in Mumbai. At 14, Holly was first noticed as she took a hat-trick with her first three balls whilst playing in the men's A-grade team at Kingaroy. Holly has been called in at the last minute to fill in for her idol, Australian dual international Elysse Perry, who was forced onto the sidelines because of a stomach bug. Holly is playing in only her second game for Australia and she has claimed three vital wickets. Holly is a perfect example of how great young regional sportswomen can rise through the ranks and represent their sport at a national level. I also congratulate Holly for being named our Australia Day South Burnett Young Sportsperson of the Year.

Also, whilst I was in Esk for the Somerset awards, Rochelle Vidler was named the Young Sportsperson of the Year. At 11, she is the Australian discus champion. To think that this young girl, coming from the small town of Esk, has risen through the ranks to become an Australian champion is amazing. I would also like to quickly mention 17-year-old Stephen Kakakios of Toogoolawah. He is the eldest of 11 children and he is an Australian champion in the sport of taekwondo. Stephen is hoping to compete in this sport at the Olympics. It seems that he—

(Time expired)

McGovern, Mr D

 **Hon. JJ McVEIGH** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) (3.41 pm): This afternoon I rise to pay tribute to a great Toowoomba man and rugby league legend and stalwart, Mr Des McGovern. Des was one of our most enduring ambassadors, especially in the Toowoomba sporting community and rugby league circles. Des McGovern passed away recently at the age of 84. He was an integral part of Toowoomba's golden era of rugby league during the 1950s. His career

included two Kangaroos tours, seven test matches and 15 games for Queensland. He toured as a winger with the Kangaroos in 1952-53 and in 1956-57. Des was also a member of the Toowoomba Bulimba Cup teams.

Des is remembered as a successful rugby league coach in country Queensland regions, particularly Toowoomba, where he coached the mighty Toowoomba Clydesdales. Des was a Darling Downs boy through and through. I am told by those who knew him best that for many years his potential as a lightning-fast winger was evident at an early age and anecdotes about his life experience as such were shared at his funeral.

Des went to Clifton State School and legend has it that his ability to dash down the sideline and dive over the try line was a regular occurrence. The only problem was that, as is typical of small country football fields, the start of the try line and the dead ball line was a very short distance and Des would end up sliding past the dead ball line and often hit the tin fence. Apparently, the imprint of his forehead can be seen all over tin fences on the Darling Downs because he scored so many tries.

As well as being a master coach Des was also a great rugby league brain, which included him working as a rugby league writer for the *Darling Downs Star* newspaper and the *Chronicle*. He was also the voice of rugby league on the Darling Downs, hitting the airwaves and calling the local games on radio station 4AK before moving to 4GR, 4WK and finally 102.7FM. Des retired from full-time commentary at the end of the 2010 season, aged 82.

Des is survived by his children, Barbara, Desmond and Margaret and their families, with whom so many families in Toowoomba, including my own, are friends. His funeral was held yesterday at Toowoomba's Our Lady of Lourdes Church on what would have been his 85th birthday.

Insurance Premiums



Mr TROUT (Barron River—LNP) (3.44 pm): Residents of the Far North are reeling under huge hikes in all areas of insurance and their inability to cope with the financial burden is just the tip of the iceberg. If you ask the man in the street what he perceives to be the reason for the unprecedented hike in insurance premiums, in bemoaning the fact that his home insurance has jumped from \$1,200 per annum to \$6,500, he will tell you that he has been told the reason is the weather events in Australia in recent years. But much of the risk of the Queensland floods was distributed among and pre-empted by global insurers.

Campbell Fuller, a spokesman for the Insurance Council of Australia, recently stated—

The damage bill is likely to rise considerably, but insurers were well prepared financially and logistically for a wet summer.

The practice of postcode dropping has become widespread. Queensland insurers are no longer insures for all of Queensland unless it suits them and it is profitable. To maintain their advertised status as a Queensland insurer, in high-risk areas customers are quoted astronomical premiums in an attempt to dissuade them from insuring. In the absence of choice—for example, where the property is mortgaged—the customer sacrifices huge sums of hard earned money that would otherwise have been directed into the local economy one way or another. Instead, that money leaves the area to feed the profits of the insurance companies across Australia.

The Cairns region is a magnet for out-of-state property investors, mostly in the strata title unit market. As all strata property must be insured, where body corporate managers are employed one of their roles is to obtain insurance quotes. Most body corporate management companies earn a 20 per cent commission from their chosen insurer, taking away the opportunity for owners to shop around for the best deal and effectively raising the premium whilst lining the coffers of the body corporate management company. After Cyclone Yasi, a constituent with investments in Port Douglas received a building insurance renewal that had increased from \$3,500 to \$14,500. The body corporate manager said, 'It's the best we can do.' However, the body corporate manager was going to earn more from the commission on the premium than from the administration fee for the whole year.

Investment in property is already compromised. These are probably good times for buyers, but who wants to buy into a financial nightmare? The solution is for legislation to compel insurers to include flood cover; legislation to prevent body corporate managers from receiving commissions solely on the basis of the premium amount they provide; a parliamentary review of the retail and reinsurance market to assess if there is workable competition in the market; and natural disasters to be covered by a government reinsurance underwriting program.

One of my constituents, Roger Ward, has used his relevant experience to research insurance issues and has recently set up a petition to lobby both state and federal governments for action. I encourage my constituents to sign his petition at rogerward.weebly.com.

Mary Valley Tenant Purchase Scheme

 **Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—Ind) (3.47 pm): I use this opportunity to respond to the statement by the member for Gympie that—

Peter Wellington MP suggests that Mary Valley tenants from Labor's Traveston Dam debacle should be thrown out of their properties.

I table a copy for the *Hansard* record. This is absolute rubbish and a deliberate misrepresentation of my question in parliament this morning by the member for Gympie. The member for Gympie should hang his head in shame.

Tabled paper: Email, dated 14 February 2013, from Nicklin electorate office regarding comments by the member for Gympie, Mr David Gibson MP, in relation to Mary Valley tenants [\[2093\]](#).

Queenslanders demand that our valuable Mary Valley land be sold on the open market and not through a secret sweetheart deal behind closed doors. Queenslanders agree with me that if current tenants or former landowners want to buy the land, then they should go through the open market sale and not be offered the land for sale at a price when others in the valley, who are prepared to pay more, have no chance and no look-in. I have spoken with the Queensland Auditor-General about the government's Mary Valley tenancy purchase scheme. And guess what he says? He agrees with me that the best test for the market value of the land is to put it on the open market. He also agrees that land valuers and real estate agents all have different opinions on land values.

When the member for Gympie claims that the land will be offered for sale at market price I say it is a sham. Look how busy our land courts are. Look at our land valuers day in, day out arguing over land values. Do not talk to me about market values behind closed doors. This morning in parliament the Deputy Premier admitted that the government only intends to recover a fraction of the money the former government spent acquiring this land. No wonder, when they are not going to put it on the open market.

This land is recognised in Australia as potentially very valuable which can be used to generate a lot of wealth for our region. The records show that many of the former Mary Valley landowners sold their properties to the state government for significantly more than they had ever dreamed of receiving. They could not get to the solicitor quick enough to accept the offer. Then they were able to enter into long-term leases at peppercorn rents, spend nothing on their properties, let them run down, and now the government says they deserve preferential treatment. The member for Gympie, the Deputy Premier and this government should not be allowed to allow the current proposal to continue. Many Mary Valley residents agree with me that this preferential treatment should not be allowed to happen. The land belongs to the people of Queensland. The government is the trustee for Queenslanders and this government should do what the Auditor-General agrees with me should happen. The only way to test market value and be accurate is offer these houses for sale on the open market.

Grow

 **Mr KAYE** (Greenslopes—LNP) (3.50 pm): I rise to speak about Grow, a nationwide not-for-profit organisation that helps guide those with mental illnesses toward recovery. It is my privilege to announce that the Greenslopes electorate is host to both the Queensland and national headquarters of Grow. Grow also exists in America, Ireland and New Zealand. The national patron of Grow is Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia. Grow began in 1957 at a time when being mentally ill meant being stigmatised by society and the most likely treatment or support was simply to be institutionalised or ignored.

Grow was established because a group of people believed there had to be a better way. So they created a forum where people suffering from depression and other mental illnesses could support each other through the difficulties they experienced in their everyday lives and go on to live lives full of hope and aspiration. People may go to Grow because they have experienced mental illness, depression, anxiety, panic attacks and mental and emotional distress. Grow groups vary in size from four to 15 members and are run by experienced 'growers' who take a leadership role within the group. As a group, the growers support each other and exchange strategies to help take control of their lives as they head towards recovery. Group members volunteer to take on roles such as leading, chairing or organising meetings. These roles are designed to extend the social and life management skills of Grow members, as well as challenging them to take steps to recovery. Grow meetings consist of personal testimonies, group work on participants' problems, the assignment of tailored practical tasks, reports of progress which offer encouragement to change and grow, adult education about maintaining mental health and rebuilding lives, development of social skills and supportive relationships.

I visited Grow's Queensland office and was pleased to meet the board, along with a number of former growers such as Joel Wilson, who has successfully completed the program and who is continuing to stay involved in the organisation and give back to others. I really enjoyed my time with the team at Grow and I sincerely look forward to supporting them in the work that they do.

Information that was provided to me stated one of the things that makes Grow so special is the practical advice and wisdom that are discussed from the literature that has been written by growers since its inception. The practical mantras, models, stories and tools have proven to be of enormous benefit to growers, keeping them on track on their road to recovery. An example of the material includes statements like 'feelings are not facts', 'when the time comes to act, don't examine any more pros and cons, just do it', and, 'you alone can do it but you can't do it alone.' I would also like to pay tribute to national CEO Clare Giulfoyle, Queensland Branch Manager Diane Whyte and members of the board for their efforts in fostering Grow, not just in the Greenslopes community but also many others. I also congratulate them on securing funding from Queensland's Gambling Community Benefit Fund, which will help improve Grow's facilities and training programs in the Greenslopes electorate. It is free to participate in Grow programs. There are no assessments, no need for a diagnosis and no strict eligibility criteria. I hope that members of the House will find time to meet with and provide support to their local Grow groups if they have not done so already.

Under 1 Roof

 **Mr CAVALLUCCI** (Brisbane Central—LNP) (3.53 pm): I rise to talk about another great organisation that I am proud to have in my electorate called Under 1 Roof, involving a consortium and a specifically targeted project focused on tackling homelessness and involving a forceful gathering of Brisbane's most experienced and relevant homelessness agencies. The effect of this group has been phenomenal. There is now renewed hope for Brisbane's homeless after this group of not-for-profit agencies joined forces to help reduce the number of people living rough on the city's streets.

The Under 1 Roof consortium of homelessness, housing and community agencies based in Brisbane's inner city coordinates services and provides necessary assistance with accommodation, rehabilitation, health, education and employment for the most needy. The fact is that if there is something that we have all learnt it is that no one agency or individual can tackle this task alone. Fiona Caniglia, the inaugural project manager of Under 1 Roof, ensures that their program coordinates a multi-agency response for homeless individuals in Brisbane. Homeless people in Brisbane can now be assigned a case worker from one organisation who will coordinate on their behalf with other case workers from other agencies. This consortium ensures fewer people are misguided or turned away from underresourced services. There is no longer a need to start afresh when a person first comes to these services. At a recent forum that I supported here in Parliament House representatives from the charities involved, including 139 Club in Fortitude Valley, Brisbane Youth Service, CityCare Brisbane, Mission Australia, the Valley Rotary Club, New Farm Neighbourhood Centre, BRIC Housing, BHC and others, displayed their new agenda and support for the Under 1 Roof project. I also recently conducted a tour of the facilities at BRIC Housing and Roma House just near my electorate office in Spring Hill. I was very impressed with the dedication of the staff and program coordinators. The point was reinforced through my visit that when people have to go to services individually and go through separate assessment processes it becomes very difficult. However, the Under 1 Roof model provides a uniform assessment process and a much more integrated way for all participants and supporters to come together and achieve outcomes for the homeless.

For those sleeping rough, this great project is finally providing a genuine answer and solution. There is still a long way to go, but on behalf of the most vulnerable and the entire community I commend all those involved in the Under 1 Roof project and offer them my full support.

Gladstone Electorate

 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (3.56 pm): This week in parliament we have had the opportunity to review events and encourage and recognise those many people in our communities who have been affected by floods, along with those who have risen to the occasion and worked generously and selflessly to assist those who have been affected. This flood also again raised and re-emphasised issues in my electorate in relation to communities that are so easily isolated. I speak particularly about the communities in Boyne Valley which, during this flood event and previous flood events, are totally cut off. There are four small discrete communities that are each isolated from one another and each isolated from the greater community. Because they have no mobile phone coverage, as soon as there is any decent rain their copper network falls out of service and there is little or no opportunity, once the roads are cut, for communication between those communities. It has highlighted the very real need for them to have some kind of communication devices to allow, particularly in emergency situations, for help to be gained.

The Premier was in the electorate, and I thanked him earlier this week for coming and meeting with the council, and was able to meet a gentleman in my electorate who is a bit of an inventor. The member for Lockyer was talking about 'road closed' signs. This particular gentleman has invented a water activated road closure sign that actually creates a physical barrier to stop vehicles traversing flooded areas. The only concern would be to make sure that when it was activated the water was too deep to actually drive across and not just six inches across a causeway or something that would easily and safely be negotiated. The

proposal that he put to the council, and I know he spoke to the Premier and the Premier's adviser about, is well worth considering. As I said, it is water activated. It creates a physical barrier to stop people from travelling across the causeway or bridge, whatever is underwater, and as soon as the water drops it activates the barrier to lift and opens the road again.

The floods also highlighted a number of areas in the community where the road, if it faltered, would create substantial difficulties for industry. I draw the attention of the minister to the Calliope River Bridge on Hanson Road. It is the main artery to all the major industries to the north of the community. It has recently had strengthening work done because the pylons had weakened dramatically. That work is almost completed, but if that bridge was to fail it would cause significant disruption to industry north of Gladstone. I believe it is timely, in light of the flood events, to have a look at duplication of that bridge, not in the near future but certainly as soon as is practicable.

ETHICS COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (3.59 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

- (1) That this House notes report No. 128 of the Ethics Committee and the recommendations of the committee that a right of reply be incorporated into the *Record of Proceedings*; and
- (2) That the House adopt the committee's recommendation and incorporate the right of reply into the record of proceedings.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

RESPONSE BY MS FIONA MCNAMARA TO STATEMENTS MADE BY THE MEMBER FOR KALLANGUR (MR TREVOR RUTHENBERG MP) ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2012

On 11 September 2012, the Member for Kallangur made the following statements in the Queensland Parliament:

1. It is not only untrue but it is quite disingenuous, misleading and untruthful of the union, and in particular this union official, to tell its members that I refused to meet with teachers and QTU members.
2. ... as this particular union official has runs on the board when it comes to disregarding the truth.
3. This display of dishonesty and disregard for the truth is simply more of the same from her.
4. This union official's word cannot be trusted as her word has no integrity.
5. This union official lacks integrity and she has shown that her word cannot be trusted. She took advantage of the good faith placed by her by the union members, who trusted her but who were deceived by her.
6. The QTU needs to offer a public apology to the teachers in north Brisbane for deceiving their membership.
7. Further, the QTU needs to discipline this union official for her blatant disregard for the truth, just like a teacher would discipline a child who caused serious mischief.
8. I warn the people living in that electorate to think very carefully before they consider this candidate. This person has shown over a period of time and in several different settings, first during the state election and now as a QTU official, that truth is a casualty in her naked political ambition and that she cannot be trusted to act with any sort of integrity.

The allegations of my dishonesty are untrue and the representations about specific events are misleading and untrue.

I have at all times given my time towards the best interests of Teachers' Union members and I deny any impropriety.

The meeting outside Mr Ruthenberg's office was in pursuance of Mr Ruthenberg's suggestion that, although he would not meet, he would be happy to receive questions in writing.

MOTION

Referral to the Education and Innovation Committee

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (4.00 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

1. That the Education and Innovation Committee inquire into and report on the assessment methods used in Senior Mathematics, Chemistry and Physics in Queensland schools.
2. That, in undertaking this inquiry, the committee should consider the following issues:
 - ensuring assessment processes are supported by teachers;
 - student participation levels;
 - the ability of assessment processes to support valid and reliable judgements of student outcomes.

3. Further, that the committee take public submissions and consult with key stakeholders and relevant subject matter experts.
4. The committee is to report to the Legislative Assembly by 16 August 2013.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

CLASSIFICATION OF COMPUTER GAMES AND IMAGES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 225, on motion of Mr Bleijie—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (4.01 pm), continuing in reply: Colleagues will recall that just prior to our lunch break I had thanked all honourable members for their great contributions to this debate. If I may, I offer an apology to the parliament. As all good gamers in this House know, we have some office staff who enjoy games. I have a media adviser who is a little trigger happy and in the lunch period sent out a press release saying that this bill has, in fact, passed—congratulations, the classification bill has passed through the parliament—and the *Courier-Mail* has published a story online. I assure the House that it has not passed through the parliament. I do apologise—

Ms Palaszczuk interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the opposition leader. It was an administrative error by a trigger-happy media staffer downstairs. I know the Minister for Health has had this happen to him as well. I do apologise. Of course, it was not the intention to send out the press release until such time as honourable members had had a chance to fully debate and vote on this bill. Hopefully, that will not impact on the vote going through this afternoon.

I will address some of the comments made, particularly by the Leader of the Opposition, with respect to the elements of the bill relating to the State Reporting Bureau, which will be outsourced. The opposition leader referred to a letter from Spark & Cannon, which she was good enough to give me a copy of. The letter is addressed to me and dated 4 January. I told the opposition leader that I had not, in fact, seen the letter. I was not aware that Spark & Cannon had not put in a tender. I suspect what has happened is that it has gone through Corporate Services, but because it was in the procurement process it has never made it to my desk. I think that is the right thing to do, because I did not know until the opposition leader mentioned it in her speech that Spark & Cannon did not put in a tender. Knowing them as one of the companies that do outsourcing, I suspected that they would have. I assure the opposition leader that I am advised by my department that the letter went to Corporate Services. I suspect, because of the procurement process, the letter was not drawn to my attention because we were in the midst of a tender process.

I do not know the winner of the tender process. Obviously, it is not going to be Spark & Cannon, because they did not put in a tender. I am advised that a probity officer has been appointed from the outset. When the DG announces the successful tender, we will know where we go. We did have a rigorous process in place, which my office and I remained completely out of. I am very confident in the procurement process for this tender, because we are talking about a big tender. It is a saving to government of about \$6 million a year, so we wanted to ensure that the procurement processes around it were solid. I think this is a good example of how solid it was, as that letter did not get to my desk.

The Leader of the Opposition raised other issues. She asked why we are doing this. We are outsourcing, firstly, because it is an efficiency measure for government and we save approximately \$6 million a year. Secondly, nearly every other state and territory in Australia outsourced many years ago. Western Australia outsources the recording and transcription of all court proceedings and they have been doing that for many years. In Victoria, the transcription of civil proceedings in the Supreme and County courts is undertaken by the private sector. All magistrates courts and Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal proceedings are outsourced. The recording and transcription of all proceedings in the Federal Court, the Family Court and the Federal Magistrates Court have been outsourced for a number of years. New South Wales has an ad hoc outsourcing of transcript production, and an outsourced model has also been implemented in the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory. I think at the moment the only ones missing are Queensland and South Australia. Every other jurisdiction in Australia, including our Commonwealth courts, has been outsourced. Western Australia has been outsourced for many years and more recently the federal courts have done so.

The member for Gladstone raised the issues of privacy and confidentiality and asked how we retain those because we are moving to a system where we will not have in-house people in our courts transcribing or recording proceedings any more. It will be done out of house. I assure the member for Gladstone that confidentiality and privacy with respect to records and transcriptions are of paramount concern to the government. Under the outsourcing arrangements, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General will ensure that confidentiality and privacy are dealt with through the tender documents that have been issued. As I said to the member for Gladstone, I have kept completely out of the tender process, but it was a part of the approval process. Before anyone could apply for the tender, they had to provide those in the contracts.

All employees and subcontractors of the contracted service provider will be required to sign a deed of confidentiality and a deed of privacy. Members will be aware that part 4 of chapter 2 of the Information Privacy Act 2009 requires the Department of Justice and Attorney-General to take all reasonable steps to ensure that a contracted service provider is required to comply with parts 1 and 3 of the act. Those are the parts that apply to information privacy principles. The department will bring the privacy principles to the contracted service provider's attention and ensure that the entity understands that it is bound by those exact principles. Contractual requirements with respect to confidentiality and privacy were detailed in sections 19 and 20 of the conditions of contract contained in the tender documents. I am completely satisfied that the confidentiality and privacy of individuals will be maintained.

The other issue raised externally is with respect to the length of time of trials. I offer the House the reassurance that some stakeholders, particularly in submissions, have raised concerns that outsourcing will lead to trial delays. I assure members of the House that it is quite the contrary. One of the key reasons and aims of the government's decision to outsource these services is to improve the timeliness of availability of transcriptions and to improve the delivery of justice. Contractual provisions will specifically provide for the government's expectations as to time frames for transcriptions. For example, the tender documents specified a mandatory requirement for 95 per cent of transcripts to be delivered in accordance with time frames specified by the orderer.

We have worked with the judiciary, the Chief Justice and the Chief Judge. We have consulted with them with respect to these documents. In fact, the Chief Justice had—and I may be corrected on this but by my recollection serves me correctly—Justice Byrne look at the documentation on behalf of the Chief Justice. We have had communication with the courts, because we want a system that, yes, saves us money and also, like other jurisdictions in Australia, has a more efficient service. I refer to the technology currently in the State Reporting Bureau. At one of the first meetings I had, the state manager of the State Reporting Bureau was present. He told me that either the software or the hardware—I think it was the software—was on its last legs and had not worked since its implementation. I note that, from my colleague the honourable minister who sits beside me, I have learned a lot about IT in the past two days, as a result of the questions directed at her.

Ms Palaszczuk: Seriously?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, I have, and I thank you for asking those particular questions because I have had the chance to understand one of my colleague's portfolios in great detail over the last couple of days. The honourable minister will understand that when we have an IT system or software system that is on its last legs it is a good opportunity to refresh it and it will not come at the government's cost. It will cost the corporate who wins the tender. We deal with the private sector to make sure that the savings, efficiencies and better services can be realised with respect to this.

The opposition leader has on a number of occasions in parliament talked about the number of complaints with respect to the State Reporting Bureau. I know in estimates I talked about written complaints. The opposition leader found three written complaints. In fact, I think I gave copies of three written complaints to her after estimates.

The opposition leader then went and did an RTI. The opposition leader or her staff did an RTI application on my ministerial office. When my ministerial office sent back in relation to the RTI that we held no documentation, we did not. The department holds documentation. The opposition leader's staff should have done an RTI application on not only the minister's office but also the department. As I understand it—

Ms Palaszczuk interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I could not provide it because we did not have it in my office. If you go by the letter of the law with the RTI Act and apply to the minister's office, that is where it goes. As a former minister, the member would appreciate that the department is separate from the minister's office. If letters are required then I suggest to the honourable opposition leader's staff members that perhaps they fill out the form correctly and do an RTI on my department not just my ministerial office. I would be more than happy to oblige the independent RTI officers we have.

I have talked about the probity adviser. We did have a probity adviser in place right from the outset. I hope that reassures the opposition leader. I did not have anything to do with that. I did not meet with any people putting in tenders. I do not know who put in tenders. I do not think there are many organisations that

provide this service around Australia, though. I think Spark & Cannon do either the Carmody commission of inquiry or the royal commission into the Health payroll bungle. I think they are doing the transcription of one of those. It may be for QCAT. Some of these things we already outsourced. For instance, the transcripts for QCAT, which was set up by the Labor Party, are outsourced and not done in-house by the State Reporting Bureau.

The issue of confidentiality I have dealt with. I have been advised that in the next couple of weeks we will hopefully announce the successful tenderer in the procurement process. They can then get on with the job. I have been advised—and the honourable minister for IT will be happy with this—that we are not just going to throw the old system out, we are going to run the systems in conjunction with each other to ensure that we have got it right before we turn off the old system.

I thank all other honourable members for their contributions today. I will deal with a couple of other issues. The member for Ipswich, Mr Ian Berry, made a great contribution. The member for Mount Coot-tha talked about a number of her colleagues who are gamers. Unfortunately, we did not hear from the member for Brisbane Central because he had leave and missed the debate. I am glad to see he is in the chamber now. I will give a bit of a contribution for the member in a minute.

The member for Gladstone talked about confidentiality. She also talked about classification issues with respect to her constituent named Nik. Those are the sorts of emails that we have asking why Queensland has not yet passed such legislation. As I have indicated to people, it was a national agenda. It was not the incoming government's priority to get on with classification, but I am glad that one of the first bills we are debating in the new year is this. To all the people who were attacking me on Twitter yesterday asking why we had not done this, to all the young gamers who sent hate mail, I say that we are here debating it. We will hopefully have this passed with the opposition leader's help later this afternoon—

Ms Palaszczuk interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: Twitter. I cannot decipher it, though. Minister Emerson would know what they call it on Twitter when you do not use proper words.

Mr Emerson: Emoticom.

Mr BLEIJIE: Emoticom and those sorts of things. I was reading a few of those. The member for Bulimba talked about 1984 when he had his first computer or game. I was still in nappies in 1984. I think my first game was the Sega or whatever it used to be called back then. I thank the member for Bulimba for his contribution.

The member for Toowoomba North talked about games and that he cannot play games. I think he was the only member who mentioned the amendment to the name of the Neighbourhood Disputes Resolution Act, which was good.

I dealt with the member for Lytton's contribution before lunch. He said that he was scared of the *Resident Evil* game. He said that he had sleepovers with his mates on rainy nights and he got quite scared by these computer games. He has been through that now.

I think the overall issue with games is parental responsibility. This bill will allow the opportunity for gamers to have more access and more choice with respect to R18+ games. At the moment the difficulty is that some of the games which probably should not even be MA15+ are being classified as M15 and are being sold as that when they should be R18+. That is going to be better for children and young people because there will be a clear distinction between MA15+ and R18+. It will be better for parents.

I always say in these sorts of things that nothing is better than parental responsibility. As a child is growing up, if they ought not be playing these games and parents do not want them to then they should make sure, as best they can, that they do not have access to these games. Parents have to retain a level of responsibility over these things.

Bearing in mind that the Leader of the House is keen to proceed as planned to other legislation, I will finish by using a contribution from the member for Brisbane Central. Ordinarily this is not how I would end a contribution in this great place. The member for Brisbane Central has a long history with games and has been involved in technology around games. He does not go as far as wanting to set up an Xbox room at Parliament House for honourable members because we do not have time. He is a big supporter of the legislation. This is a contribution from the member for Brisbane Central—I hope it makes sense to everyone; it certainly does not make sense to me—

So to all you leet gamers, claner's, haxor's and lets not forget the NOOb's, who've been p'wning for that epic win, drop your aimbots, there will be no T'king or lagging on this bill, because this one is for the win.

Good luck to Hansard for that one! I have a copy of that for Hansard. I am reliably informed by the member for Brisbane Central that I have covered all the names of the games and the game speak. I hope I did it justice, member for Brisbane Central. I do not think I did.

This bill is about getting this right for R18+ classification. It is about making sure that there is choice for consumers in Australia. I know on my Facebook site last night that some people were saying that this means more regulation and red tape. It is not about regulation and red tape. It is about choice and making sure there are safety mechanisms there. Businesses that want to sell R18+ games can sell them right across Australia with the same classification.

It is about making sure the Neighbourhood Dispute Resolution Act is called what it is meant to be by the inclusion of the words 'dividing fences and trees'. It gives the legislative authority for the government's intention to outsource the State Reporting Bureau to make sure that we retain some efficiencies in our system. As we go forward we will also work with the judiciary, tribunals and so forth to make sure that we have a system that gives them a great service that they will be proud of, as with every other jurisdiction. On that note, I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 47, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 48 to 59—

Mr BLEIJIE (4.19 pm): I seek leave to move amendments en bloc.

Leave granted.

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

1 Clause 49 (Amendment of s 4 (Definitions))

Page 34, line 20, after 'section 5A'—

insert—

'or 5C'.

2 Clause 49 (Amendment of s 4 (Definitions))

Page 35, after line 6—

insert—

'(6A) Section 4, definition legal proceeding, 'inquiry, examination, or arbitration'—

omit, insert—

'inquiry or examination, but not including an arbitration'.

3 Clause 50 (Replacement of s 5 (Power to direct recording under this Act))

Page 35, lines 21 to 26—

omit, insert—

'(2) The recording may be done—

(a) for any legal proceeding—

(i) under an arrangement under section 5A; or

(ii) by a public service employee in the department; or

(b) for a legal proceeding before QCAT—by a member of QCAT or an adjudicator under the QCAT Act; or

(c) for an inquiry or examination—under an arrangement under section 5C.'

4 Clause 50 (Replacement of s 5 (Power to direct recording under this Act))

Page 37, after line 18—

insert—

'5C Inquiries and examinations

'(1) This section applies in relation to a legal proceeding that is an inquiry or examination.

'(2) The court or person before whom the inquiry or examination is conducted may arrange for either or both of the following to be carried out—

(a) the recording of relevant matter in the proceeding under section 5;

(b) the transcription of a record under this Act of the proceeding.

'(3) An arrangement under subsection (2) may be for a recording or transcription to be carried out by an officer or employee of the court or person or by someone else (for example, a person who also provides services under an arrangement with the chief executive under section 5A).

'(4) Section 5B does not apply in relation to a record under this Act of the proceeding (whether or not the record was made or transcribed under an arrangement under subsection (2)).'

I table the explanatory notes to these amendments.

Tabled paper: Classification of Computer Games and Images and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, explanatory notes to Hon. Jarrod Bleijie's amendments [2094].

I will speak briefly on these four amendments I have moved en bloc. Amendment No. 1 is consequential upon amendment No. 4 which will permit an inquirer or examiner to make arrangements outside the state's outsourcing arrangements for courts or tribunals. Amendment No. 1 expands the definition of 'recording service' in section 4 of the Recording of Evidence Act 1962 as inserted by clause 49 to include a transcription of an inquiry or examination under new section 5C. This is required as the term 'recording service' relates to what a recorder does which is a term used throughout the Recording of Evidence Act 1962.

Amendment No. 2 amends the definition of 'legal proceeding' to remove the reference to arbitration proceedings. This is being done to reflect what is effectively the current practice—that is, that parties can make private arrangements for recording and transcribing.

Amendment No. 3 amends new section 5 which sets out how legal proceedings are to be recorded to include that the recording may be done 'for an inquiry or examination—under an arrangement under section 5C'.

Amendment No. 4 amends clause 50 to insert a new section 5C, which provides that the court or person conducting an inquiry or examination may arrange for the recording or transcription of the proceeding. In such a case, the recording is done under that arrangement rather than an arrangement made by the chief executive under new section 5A.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the Attorney. His office provided my office with a briefing on these amendments over the lunch break and we appreciate the explanation. Essentially, as I stated, we are still opposing the outsourcing of the court transcription services and we will be voting against part 8 of the bill. However, should part 8 of the bill be passed, we do acknowledge the amendments and we will not be opposing the amendments.

I am pleased that the Attorney has taken on board some of the proposals put forward by the Bar Association. I am also pleased that existing arrangements in relation to the commission of inquiry, CMC hearings, arbitrations and other inquiries and examinations will remain and they can make their own arrangements for the recording of their proceedings.

The only issue I have if I could ask the Attorney for an explanation is in relation to the invitation to offer. Now that that has actually narrowed, is that going to be explained to the people who have put in a tender? Is there any opportunity for other people to put in a tender now or has that tender process actually closed? I think you indicated that you are going to be making an announcement in a couple of weeks, so if you could address that issue.

Whilst I am on my feet for the purposes of time, I can clarify that the opposition is opposed to clauses 48 to 59. This is essentially outsourcing the court recording services. We believe that the system that was in place was satisfactory. The Attorney has given some assurances as to certain parts of the tender that has gone out. My real concern still remains about confidentiality, but I do acknowledge that the Attorney has said that confidentiality agreements are going to be put in place. I hope that the government does monitor this on a consistent basis just to make sure that confidentiality is maintained.

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the Leader of the Opposition. Dealing with the question of where the tender is at the moment, I can advise the opposition leader that the tender was advertised to the market on 22 November 2012 and closed on 7 January 2013—it was open for 40 days or so. It is estimated that the contract will be signed by 17 February 2013, enabling implementation to commence from March 2013. So there will not be a further opportunity. People had 40 or so days to put in their tender documents. As I said, the tender documents were drafted on the basis that after consultation—and we went to the judiciary as well—we wanted to make sure that the people putting the tender in actually signed off on what the contract said they were going to do: 'You will get your people to sign confidentiality agreements.' I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that, as we roll this out in March, we will be keeping a very careful watch on any issues to make sure that the successful tenderer is doing what they said they were going to do in the tender. If there are any issues, we will deal with them at the appropriate time.

But I assure the opposition leader that confidentiality is of paramount importance. We are talking about people's lives here and what happens in court and there are some sensitive issues. We will keep a watching brief on the successful tenderer once they are announced. But I can assure the opposition leader that, if anything, we can take some comfort in the fact that other jurisdictions have gone through this. WA has done this for many, many years. I know the opposition leader has raised the issue of New South Wales before. I can assure the opposition leader that the fellow in New South Wales who had that criminal history certainly will not be providing any transcription services in Queensland. We will make sure of that. But we will keep a watching brief.

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: The Attorney-General and Minister for Justice has possibly responded to my concerns but, given that the tender has proceeded as far as it has—again, some of the Attorney-General's comments were oblique; he did not answer specifically—what provision has been made for people who are currently doing the job in terms of tenure? With any privatisation there are problems with the people currently doing the work losing their employment. In other instances where this has occurred workers have

been given two years of job protection, and that has happened in a broad range of areas where work has gone to the private sector. I am wondering whether there is any job protection for these workers. I think two years is fine. It gives people two years in which to determine what else they are going to do. It is certainly no protection of employment into the future. So that is my concern with this whole proposal of privatisation—that those people who have been doing a wonderful job for many years may be left out in the cold with fairly limited job prospects.

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for Gladstone for the question. I have been a bit ambiguous on some of the issues because I in fact do not know because with the procurement process, the stringent procurement process, I have remained completely out of that process, and rightly so. I have not even been briefed on who has it or who has put the tenders in. It is a completely separate probity committee with a probity auditor adviser looking at it under government protocols.

With respect to current staff, I thank the State Reporting Bureau staff. As other ministers have said on many occasions in this House, it has not been an easy 12 months with respect to our departments, with respect to looking for government savings and efficiencies in what we are doing. So we will lose about 200 full-time equivalents who are currently providing the service right around Queensland at the moment, and I have quoted that figure before. I want to thank those people for doing the job.

I am advised that, in terms of voluntary redundancies for the State Reporting Bureau staff, the acceptance rate for those voluntary redundancies has been upwards of 95 per cent. If there are opportunities to employ former State Reporting Bureau staff after they leave the department, I am hoping that the successful tenderer will take them on, depending on whom the successful tenderer is when it is announced. But I am sure that if they can get a job in the private sector doing what they were doing in the public sector—I know there are some private transcription services that allow for a better working environment, for instance, than the Queensland government does in terms of courtrooms and small backrooms. I have been in many courtrooms across Queensland and I have seen a lot of the small storerooms where State Reporting Bureau staff have had to work out of.

I can assure the member for Gladstone that if there is an opportunity to employ these people I am sure the private sector will take them on because they have a level of experience with this. There will probably be new technologies though because the software or the hardware technology used in Queensland courts is on its last legs. I cannot say they are guaranteed a job placement, as you indicate, for two years. But, as I said, we have had a very high acceptance rate from staff of the State Reporting Bureau for the voluntary redundancies, and they will work their way out of the department over a period of time so that we can ensure we have this in place. Then I am hoping there will be opportunities in the private sector for them.

Dr DOUGLAS: I think the amendments are a good change. Specifically in relation to the amendments moved by the Attorney-General, I was concerned originally at the extensive amount of change. I have actually spoken to a number of former court reporters. I have had a fair bit to do with them because of what I have done in my previous career; even though I am a doctor I had a bit to do with these things. There were competing arguments about whether the changes were good or bad. I think the extensive amount of change across a wide spectrum was something people had not quite considered. I see that the Bar Association, the CMC and the ACICA have all made submissions, either latterly or previously, and that the Attorney-General took those submissions on board. I think that was very good and I congratulate the Attorney-General and his staff for doing so.

My concern really is that the competing arguments do have some substance and we need to take that on board, even though what I have just heard from the Attorney-General with regard to voluntary redundancies leads me to believe that in some ways—it is like a market forces argument; it actually determines the end result anyway. Those things are increasingly being diluted or diminished in significance, but under the previous system there were obviously some issues and we must make sure we do not reintroduce some of the problems we had and then find ourselves back where we were, just with a private body that we have to deal with. So I think the changes to restriction to courts are good.

My concern would be that the change is now so comprehensive that the original tender is very different. I know that the Attorney-General must be considering exactly how he will manage that. I see that the intention currently is not to change it. It may be that we might have to get them to reconsider that. I know that is very difficult—it is almost like retendering—but we might have to consider that, because it is a completely different ball game. I do not know what all of the speakers will say—I will listen to those arguments—but I would like to hear what the Attorney-General has to say, because it will make a significant difference. The tenders may be very different, and those who chose not to tender might want to tender for this even though they did not want to tender for the other thing. And those who did submit a tender may not want to proceed. In other words, you may end up with the worst of all results, not by design. This may be something that the Attorney-General could consider.

Mr BLEIJIE: I thank the member for Gaven for the inquiry. I have been talking to my departmental staff, and the probity adviser, who oversaw this whole process, has just advised me that the tender document was never part of the tender documents for the inquiries, examinations or arbitrations. So, even

though we are making these amendments now, they will not impact on the tender because they were not in the contract to tender anyway. So no-one will get less or more benefit, because those things were not included in the original contract anyway. Everyone will be on the same playing field, producing those things that were required in the tender. The tender will not change as a result of these amendments.

Amendments agreed to.

Division: Question put—That clauses 48 to 59, as amended, be agreed to.

AYES, 72—Bates, Bennett, Berry, Bleijie, Boothman, Cavallucci, Choat, Costigan, Cox, Crandon, Cripps, Crisafulli, Davies, C Davis, T Davis, Dempsey, Dillaway, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, France, Frecklington, Gibson, Grant, Grimwade, Hart, Hathaway, Hobbs, Holswich, Hopper, Kaye, Kempton, King, Knuth, Krause, Langbroek, Latter, Maddern, Malone, Mander, McArdle, McVeigh, Millard, Minnikin, Molhoek, Newman, Nicholls, Ostapovitch, Powell, Pucci, Rice, Rickuss, Robinson, Ruthenberg, Seeney, Shorten, Shuttleworth, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Symes, Trout, Walker, Watts, Woodforth, Young. Tellers: Menkens, Smith

NOES, 10—Byrne, Cunningham, Judge, Mulherin, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Trad, Wellington. Tellers: Miller, Scott

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clauses 48 to 59, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 60 and 61, as read, agreed to.

Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading



Hon. JP BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (4.42 pm): I move—

That the bill, as amended, be now read a third time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title



Hon. JP BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (4.42 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.

HEAVY VEHICLE NATIONAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 13 November 2012 (see p. 2486).

Second Reading



Hon. SA EMERSON (Indooroopilly—LNP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (4.43 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I would like to thank the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee for its timely consideration of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2012. In its report, the committee made only one recommendation about the bill, and that was to recommend the bill be passed without amendment. It will not surprise anyone that the Queensland government supports this recommendation with no reservations.

For many years now, the heavy vehicle industry has been calling for a single national regulator and a single national law for heavy vehicle regulation. Passage of this bill will bring the reality of a fully operational national regulator one step closer. The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator commenced some initial functions on 21 January 2013 and now manages the National Heavy Vehicle Accreditation Scheme and the Performance Based Standards Scheme. Once this bill passes through the Queensland parliament, other jurisdictions will then commence their own parliamentary processes.

The Heavy Vehicle National Law is expected to come into effect in a majority of states and territories by the middle of this year. At that time, the regulator will commence administering the national law and will be responsible for heavy vehicle regulatory services. The regulator will be a single contact point—a one-stop shop, if you will—that will provide centralised business services and information to heavy vehicle owners, operators and drivers across the nation. This will lead to improved productivity and safety by removing inefficiencies arising from inconsistent judicial requirements, and it will streamline regulatory arrangements that will see a reduction in costs and regulatory burden on Australian transport companies.

Improvements brought about by the Heavy Vehicle National Law will result in estimated productivity benefits of \$162 million per year accruing to industry and the Queensland economy over the next 22 years. This will be a combination of economic benefits for operators from the establishment of the regulator and cost savings to the Queensland government and operators from the use of streamlined national systems and processes for providing regulatory activities, such as improved access to the road network for innovative multicomination vehicles. This bill ensures that the heavy vehicle industry can continue to support the four-pillar economy, ensuring Queensland remains a great state with great opportunity.

 **Ms TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (4.46 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate regarding the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2012, the HVNLA. At the outset, I would like to advise the House that the opposition will be supporting the bill in its current form. The implementation of this important microeconomic reform can be traced back to 2 July 2009 when COAG agreed to establish the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and a national body of law consistent across all jurisdictions governing the regulation of all vehicles weighing more than 4.5 tonnes. It was an initiative of the federal Labor government, working in partnership with the states, that has delivered this landmark reform that is predicted to save industry up to \$12 billion over the next 20 years Australia-wide.

All members will recall that in 2012 this parliament passed the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012, which established the operational framework for the national regulator which is based here in Queensland. On 21 January 2013, the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, the NHVR, commenced operating in Brisbane. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the new staff of the NHVR, as well as those who transitioned from the project office in the Department of Transport and Main Roads, on the smooth transition to the national law to date.

The bill before the House today seeks to amend the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012, including the Heavy Vehicle National Law, which is a schedule to the act. I will touch on just a few of the significant policy changes that this bill will bring about. The HVNLA will provide an access framework to support more efficient performance based standards vehicles, which currently operate through administrative arrangements. This means that new and innovative types of vehicles will not be assessed according to prescriptive rules about length or weight; rather they will be assessed by how they are to perform on the road. This will allow innovation from heavy vehicle operators to develop new vehicle types while still ensuring that important safety requirements are adhered to.

The HVNLA will also provide a more transparent, robust, decision-making framework for road access decisions which should allow for improved clarity about the matters a road manager may consider, such as safety and what conditions can be applied when granting access. This will have practical benefits for operators who will be able to more clearly understand the criteria which their applications to use heavy vehicles on certain roads are to be assessed against. In an industry that often crosses state borders, it is hoped that this will assist operators and road managers to work together, particularly when they reside in different jurisdictions.

On another matter, I want to point out that the chain of responsibility provisions that currently exist are not substantively changed in any way by the HVNLA. One of the most important things that this bill does is create nationally consistent maximum penalties for all offences relating to heavy vehicles. The effort that went into the creation of the nationally consistent penalty regime should not be underestimated and is to be commended. I congratulate the staff of the NHVR, the Department of Transport and Main Roads and their counterparts in other jurisdictions on the work they have done. In such a large exercise, not everybody can get everything they want. Every jurisdiction has had to make compromises. Some penalties in Queensland will rise and some will fall. This is the same for every other jurisdiction.

I note that the penalty regime will be reviewed in 2014 to ensure that the new penalties are effective and fair. I welcome the commitment of the NHVR to conduct that review. I want to talk briefly about the submissions that were made to the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee regarding this legislation. A common thread throughout those submissions was the strong level of support for this reform. I note that some small issues are still being resolved and will continue to be addressed through the NHVR's forward work program. However, that should not detract from the fact that the NHVR and, prior to its operation, the project officer in the DTMR have worked hard over many years to address industry concerns and find solutions.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the members and staff of the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee for their work in scrutinising this piece of legislation as well as all those who took the time to make submissions. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr HOBBS** (Warrego—LNP) (4.50 pm): I am pleased to rise to speak to the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2012. As the chairman of the committee, I can say that we did a lot of work. The committee held two hearings and received 13 submissions during the course of its inquiry. It also held a public departmental briefing as well as the public hearing.

The committee supports the development of a single, consolidated body of heavy vehicle national law as it will significantly reduce the regulatory burden for the freight industry in Australia. The extensive consultation undertaken by the heavy vehicle regulator and state and territory governments has ensured that the majority of industry stakeholders are supportive of the national law process and are keen to see the new legislation passed by the relevant parliaments throughout Australia. The committee has raised some concerns about individual provisions of the bill—for example, the new work diary requirements applying to journeys over 100 kilometres compared to the current Queensland requirement of over 200 kilometres and the impact this reduction will have on Queensland drivers. However, the committee has accepted that there are significant benefits for the industry which will be achieved through nationally consistent provisions across the nation. The committee is of the view that, to ensure the uniformity of the heavy vehicle legislation, the preferred approach is for state and territory governments to work together through a national process to agree in a cooperative manner on any future amendments to the national law.

As I mentioned, a lot of work has been put into this particular bill and I would like to go into more detail. We noted that the heavy vehicle industry is generally supportive—and the opposition said this a while ago—of the national law and the amendments proposed in the bill. We acknowledge that the high level of support is due to extensive consultation that was undertaken with heavy vehicle drivers, trucking associations, logistics councils, insurers, road safety practitioners, fatigue experts and transport regulators over the course of the development of the Heavy Vehicle National Regulator and during the development of the amendment bill. Evidence of this support includes, for instance, the Australian Trucking Association saying that it supports the bill in its current state based on commitments in the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator forward work program. The National Farmers Federation supports it. The Australian Logistics Council strongly supports the development. The Queensland Trucking Association supports the reform process. The Australian Livestock and Rural Transporters Association stated that it—

... has been a strong supporter of the creation of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator ... and strongly supports the enactment of the Bill by the Queensland Parliament, without amendment and without delay. Urgency in the handling of this Bill remains important.

The National Road Transport Operators Association is acutely aware of the issues and they support it as well. AgForce generally supports the introduction of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator but had some concerns regarding some sections of the legislation.

While there is general support for the bill, a number of specific items were raised during the course of the committee's hearings. The committee is of the view that the preferred approach on any future amendments to this national law should be for state and territory governments to work cooperatively together through a national process to agree on amendments in order to ensure uniformity of heavy vehicle legislation. The committee believes that the Queensland government should make every attempt to assist in negotiating a national position.

The Long Haul Drivers Association's suggestion about the old regime of a 12-hour working day in relation to fatigue laws was a very interesting one and took up quite a lot of the committee's time to ensure we had a good handle on the situation that was evolving before us. The committee noted the concerns raised by stakeholders about the need for increased fatigue management regulation and the committee supports the development of work and rest hour templates, such as the proposed livestock transport template which aims to provide increased flexibility for transport operators with specific requirements.

The other issue we have is that Western Australia has not agreed to become part of this yet. Its fatigue laws operate under its workplace arrangements. So it is different and they are a bit more flexible. Queensland and Western Australia are very similar in a lot of ways because of our large distances when getting our livestock to market as opposed to the closer settled states that do not have those distances. We need to ensure there is flexibility. It is also important to ensure that volumetric loading is still there so that the cattle can get to market.

The other concern was that of work diaries. The committee was concerned that the requirement for a formal work diary for operators of fatigue related vehicles under standard hours which takes them more than 100 kilometres from their base may not be flexible enough for smaller operators who may be required to travel slightly longer distances in large states such as Queensland. The committee notes that the regulator has the power under clauses 357 and 358 to exempt drivers from the work diary requirements for up to three years if it is satisfied that these requirements would be an unreasonable restriction on the operation of the driver and the class of work undertaken will not impose a significant risk to public safety or of the driver driving while impaired by fatigue. We encourage the regulator to use this exemption power wherever possible to ensure maximum flexibility in the work diary requirements and to ensure the unnecessary administrative burden is minimised. We do not want people to have more bureaucratic processes to go through in order to operate their businesses.

Overall, it looks as though there could be billions of dollars in savings for the transport industry across this nation. This is a good bill. It is one that is sensible. An operator can get a permit to go from Melbourne to Darwin. It is a one-stop shop arrangement. It is certainly being introduced not before time. I support the bill.

 **Hon. JJ McVEIGH** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) (4.57 pm): I am pleased to speak to the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2012. The introduction of the national heavy vehicle law and the establishment of the regulator as outlined by the minister will certainly contribute to our government's commitment to stop waste, reduce government spending and improve services to industry, particularly, as other speakers have already mentioned, in relation to duplication. I note that the minister's information includes advice that the establishment of the regulator would reduce the cost to Queensland of heavy vehicle regulation by approximately \$135 million over a 22-year period. I also note that there is a further significant savings potential for industry—and I will speak about that in just a moment—in relation to livestock transport and that of other rural commodities.

It simply comes down to recognising that the very intensive task of trying to harmonise and align legislation across the various states will no longer be a concern for our regulators, government and hence the industry, and I note therefore that industry has provided significant support for this bill. In terms of access, a range of issues that many rural operators in the livestock transport and other commodity transport industries must operate around in terms of regulation will find that, whilst it is convenient to contact the regulator on a range of issues such as wide loads and of course logbook issues, it is in the area of access permits that benefits will be even more significant and to understand that concurrent assessments through the regulator dealing with cross-border transport asset owners and local governments will provide significant benefits in terms of single permit considerations. Again, I note that industry therefore supports this bill very strongly. It provides clarity around the matters in which a road manager, for example, may consider in terms of access, and I am pleased to see that performance indicators for the regulator will be based, amongst other things, on the extent to which the transport industry is provided access to our road networks.

Significant safety features will be enhanced for the interests of industry and other road users, quite obviously. I am pleased to see the increased focus on the performance based standard scheme which looks at governing how a vehicle particularly performs on the road, not necessarily just what it looks like. I take the opportunity to thank the minister in particular for having sensible and practical discussions with me and rural industry representatives on such issues in recent months.

The interstate benefits of this bill and the features within it have been outlined by the minister and the last couple of speakers already, but I note that in the interests of our rural industry there are significant intrastate benefits as well, particularly accruing to primary producers and transport operators working in the rural sector. In relation to the primary industries in particular, I am pleased to see that the existing local productivity initiatives and registration concessions for primary producers are being applied and retained. When we consider heavy vehicle access permits, for example, for primary producers or their transport operators who may have properties and transport needs straddling two local authorities, it would be ridiculous to see them continue to run the risk of getting different determinations.

The current Queensland access arrangements such as the Livestock Loading and Grain Harvest Management schemes will be retained. I welcome that and I think it is particularly important to recognise, as the member for Warrego just outlined, that that will provide appropriate recognition of the schedules that livestock operators must operate over long distances and of course the Grain Harvest Management Scheme in terms of the uncertainties that exist in transporting bulk commodities in terms of varying moisture contents and densities from time to time. It is for those reasons that I recognise that this bill is very much about regulatory reform and reducing red tape. I certainly welcome it from a primary production perspective.

 **Mr HOPPER** (Condamine—KAP) (5.03 pm): We welcome the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill. However, there are a few points that I want to touch on. There is a definite need for a single national system for heavy vehicle regulation, and this bill will help work towards that. It is a start and it is good to see. Currently, the inconsistency of legislation between the states has caused hardship for local trucking operators right across Queensland. Road train signage, headlights and light bars can be legal in one state but illegal in another state. Drivers can be fined accordingly, and sometimes we are talking about fines of up to \$5,000. A truckie carrying a load from Queensland to South Australia has to carry three different sets of documents to allow him to travel through each state.

I note the submission of Brian Turpie, President of the Long Haul Drivers Association, who was concerned that drivers themselves have not been consulted over this legislation. He is particularly concerned about driver fatigue. The National Road Freighters Association also raises the question of driver fatigue and driver management, so I ask the minister to look at those points that have been raised. It is their opinion that we adopt the Western Australia fatigue management guidelines which are fairer and more flexible—that is, working on 14- or 28-day schedules rather than the three-tier system of 12, 14 or 16 hours

of driving a day in place in all eastern states. In the eastern states the more money paid to the government the more hours trucks can work, whereas the Western Australia system is far more flexible and fairer on the driver.

Another issue of concern is distance mass location charging—DMLs—which is particularly bad for rural and regional Queensland, especially the north and north-west where trucks travel huge distances. DMLs will result in higher charges to use roads during peak-hour traffic, which could lead to more driver fatigue as drivers endeavour to avoid peak traffic hours for deliveries. It is preferable to adopt a fuel based registration charge which will bring down the cost of the current registration and the high-end user will pay for the amount used. It seems a fairer system of user pays. That would be a very good system for the minister to try to adopt or at least have a look at.

I met with a number of truckies in my office recently and they have laid out their concerns within their industry. One of their concerns is the very heavy hand used by some police. There are some very grey areas in legislation in Queensland and the interpretation of legislation is usually taken on by the intercepting officer. That has been proven on a number of occasions. One of their biggest problems is logbook infringements and the way some officers go about nitpicking logbooks. Sometimes officers go back three or four pages in logbooks, and some of these truckies find logbooks very hard to fill out. How is that road safety—that is, when they go back four pages trying to get a fine or an infringement on a truck driver? I had a truck driver say that the weighbridge system needs to be seriously looked at. He believes that there are mass differences in weighbridges, so we probably need to talk to weights and measures people to see if they are doing their job in that area. He said you can be up to 100 kilograms out with your net weight at different locations.

Has the government received more in infringements in the last six months than the previous six months? That was one of the questions that was asked of me by those truck drivers. I said that I would probably put a question on notice to try to find out, but now that this bill has come up for debate I ask the minister to respond. That truck driver believes that that has happened—very much so. Truck drivers believe police are more or less having to write their own rules because they have a lack of knowledge of the legislation before them that they have to operate under. For example, the signage for trucks varies. With regard to putting a sign on the front of a truck, cutting the black boundary off the sign to fit it into the bullbar is an infringement. What has the black boundary of a black-and-yellow sign got to do with the sign? It still says 'long haulage' or 'road train' or whatever it is, yet that is an infringement because the sign has been tampered with. It might only be a centimetre that has been taken off the edge of the sign, but drivers are being fined for that. There are still cloth signs. They have been made illegal to use but they can still be bought. Truckies think, 'I'll buy this sign to put it on the truck to do the right thing,' yet they are getting booked.

These are just some of the issues that have been brought to my attention by truck drivers and transport owners within my electorate. They asked me to bring them to the House to try to get clarification. I am not picking here, Minister. I am just passing on what these drivers have said about this legislation. The fuel issue I mentioned earlier is seriously worth looking at, because there are some haulage companies that do not do a lot of miles but still pay high registration. That would be a much fairer system to adopt.

 **Mr GRANT** (Springwood—LNP) (5.09 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2012. I want to say how delighted I am that today marks one of those occasions when we are fulfilling an election promise of reducing red tape. As the committee worked on this bill, we saw the size of it and part-way through our work of examining the 740-odd pages I started to question pretty closely, 'How many pages are going to be repealed when this is passed?' I am very happy to report that in the order of 2,000 pages and eight different pieces of legislation will disappear following the passing of this bill. That pleases me no end. LNP governments are aware of what it is like to run a business, whether that be small, medium or large. It pleases me no end to make it easier for those among us who contribute to such a huge benefit for society as the heavy transport industry.

As I am aware that we have to pass another bill tonight and also of the fact that the opposition is supporting this bill, I will speak to just a few points and not further the discussion any longer than we need to. I think it is worth reporting that the issue of the hard-cash benefit to the industry and, therefore, all Australians has been calculated by two independent different methods and that between \$9 billion and \$12 billion will be saved over the coming 20 years. I think that is a very significant benefit.

When it comes to heavy vehicle transport, we are all aware of the tragic accidents that happen from time to time on our roads and we have to ponder so very thoroughly the issues of what contributes—who is responsible and what number and combination of factors contribute—to deaths involving heavy vehicle traffic on our roads. It was very interesting to read and analyse the statistics and the careful research that has gone into this bill and to gain an understanding of advanced fatigue management systems that are being employed these days. I am very happy to see this bill coming to pass today.

The only other comment that I wish to make relates to the penalties. We are seeing significant increases in penalties in this bill—up to as much as \$20,000. I took a dim view of a \$20,000 fine, thinking that it would be for a driver doing something wrong and I thought, ‘What would warrant a \$20,000 fine?’ In fact, the maximum fine of \$20,000 relates to the regulator themselves should they misuse confidential information or suchlike. So there is a wide variety of fines that can be levied, but that fine at the top of the tree is reserved for the regulator himself or herself. I commend the bill to the House. I want to thank the minister for bringing to fruition what has taken many, many years to develop.

 **Mr SHORTEN** (Algeria—LNP) (5.12 pm): I rise today to contribute to the discussion on the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2012, which was examined by the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee, on which I sit as a member. On receiving the two volumes containing the bill I was concerned that, given its size, it would be a long and complicated investigation. But the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator has worked and consulted widely within the industry and I commend them for that. I suggest that it would not be an easy task to engage multiple stakeholders and find common ground on so many and varied issues, but they have done it.

The House may remember that we dealt with the original Heavy Vehicle National Law Bill back in August 2012. That particular bill set up the regulator, which was the first stage in implementing a single national system for heavy vehicle regulation. The committee held two public hearings—one with the Department of Transport and Main Roads and the other where 15 witnesses were able to provide the committee with their views and concerns about various aspects of the bill. The committee received 13 submissions from stakeholders and those submissions can be accessed on the parliamentary website if people are interested.

The heavy vehicle industry is generally supportive of the national law. The Australian Trucking Association said that it supports the bill in its current state based on the commitments in the NHVR forward work program. The National Road Transport Operators Association said—

NatRoad supports the passage of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2012 in its current form.

The committee found that there was general support for the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill, but with a bill the size of this one, there will always be some specific issues that are raised during its examination. I would like to address a number of those issues. For a national law to work, it needs the agreement of all the states. It needs the states to work cooperatively and not go off on their own making changes to legislation unilaterally. As a state we intend to work towards an acceptable national position, but Queensland must always legislate in the interests of Queensland.

During the committee’s examination of this bill there was a lot of referral to the forward work program. A number of stakeholders raised concerns that the forward work program would be adhered to and resolved as quickly as possible. NatRoad even went to the extent of commenting that its support of the bill was dependent on the forward work program being adhered to and issues resolved in a timely manner. As a committee we noted that the Department of Transport and Main Roads advised that it is committed to working closely with stakeholders to progress the forward work program.

The committee was advised by the regulator that it intended to administer the new regime within the pool of funding that is provided by the current heavy vehicle charges. The committee noted that it is the intention of the regulator to administer the new regime within the current pool of funding, but understands that the regulator does not have direct control over the annual heavy vehicle determination charges, which are agreed to by SCOTI on the recommendation of the NTC.

The question of driver fatigue management occupied a considerable amount of the committee’s time and the stakeholders’ comments. It is not an easy area to address, as there are varying views on when drivers are fatigued and the best way to manage that fatigue. One of the jobs I held in my previous life was as a dispatch clerk for a very large manufacturing company. On a daily basis I would see drivers whose trucks would be loaded with product and leave to drive to North Queensland—Ayr, Tully. I would see those same drivers later in the week picking up another load. I would see drivers who had just driven from Melbourne loading for a trip up north. All of those drivers were trying to earn a living. Some to me looked tired while others looked as fresh as a daisy. Each driver knew his personal limits, but as legislators we have to take a wider view. The current fatigue management laws in Queensland are based on the national model fatigue laws, which were finalised by the NTC in 2008. We as a committee noted stakeholders’ concerns about the need for increased flexibility. We also support the development of work and rest templates such as the proposed livestock transport template.

I believe everything happens for a reason, so I do not think it was a coincidence that, during my consideration of this bill, I saw an item on a current affairs show about the installation of black boxes in trucks. This measure has been undertaken by a very large trucking corporation—in fact, Linfox—through its fleet of trucks. I cannot quote exact statistics as I am likely to get them wrong, but I was very impressed that, by the simple act of installing these devices, it was noted that there was a dramatic reduction in

accidents within the fleet. I am for any innovation that will increase the safety of not just the driver of the truck but all road users, so I was happy to hear that black boxes are addressed within this bill, even if their installation is on a voluntary basis. The committee made one recommendation and that is that this bill be passed. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (5.18 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2012. This bill aims to reduce the red tape that is currently engulfing the heavy transport industry, thus increasing the industry's productivity and its ability to improve the promotion of safety. We must all remember that the heavy transport industry is a vital component of our government's four-pillar economy, as it provides the connection upon which the four pillars rely.

The provision of the national regulator will remove many of the stifling hurdles that exist under the current system. This bill also allows the adoption of the national fatigue model, improving the consistency of compliance obligations required of both operators and drivers. That can only mean one thing: a safer working environment for our hardworking heavy vehicle drivers. This safer work environment will come about by the use of a risk classification approach to fatigue management and the streamlined access to advanced fatigue management for both operators and drivers.

The issue of fatigue management among heavy vehicle drivers is one that is close to my heart. It stems from my days managing the Australian Radio Network station in Albury-Wodonga and working with the then Road Transport Forum and the New South Wales Road Traffic Authority and partner radio stations in Wagga, Moree, Wangaratta, Shepparton, Emerald and Nowra to provide special coverage of some of Australia's busiest highways. Together we developed the specialist radio program to specifically address the issue of driver fatigue, *Truck Radio*, a breakfast show hosted in the middle of the night by Caroline Hutchinson that was designed to help keep drivers awake. And, yes, we played plenty of AC/ DC to make sure that we achieved that end. Caroline now anchors the Mix FM breakfast show on the Sunshine Coast which is home to our Attorney-General, the member for Kawana, and, of course, the Speaker of the House, Fiona Simpson.

We should not underestimate the extent and the tragedy of some of the issues around driver fatigue. Aside from the obvious cost and the impact that that has on insurance cover and the actual operating costs of running vehicles, we should not underestimate the degree of human tragedy that comes as a result of driver fatigue. It is not just the heavy vehicle drivers who suffer; it is also the unsuspecting drivers of vehicles.

In those days of developing the radio program I had the privilege of speaking with many heavy vehicle drivers at the Marulan heavy vehicle weigh station just outside Sydney at the start of the Hume. It was incredible to hear some of their stories. Many private operators struggled to survive in such a competitive environment where there were so many cowboys operating and pushing the limits and, on many occasions, breaking the law to try to meet some of their deadlines. I also sat with drivers at truck stops in places like Goondiwindi and Wangaratta, the truck stop down at the Tweed and also Port Lincoln and Townsville and got to hear firsthand some of the challenges that they face in meeting those deadlines and delivering much needed freight to some of the most remote and far-flung parts of our nation.

The National Road Safety Strategy significantly takes a holistic approach to roads, speeds, vehicles, road users and their behaviour and performance with a particular focus on monitoring and reporting. All these factors contribute to road fatalities and serious road crashes. I believe that the National Road Safety Strategy will now be better supported by the adoption of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill.

I have visited the Australian Truck Drivers' Memorial at Tarcutta. There you will see a memorial wall with the names of those drivers who have given their lives and made the ultimate sacrifice for their job. I have attended this memorial service on occasions—it is conducted each October—and I have stood with some of the families who have lost their dads on the nation's roads and highways. I leave you with these words, 'As long as we remember you, you will never really die, even if we see your names upon the wall.' These were the words spoken by the wife of the late Slim Dusty, Joy McKean, at the Australian Truck Drivers' Memorial last October to the gathered families and friends. Not that I am particularly what you would call a Slim Dusty fan, but I did have the great pleasure a few years ago of hearing Slim sing those words live in concert at a family reunion in Wagga Wagga and what an incredibly moving experience that was. I believe that these changes are incredibly important. The Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2012 is undoubtedly an important step forward in reducing the number of names that ultimately end up on this wall at Tarcutta. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (5.24 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2012. The Newman government has pledged to help business by reducing the impact of red tape and eliminating unnecessary regulation. A basic objective driving the introduction of the Heavy Vehicle National Law is to achieve the same outcome in the same circumstances across all jurisdictions and reduce the legal and administrative costs of compliance for industry. This amendment bill resolves many issues that were standing in the way of that, leaving a clear path to a single national regulatory

environment for the heavy vehicle industry. Improvements brought about by the Heavy Vehicle National Law will result in estimated benefits of \$162 million per year accruing to industry and the Queensland economy over the next 22 years, outcomes eagerly anticipated by the transport industry.

This bill directly aligns with this government's initiatives to reduce red tape and improve productivity and competitiveness within Queensland industries and will replace thousands of pages of often conflicting legislation weighing down businesses across the country. This single consolidated body of law, and commencement of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator on 21 January 2013, will make it easier for businesses and workers to operate across state borders and will also provide a stable platform for ongoing change and long-term improvements in heavy vehicle regulation and safety. For example, significant improvements in the regulation of fatigue through a risk classification system and improvements to the Advanced Fatigue Management Scheme will offer greater safety and flexibility outcomes into the future, including for Queensland's rural and remote transport operators.

As an independent entity the regulator will have an ongoing role in identifying issues and will make significant contributions to improving safety and customer service and also promoting innovation to increase productivity. The regulator will provide owners and operators a single point through which they conduct heavy vehicle business with governments across the nation. For example, as mentioned last year in a previous speech on this issue, this one-stop-shop will allow accreditation applications and the issue of access permits to be coordinated through a single point of contact, cutting down on unnecessary costs and time for operators. Currently, heavy vehicle operators and drivers need to comply with different regulations in each state and territory they operate in. This regulatory regime, with different requirements in each jurisdiction, results in duplication, burdensome red tape, increased costs, confusion and stress for operators and drivers alike. Intrastate operators seeking access approvals will also benefit from the new regulator's case management approach which will coordinate approvals with local governments. Local governments will in turn benefit from the regulator's support, particularly in providing expertise to assist with last mile access decisions. In the next six months the regulator will create a national mapping network that will combine existing gazetted routes and maps from across jurisdictions which will then be available on its website. Any local government network mapping products that are available will also be included. An operator can access this central resource and ascertain what conditions or gazettal notices apply to a particular route or part of the road network and plan their trip accordingly.

When this law is applied nationally, it will remove regulatory inconsistencies that currently plague operators, adding to the costs of compliance and of doing business in the transport industry—costs that are ultimately passed on to each and every one of us as consumers. Supporting the new regulator in their role of improving productivity and efficiency in the transport industry by passing this bill will have flow-on effects that will be good for the hip pocket of every Queenslanders. We have become an overregulated society and any reduction in unnecessary red tape is a move in the right direction. I commend this very important bill to the House.

 **Mrs MENKENS** (Burdekin—LNP) (5.28 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill 2012. I commend the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, the Hon. Scott Emerson. Like other members of this Newman government, he is focused and committed to cutting red tape, lowering cost and waste and is also focused on making things work more efficiently and effectively for industry in Queensland. This Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill puts the wheels in motion to achieve this.

I have often been approached by truck drivers and one of their major complaints is the differing laws across the various states across the country. As well as having to traverse the nation's highway carting livestock, freight, machinery and many other goods, they are confronted with a variety of rules and regulations. Here in Queensland the transport industry keeps our economy moving. That was most evident during the floods where, as one went further north, the shelves were empty. We heard about produce that was ready to be transported but could not be; it was dependent on the transport industry.

We focus on the roads, but the transport industry is our central pivot. I salute all members of the transport industry, particularly the truckies. The service that they provide to our state and to the nation is something we cannot measure. The transport industry is particularly important for rural industries involved in fresh produce and, of course, we must never forget the livestock haulage industry. I have been privileged to attend a couple of the Bull Carter's Balls. Livestock haulage is one of the more difficult trucking areas, but it is terribly necessary.

As well as having to haul loads across the national Bruce Highway in Queensland, truckies have to face a barrage of varying laws when they cross into other states. A single national law and a new National Heavy Vehicle Regulator will provide a range of benefits to the heavy vehicle industry, including the provision of timely advice surrounding access to the road network for high-productivity vehicles. Truckies will be able to easily contact the regulator regarding issues such as the transportation of wide loads or their logbooks, which are a necessity but also a very difficult part of the process. However, I believe many will significantly benefit as far as access permits are concerned. This process will be more streamlined with the regulator dealing with cross-border asset owners and local governments on behalf of operators to ensure that a single permit, with a straightforward set of operating conditions, is issued and just one access permit

will cover each applicable jurisdiction. I note many transport operators and drivers are waiting for this more simplified process. They have been calling out for this for years. Those freight operators have given the bill their complete backing.

The passing of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill will not only significantly reduce the amount of red tape via permits but also reduce costs. A National Heavy Vehicle Regulator project office report, issued in August 2011, estimated that the establishment of the regulator will reduce the cost to Queensland of heavy vehicle regulation by approximately \$135 million over a 22-year period. Having a national regulator capturing freight data on permit applications in one central location will help inform infrastructure investment choices by jurisdictions. That information will help more quickly identify freight growth corridors and improve jurisdictional responses to infrastructure issues, which in turn will lead to less congested and safer roads.

I fully support the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill because it is an important practical step towards improving industry confidence in the economy and boosting conditions necessary for developing the economic strength of Queensland. The majority of discussions surrounding this bill and the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator have centred on benefits to interstate heavy vehicle transport operators. It is one of the aims of the Newman government to make it easy to do business in Queensland. However, this reform will also deliver significant intrastate benefits, many of them accruing to primary producers and transport operators working in the rural sector.

 **Hon. SA EMERSON** (Indooroopilly—LNP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (5.33 pm), in reply: This amendment bill is the final chapter in a very long and challenging legislative reform that will usher in a new era for the heavy vehicle industry. What began as 12 individual model laws is now one single national law to govern heavy vehicles across Australia. I thank all honourable members for their participation in today's debate and for their support of this bill. Once again I acknowledge the work of the Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee in reviewing this bill and for the committee's knowledgeable and considered response.

The heavy vehicle industry has waited a long time for this moment and, as active participants during the development of the national law and regulatory reform, industry members should feel rightly proud of a reform that will have a profound effect on how they operate within Queensland and when travelling interstate. The role of other jurisdictions during the development of the national law and their ongoing support of Queensland as host to the reform should also be acknowledged. The passage of the amendment bill through Queensland's parliament will pave the way for other jurisdictions to pass the necessary laws to adopt the national law through their own parliaments. Hopefully, this will lead to the full legislative operation of the regulator in July this year.

It is pleasing to see the opposition's continued support for this important reform and I acknowledge that and thank them for it. The importance of this bill to the heavy vehicle industry and the positive effect it will have on the economic strength of Queensland was no more evident than in the bipartisan support received here today.

The member for Warrego noted that the heavy vehicle industry is generally supportive and acknowledged that that high level of support is due in no small way to the extensive consultation that has occurred during the development of this legislation. I also acknowledge his comments about fatigue management. The change from prescriptive driving hours to an industry-specific template will allow operators to take advantage of advanced fatigue management. In turn, this will enable productivity benefits within the industry.

The member for Toowoomba South noted the potential savings for industry. This legislation has allowed the regulator to be established, which will result in a productivity benefit of \$162 million per year accruing to industry. It is important to reinforce the honourable member's comments about access. This legislation will streamline the administrative process behind the granting of access.

The member for Condamine referred to the differences currently in place between jurisdictions, such as needing multiple documentations for interstate journeys. This legislation consolidates existing heavy vehicle model legislation to create consistency across jurisdictions. I acknowledge the member's comments around cloth signage for heavy vehicles. I inform the member that the member for Warrego wrote to me on behalf of Mr Russell Martin on that very issue. I am pleased to tell the House that the issue has been dealt with separately to this bill. Changes to the relevant guidelines for signage requirements were made late in 2012 to allow for flexible signage on road trains and long vehicles. The member raised concerns about heavy handed police enforcement of heavy vehicle regulations. I note that penalties for minor infringements such as logbook offences have been reduced from \$600 to \$150.

As the member for Springwood said, this legislation brings together 12 pieces of model legislation—over 8,000 pages—into one piece of legislation, just over 700 pages in length. That is an incredible reduction in the regulatory burden on industry and serves to reduce confusion for heavy vehicle operators, heavy vehicle enforcers and transport agencies.

I note the comments of the member for Chatsworth, the assistant minister for public transport, on the last mile issues that exist. The regulator will facilitate the coordination and access applications between state and local governments, improving administrative efficiencies and having a positive impact on last mile

issues. I also advise the House that mass distance location charging is not a function of this regulator and is not part of the bill. Mass distance location is an issue being considered by COAG through the heavy vehicle charging and investment reform.

I note that, given the need to move this bill forward as quickly as possible today, the member for Lockyer did not speak to the bill. However, he has spoken to me about these issues and is very supportive of the bill. He is also supportive of the heavy vehicle industry. He pointed out to me that later this month, on 23 February, the 10th annual Lights on the Hill Convoy 2013 will be held, which is a memorial convoy recognising the trucking industry and those people who have lost their lives in it.

In closing, I thank my ministerial and departmental staff for their dedication in preparing this legislation. It has been a long journey, but it has been a worthwhile journey. I also acknowledge to the House the unerring and enthusiastic support of the Premier for this legislation. I welcome his ongoing support for these reforms.

Mr Seeney: The Deputy Premier, too.

Mr EMERSON: And that of the Deputy Premier, as well. I take the interjection. They have not swerved in their support. In closing, I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 755, as read, agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 4, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

 **Hon. SA EMERSON** (Indooroopilly—LNP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (5.41 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. SA EMERSON** (Indooroopilly—LNP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (5.41 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.

QUEENSLAND RECONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 13 February (see p. 144).

Second Reading

Hon. DF CRISAFULLI (Mundingburra—LNP) (Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience) (5.41 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (5.42 pm): At the end of Queensland's summer of sorrow in 2010-11 I do not think anyone thought we would have to deal with yet more devastating natural disasters just two years later. Disaster relief and recovery efforts are so important they require both bipartisan goodwill and detailed scrutiny by all involved to ensure they are completed as quickly and as efficiently as possible. The previous Labor government developed a comprehensive reconstruction program that would take a number of years to complete. In fact, this financial year was set to be the biggest rebuilding year after the 2010-11 floods and Cyclone Yasi.

The Queensland Reconstruction Authority was created by Labor to administer this massive recovery effort. This legislation now seeks to extend the life of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority established by the previous Labor government. This follows the LNP signing a 2013 national partnership agreement with the Commonwealth that extends the existing funding agreement to include ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald. This national partnership agreement is substantially similar to the agreement hammered out after the 2010-11 natural disasters.

Under the 2011 agreement, the Queensland Disaster Recovery Cabinet Committee was created to oversee and coordinate the work of QRA. This cabinet committee was supposed to ensure the recovery effort was delivered efficiently and effectively. Paragraph B7 of the 2013 national partnership agreement again sets out the role of the Queensland Disaster Recovery Cabinet Committee. I am glad to see this further recognition of the important role of the cabinet committee.

In the interests of ensuring the new recovery efforts are effective, unfortunately I think it is necessary to highlight the fact that this government has, until recent events thrust natural disaster recovery back into spotlight, not applied its full efforts to the Queensland construction task. We know for a fact that this government did not convene a single meeting of the Disaster Recovery Cabinet Committee in 2012. When the Deputy Premier was asked about this situation he referred to the committee as a relic of the Bligh government. For the parliament's benefit I table a copy of the reconstruction governance framework which sets out the important role of the Disaster Recovery Cabinet Committee.

Tabled paper: Document titled 'Queensland Reconstruction Authority governance map' [2095].

Clearly the national partnership agreement once again enshrines the central role of this committee. Therefore, it seems that the Deputy Premier had a massive change of heart on the importance of the Disaster Recovery Cabinet Committee, and I welcome that. Unfortunately, the fact remains that the government did not hold a single meeting of the Disaster Recovery Cabinet Committee in the biggest year of building after the 2010-11 floods—a year in which reconstruction spending reached \$4.17 billion, the largest in Queensland's history.

The previous government also constituted the Floods Commission of Inquiry to identify any problems with the disaster response. When the commission's final report was released in the midst of the last election campaign it received broad bipartisan support. Of course, the responsibility to implement the recommendations arising out of the report fell to the LNP. To date, the LNP is yet to complete 76 out of the 123 recommendations in the Floods Commission of Inquiry final report that relate to the state government.

It is worth noting that chapter 11 of the Floods Commission of Inquiry final report specifically mentions a request from the Bundaberg Regional Council to engage in a flood buyback scheme for flood-prone homes. I table a copy of chapter 11 and refer members to page 274.

Tabled paper: Extract of chapter 11 from the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry, Final Report, titled 'Buy backs and land swaps' [2096].

To the best of my knowledge, the government did not engage in any meaningful work on this issue prior to the 2013 floods. I invite the minister to correct the record if there were discussions on this matter and outline what the outcomes of those discussions were.

As I said at the outset of my speech, we need a bipartisan commitment to reconstruction but also strict scrutiny. It is unfortunate that this government has sought to politicise January's disastrous events. I was disappointed with the Treasurer who invented a funding issue to imply the Commonwealth was not supporting disaster recovery. The facts are simply these. The Commonwealth government provided advanced funding of \$1.4 billion in 2010-11 and \$2 billion last financial year to the state government in response to the 2010-11 natural disasters. The Treasurer told us there was an historical payment issue relating to \$725 million in funding dating back to 2006 just following the flood events this year. This was despite a media statement from the Deputy Premier early in January stating that the rebuilding was going well with joint Commonwealth funding and there were no issues.

As it turned out, it was the Treasurer who was found wanting when it was revealed the issue had arisen because requirements from the Queensland Auditor-General had not been met. The same Treasurer also claimed that sporting and community infrastructure would not be supported for funding before even asking the Commonwealth. The Treasurer did this knowing full well that under the 2011 national partnership agreement, signed by the previous government, infrastructure that was not eligible for NDRRA, such as Brisbane CityCat terminals, received Commonwealth support. The funding agreement that was signed after all of this grandstanding was almost identical to that in 2011.

I note that this government has made much of its plans to rebuild disaster affected infrastructure back better. We welcome that commitment, but it is not new. The amendment of the main purpose of the act at clause 3 and to the authority's functions at clause 5 has been included for no other purpose than the government trying to make itself look better than the previous government.

The Queensland Reconstruction Authority, established by the previous government, has long had a rebuilding focus on resilience and building it back better. For the minister's benefit I table a document from the Queensland Reconstruction Authority from September 2011 called *Rebuilding a stronger more resilient future*.

Tabled paper: Document titled 'Queensland Reconstruction Authority, Rebuilding a stronger, more resilient Queensland: The capacity to prepare for, withstand, respond to and recover from disasters' [2097].

This document details how the Queensland Reconstruction Authority has been working towards betterment of infrastructure projects and developing resilience with the support of local communities. The previous government invested \$10 million for flood mitigation for south-west communities, including

\$3.1 million for works at the Balonne River at St George and \$4.7 million for a project with the Maranoa council for flood mitigation in Roma. And we committed \$13.2 million for the long-term flood mitigation works in Charleville. We also committed at the election another \$23.3 million for flood mitigation in the Toowoomba CBD. All of this was in addition to the \$44 million in natural disaster resilience funding to help councils prepare for and mitigate against natural disasters.

When the Floods Commission of Inquiry final report was handed down in March last year, we immediately committed \$40 million towards meeting the flood plain management recommendations—a commitment which the LNP matched. And how much of this \$40 million fund has been committed under the Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience? So far, only 34 per cent of this fund has been committed. So to make it clear: following the 2010 and 2011 disasters, the previous government committed more funding to resilience and betterment than this government has to date. I provide these details to the House not in an attempt to score political points but simply to illustrate the facts.

We should also not forget that the Queensland Reconstruction Authority last financial year disappointingly had an emphasis of matter on its financial accounts by the Auditor-General because the Deputy Premier nearly wound up the authority by mistake. The last public audit report on the Reconstruction Authority was contained in the *Results of audits: state public sector entities for 2011-12*. This report states that there is an emphasis of matter for the Reconstruction Authority. This was because it was due to cease on 21 February 2013 and it was uncertain at the time of the audit opinion being issued whether the authority would be a going concern. I note that in 2010-11 the Reconstruction Authority received an unqualified audit opinion.

Whilst we welcome the focus of the LNP government on the betterment of infrastructure and disaster resilience, we ask that the focus not be exclusively on flooding just as it was under the previous government. I also call on the minister to ensure that the Queensland Reconstruction Authority is adequately resourced, noting that 22 full-time equivalent positions were cut in the last budget. It is important that the government considers how staffing reductions have impacted on disaster recovery including the loss of 550 full-time equivalent positions in QBuild, 385 in Communities, 345 in Community Safety and 600 in RoadTek.

Looking briefly at the remaining clauses of the bill, I see that the bill has a very simple effect. The life of the Reconstruction Authority is extended from 30 June 2014 until 30 June 2015. The bill also changes the meaning of a 'disaster event' in the current Queensland Reconstruction Authority Act 2011 to include storms, tornadoes and floods caused by ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald and associated heavy rains in January and February 2013.

The opposition will be supporting this legislation. Now is the time to put politics behind us to stop finger-pointing—

Government members interjected.

Mr MULHERIN: You raised all of these issues and I am just rebutting the misinformation that you are spreading within the community. Now is the time to make infrastructure betterment and resilience a real focus to make sure that our disaster response is adequately resourced. This issue is too important.

 **Hon. JJ McVEIGH** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) (5.53 pm): I am pleased to speak to the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Amendment Bill 2013. I, together with the majority of speakers this evening I trust, am focused on having a non-political discussion about this bill. The bill amends the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Act 2011, as the minister has outlined, and it does so to ensure that the government and Queensland is able to effectively and efficiently respond to the 2013 disaster events and to enhance the state's resilience, as the minister has outlined, to future disasters.

I note that it proposes to amend the definition of a 'disaster event' to include storms, floods and tornadoes caused by ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald. I think that is a particularly important amendment given the impact of the weather events surrounding ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald. I use the example, as members of the House are familiar with it given updates from the Deputy Premier and others, of impacts on orchards. In my own case I can share the example of impacts on macadamia nut tree orchards very close to Bundaberg where tornadoes had a very significant impact.

To stand in those orchards and assume that the wind events would have blown trees over in one direction but to see in fact that effectively a whirlpool, as you would imagine, had occurred within the orchards, that event had quite a significant impact on those trees and particularly on the operations involved in the clean-up and the impending harvest operations. So that amendment in recognising the nature of this disaster event is, I would suggest, particularly important.

I note also that the Queensland Reconstruction Authority will work with affected local governments and their communities in delivering both reconstruction and the resilience programs. I stress that the reconstruction and resilience is so important, as the minister has outlined.

I look forward, as Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, to working with the minister, working with the Deputy Premier and working with the Premier in that recovery and resilience exercise. The simple fact is that we need to focus on the nature of our farming systems and on the economics of various farming systems—in particular, we need to focus on soil management—and that is what I will be doing in association with the ministers relevant including the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines.

Resilience needs to take into account the fact that our grazing industries, our dairy industries, cropping of various types and obviously orchardists and horticulture in areas affected across the southern parts of the state—most particularly in the Deputy Premier's own electorate of Callide in the North Burnett—will require significant assistance and focus going forward. And it has been my honour to stand beside the Deputy Premier, not only given his interests in the future of this state and this concept of resilience in such events but particularly given his interest in his own electorate where he hosted many of his colleagues to look at that damage.

The resilience aspect also needs to take into account factors such as those mentioned by the member for Gladstone in relation to communications. Her examples that have been shared in this House in relation to failed telecommunications in the Boyne Valley, replicated in many other parts of Queensland affected by this event, need to be taken into account, certainly by the federal government. I reiterate that, in terms of resilience, the Premier, the Deputy Premier, obviously local members and the Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience have made the point that in terms of agricultural produce Queensland consumers, indeed Australian consumers, and particularly the supermarket chains need to get behind our rural producers, particularly those in the citrus industry in the North Burnett. And I have to commend the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for echoing that call as well.

I congratulate the Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience for being a man of action in this case who, alongside the Premier, has certainly taken to the recovery and resilience challenge with gusto—the level of gusto and can-do attitude that many have unfortunately observed was lacking under the former government. Finally, I thank the minister and again the Premier, Deputy Premier and Treasurer for securing the assistance that will assist in the recovery exercise through the NDRRA negotiations with the federal government, and that will very much pave the way for resilience focus going forward. It is for those reasons that I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr PUCCI** (Logan—LNP) (5.59 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Amendment Bill 2013. For the second time in as many years, our great state was afflicted with a natural disaster that impacted heavily on livelihoods, infrastructure, commerce and services to our communities. In true Queensland spirit, our communities picked themselves up and got on with the tough challenge of rebuilding their homes and businesses in the wake of ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald. As I mentioned during debate of the condolence motion moved by the honourable the Premier, my great electorate of Logan, like so many other areas across our great state, was rocked by rising flood waters, power outages and fallen debris.

With homes inundated and worldly possessions lost, our communities turned to our government to help them rebuild. This legislative amendment sets out to ensure that no Queenslanders are left behind—that no-one will be forgotten as our great state puts back together the pieces that form the fabric of our community.

The Queensland Reconstruction Authority Amendment Bill 2013 seeks to expand the jurisdiction of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority to include the disaster events of January and February this year. It will also pave the way for the authority to have a stronger focus on disaster resilience and extend the operations of the 2011 act to June 2015. This amendment will allow the authority to work cohesively with local governments and the local community throughout the duration of the reconstruction program.

The bill also gives the authority the platform to cohesively interact with external agencies and all levels of government in preparation for possible future natural disaster events. This approach to manage possible future events will allow for sound planning for future land developments in areas such as greater Flagstone. This region is on the grow. Flagstone is currently home to approximately 4,000 people. As I have mentioned on several occasions, this number is set to rise dramatically—to over 100,000 people in the coming years. Such a growth area requires appropriate measures to be put in place to avoid and/or minimise the impact on the community of events such as those recently experienced. For example, Flagstone has two main arterial roads into the community, Teviot Road and Cusack Lane. Both of these council roads were impassable, preventing any form of medical relief or supplies from entering the community.

This amendment bill will pave the way for local communities, councils and agencies to work hand in hand with the authority to best plan for growth in the region and participate in reconstruction efforts and future disaster management, with a strong focus on resilience. This bill is about rebuilding our communities together. We can make it happen and rebuild our great state. I thank the Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience for his work on this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (6.02 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Amendment Bill 2013. I think it is important to note that this is not a new piece of legislation in the sense that it does not seek to address a stand-alone event. This bill extends the operation

and responsibilities of a number of people in Queensland to include the damage done by ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald and the associated heavy rains in January and February this year. This is in addition to the disaster events that were declared under the principal act that occurred in December 2010 and January 2011, when severe Cyclone Yasi took the state. I think it is important for us to recognise that and to put that on the record. It shows that the Queensland community, as was recognised in the motion debated earlier this week, is not facing a disaster in isolation; it is facing a disaster after two years ago facing significant damage, and it is still recovering from that initial event.

It is easy to say that Queensland is a cyclone area—that rolls off the tongue very easily—but the human cost of being in a cyclone area was seen in our communities not just in December 2010 and January 2011 but also this year, when many people had only just got their homes in order and, indeed, public infrastructure was only recently put back in order after that earlier disaster.

Like others, my area has dairying, agriculture, forestry, fisheries and other primary production that has been impacted so very greatly. I am very pleased to know that this bill is broad enough to allow for investment in those industries to rebuild, whether that is state government investment or federal government investment. Neither entity can stand back from that responsibility.

I am pleased that the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry recognised the issue of communications. They are critical. When Telstra went down for 24 hours in my electorate, all of the emergency services were without an ability to communicate. They rushed out and got Optus phones, but some of those emergency centres were told that it would be between six and 12 hours before they had service. Six to 12 hours at the height of a disaster—and they were told by Optus that it would take that long to initiate service. This has shown the absolutely critical need to have back-up to the Telstra cables in the southern and northern parts of the state. Those emergency services were absolutely unable to meet the needs of the community. Again, it is incredibly dangerous for communities in my electorate to have no way of communicating with one another or with those outside.

I want to raise one other issue. I do not believe this is a stretch; I believe it is an important issue to consider under the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Amendment Bill. I raise it again—and I know that people will sigh, but it is the hospital again. I believe that intrinsic in considering the ability of communities to respond to disasters is the ability of communities generally to access reliable and responsive health services. Gladstone has such an opportunity, with an airport that is open in most inclement weather—it will be more so with the telemetry that is being installed currently—and a hospital that remains dry, relatively speaking—there was a lot of leaking, but we can fix that if we are resourced for it—with a helipad, to be able to provide health services in these difficult times. I think it can be considered under the Reconstruction Authority umbrella to invest in the hospital to ensure it is able to respond appropriately to matters that come up in emergency situations.

I do not like the word 'resilient', not because it is not a good word but because it runs off our tongues so easily. We have people who cope amazingly. They band together and they build one another up. They give and keep on giving. And that is how people who have been directly affected face tomorrow. It is because they have hope, they have friends, they have neighbours. It is not a resilience that stands on words alone; it is resilience that is built on one another. It is the responsibility of both the Reconstruction Authority and us to engender confidence and hope in these communities who, I am sure, after two major events such as these have been, are looking for a future that is, as previous ministers have said, reconstructed in a way that will not be so easily broken down. Infrastructure should be built in a way to, as best as possible, forestall further damage. I commend the authority and I support the bill.

 **Mrs MADDERN** (Maryborough—LNP) (6.09 pm): I rise to speak on the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Amendment Bill 2013 with mixed emotions. I am deeply saddened that this bill is necessary as a result of the terrible damage that former Cyclone Oswald inflicted on such a large part of Queensland. On the other hand, I am proud that the government has taken a decisive step in the process of recovery and, more importantly, has a focus on building in resilience against future such events.

While other places have been severely damaged, the Maryborough electorate has suffered severe damage to private and farming property as well as some damage to state and local government infrastructure. The Lamington Bridge has again suffered damage to the railings. These railings are built to be removed when floods threaten. In this case, the rails were not removed as a consequence of a conscious decision which was taken to leave them there. The flood rose much more quickly than usual and, with Bureau of Meteorology warnings of 125 kilometre per hour winds and tornados, I am advised that it was decided not to risk lives under the circumstances—better to lose the railings.

On the Granville Bridge, the railings normally withstand a flood, but not this time. They had to be removed as the force of the river flow had twisted them and ripped them out. The Brooweena bridge has lost both approaches, causing isolation to residents in that area. Other rural bridges and much of our rural roads are damaged. I commend the minister for being so proactive in moving to ensure that reconstruction works will be able to be carried out as quickly as possible. I note that the Don Tallon Bridge in Bundaberg, which was so badly damaged, is now open to traffic.

Most importantly, this bill extends the term of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority until June 2015. This period of time will allow us to look to the other most important part of the government's vision, which is to build resilience into our infrastructure against future events.

In moving around the electorate and talking to the residents who suffered damage and the volunteers who were assisting them, it was interesting to hear some of the comments being passed, particularly by the older residents. It seems that for many years there have been ideas put forward about how, in our case, Maryborough can be protected from the recurring damage from floods. Now is the time to review these ideas and others to assess their worth and to make decisions on how best to build that resilience. In three out of the last four floods, the Maryborough CBD has been protected by a temporary levy constructed with steel frames wrapped in blue tarp and held down with sandbags. Sadly, this time the flood was too high and waters poured over the levy and into the CBD. However, it is an innovative idea and ideas such as this are needed to build resilience. Again, I take this opportunity to thank Minister Crisafulli for all the work he has carried out in flood damaged communities over the past several weeks. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr RICKUSS** (Lockyer—LNP) (6.12 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution on the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Amendment Bill 2013. I think it is a logical transition to extend the term of this bill. I have dealt with Graeme Newton, who is the CEO of the Reconstruction Authority, and I assume, Minister, that Graeme is still there for a time. He has done a wonderful job and he has managed the difficult task from 2011 in an excellent manner. I am sure the continuation of the authority into 2013 will be a real win for the state.

I would also like to congratulate the minister on the fact that we will be building some resilience into some of this stuff. We probably need a 10 or 15 per cent increase in funding so we can get better designs and better resilience in some of the bridges. That has been done and it will give them a much longer life.

Unfortunately, when governments make legislation that is too strict and too restrictive, it actually ends up costing people money. This happened with the BER proposal when every school had to get it and then 10 or 15 schools around Queensland which had just got new buildings were closed. This cannot be too restrictive. Let us use common sense. I imagine anything that will cost an extra 50 per cent to rebuild will be looked at, but if it only costs an extra 10, 15 or 20 per cent to rebuild a better and more appropriate facility, then that is what we really want to look at.

Graeme Newton and his team work extremely well. They liaise with councils. I did see some criticism of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority from some of the lesser lights in the local government area, but I think a lot more councillors and mayors came out and supported the Queensland Reconstruction Authority for the good job it had done and for how it had delivered stuff on time and delivered stuff appropriately. That is what we want. We want someone who will actually do the job and get in there. I am sure Graeme's experience will lead the whole team to do a much better job, particularly as they liaise with Minister Crisafulli and this whole proactive government we have now. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Dr DOUGLAS** (Gaven—Ind) (6.14 pm): I support the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Amendment Bill. Whilst the Gold Coast was severely affected, it was nothing compared to what happened in the Lockyer and up in the Burnett. Rather than be repetitive, I will stay away from those issues which have been previously raised. These types of bills, which are the legislative continuation bills, enable recovery and reconstruction in the immediate aftermath of disaster. It may be that in time we will have a legislative tool that makes the step unnecessary and there will be a greater potential to shorten a potential gap in our system. These things are a challenge for governments, but there is possibly no greater challenge than the one facing individual home and business operators which have been affected by these calamities.

The other immediate issue that has become apparent is the definition of 'disaster', 'catastrophe' and 'inundation'—three different terms used for the same sort of thing. I raised the problem of the lack of consistency across those groups who define types of disasters. This was more clearly demonstrated in the presentation to affected business owners and operators in Bundaberg one week ago at the Moncrieff Theatre. The Insurance Council of Australia representative defined the situation in Bundaberg as a 'catastrophe'. He drew close parallels to those affected in North Queensland with those affected by Cyclone Yasi two years ago, yet the QRAA classification was in this case a level C, 'special', not level D, a 'disaster'. Obviously, there needs to be consistency across major industry and government. Clearly, the use of certain words and labels does have significant financial implications, but we need to be brave enough to accept these. These have a real impact on individuals because they have been left with nothing mostly in these circumstances.

I note the comments of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition about what occurred after the transition from Labor to the new LNP government. I refer to my speech given on 17 February 2011 in response to the original bill following the 2010 and 2011 flood. I reviewed the closest global comparable disaster, which was actually Kobe in 1993, and the response to the disaster of the 1974 floods and all of the literature with regard to them. Four key points came out of both and also the other major reviews at the time.

First, governments can and must be prepared to mitigate the economic and social impact of disasters by better planning across all government responsibility—that is, they have to implement this as part of their strategies in all of their departments. Second, public trust as well as consumer and investor confidence are key elements to ensure rapid and systemic recovery. Third, governments need to work more closely in partnership with the private sector, from disaster prevention through to recovery. In other words, we have to be starting to plan for our next disaster as we talk about it. This must start in tandem with reconstruction. Fourth, major disasters have multiple international dimensions and, at the other end of the scale, microeconomic dimensions. We have to have cooperative agreements. We have to be prepared to tell people that we have had a problem. We have to say, 'This is what we're going to do about it, this is what we are doing about it, and this is what you will see within a fixed time.' We must do what we say we are going to do. This is what we know works, as opposed to what does not work.

The resilience attachment is an interesting step. For me, it embraces some of the ideas that the task ahead is long and painful and is a sobering one. It does require great tolerance, sympathy, understanding, generosity and perseverance. That must occur at a time when time itself passes so quickly, when money is tight, as it always is, and when people's patience is often exhausted.

The previous legislative instrument was very effective and its extension should be effective. I urge people to be aware that we all need to have a high degree of urgency about fixing everyone's problems. Time is our enemy. We must understand the demographic and the public anxieties that fit within that. We must not play politics. I have discussed I believe the danger of what is called PDS—that is, politician deprivation syndrome. Fair building and recovery must occur and it must not be delayed. We must assist the rebuilding of communities and never forget that communities are people, not everything else except them.

 **Mr YOUNG** (Keppel—LNP) (6.19 pm): I rise to support the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Amendment Bill 2013. I wish to congratulate the Hon. David Crisafulli on his new ministerial appointment which now covers community recovery and resilience, which has been added to his former title of Minister for Local Government. The ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald and subsequent monsoonal rain brought record flooding rains that devastated many communities across Queensland.

This bill amends the definition of 'disaster events' to include storms, floods and excessive high winds, which Queenslanders experienced in January and February of 2013. The amendment ensures that the government is to have a coordinated approach to effectively and efficiently respond to communities affected by these disasters. This can be achieved by amending the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Act 2011 in three ways: expand the jurisdiction of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority to include the disaster events of January and February 2013, provide the Queensland Reconstruction Authority with a stronger focus on disaster resilience and extend the operation of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Act 2011 to 30 June 2015.

This bill is specific to the state of Queensland and is not uniform or complementary to legislation of the Commonwealth or another state to maintain consistency with legislation of other jurisdictions. When we look at the massive damage that resulted from ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald, although my area of Rockhampton and the Capricorn Coast recorded record rainfall causing substantial damage, this in no way compares with the southern communities with special mention of the poor souls of Bundaberg who lost everything. With this bill these communities will have the assurances that they will receive the recovery assistance they desperately need. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (6.20 pm): This bill expands the jurisdiction of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority to include the flooding from the tornados and the flooding from ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald, and we will hear the word 'resilience' many times over the reconstruction period. With the introduction of the bill, having a stronger focus on disaster resilience is welcomed. Our communities need the operations of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Act and I welcome the extension of its powers. Queensland Reconstruction Authority personnel were on the ground days after the event and the mammoth task started in earnest immediately. The signing of the national partnership agreement is welcomed and a positive sign that we can deal with the recommendations and engineering solutions for the many affected communities.

The appointment of the minister to the position of Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience is welcomed. I congratulate the minister and the cabinet on their commitment to the reconstruction efforts. The government's commitments were demonstrated by the efforts during the disaster events and the commitments to the recovery and reconstruction are an immediate priority. The improvements to the Queensland Reconstruction Authority acknowledge the serious damage caused and the need to rebuild with common sense and engineering based solutions. The appointment of Deputy Commissioner Brett Pointing to the recovery effort is a welcomed initiative for Bundaberg and North Burnett. I am comforted by the opportunities that this level of expertise will bring to my community. The relationships with local government are vital and the arrangements created under this government will see more cooperation and more value for money.

I heard the contribution of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I can tell honourable members that no matter what they heard or believe, the delays in activating assistance packages caused significant stress in my community. I note that now that access to essential funding has become available, work on major devastation has commenced in earnest. If the minister could assist with the activation of category D assistance that would be a most important item. We need the federal government's assistance.

I remind the House of the magnitude of the recovery and the frustrations that will emerge in our community over the next period. However, we have the right legislation, the right people in the right jobs and the drive and the commitment of this government to get the job done. I again thank the Premier, ministers, staff and my colleagues here in the House for their commitment and support for my community. Therefore, it is with hope and confidence that I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—Ind) (6.23 pm): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise to participate in the debate on the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Amendment Bill. I note, as other members have, that the bill proposes to amend the definition of 'disaster event' to include storms, floods and tornados caused by ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald and the associated heavy rains in January and February 2013.

I want to take this short opportunity to inform the House that earlier today I received a call from our local federal member Mr Alex Somlyay. He said that he had been in discussions with the federal minister and he still has not received the paperwork from the Sunshine Coast Regional Council or the state government so that small business owners and farmers in the Sunshine Coast area are able to access the natural disaster relief funding grants for clean-up and recovery work. So earlier today I had my office write to the Premier and also the Treasurer. I note that there was prompt acknowledgement from the Treasurer's office that they had received it. I put that on the record. Sometimes people think the Sunshine Coast is all rosy and things are happy. However, many parts of the Sunshine Coast were seriously affected by the recent extreme weather and, unfortunately, the criteria is too restrictive, as other members have touched on in the past. I use this chance to put that on the record for the benefit of the Treasurer and the Premier.

Before resuming my seat I again reflect on my contribution earlier in the week on the motion in relation to the disaster events. I spoke about trying to empower councils so that they are able to back zone land that should not be developed, but their hands are tied because of concerns about massive compensation claims. As I indicated during that contribution, I understand that Queensland is the only state left which still has this injurious affection law. I simply put that on the record again for the minister to consider along with the Premier's leadership team. Hopefully, in the near future Queensland will no longer see the continuation of this antiquated and outdated law. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ruthenberg): Before I call the minister, I inform members that we will be going through to adjournment immediately after passing this bill.

 **Hon. DF CRISAFULLI** (Mundingburra—LNP) (Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience) (6.25 pm), in reply: I thank everybody for their contribution. The bill puts into action what we have been talking about, which is to ensure that not only do we recover but we do so in a more resilient way. It ensures that communities affected in 2013 are able to receive ongoing assistance. It also extends the life of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority until 30 June 2015 and incorporates those events from January and February of this year.

I will now go through members' contributions and make some comments in response to some of them. I do thank them for their contribution. The member for Mackay started and finished by saying that floods were above politics and in between he politicised it. I will say that I have no intention of responding to many of those things put forward. The reason is that there are six families who do not deserve to be part of it and there are many thousands more who are recovering. What they deserve is leadership right now, not people looking to score a cheap political point.

I will, however, make one point about betterment. Whilst I respect the manner in which everyone in this House has spoken about betterment and whilst I respect that there has always been an ability for a council to make that case, it has been so bureaucratic and so troublesome that it quite simply has not worked. I have stood on too many broken bridges and seen too many pumps that do not pump despite the fact that council has said, 'Do not put it there,' to think that the betterment proposal works as it is. It must be changed and I look forward to the support from the Commonwealth to make sure that it does.

The member for Toowoomba South spoke about orchards which was near and dear to his heart as the agriculture minister. He has done a mighty job in putting forward the application to the federal government for category C funding. I commend him for that. Indeed, we have mentioned today the importance of category D funding, and I do hope that is coming sooner rather than later, particularly for those orchard growers whom the member for Toowoomba South mentioned.

The member for Logan spoke with great passion. I must commend both him and the member for Waterford for the fine effort and the leadership they provided their community. Logan may not have been impacted as much as other parts, but there was some real damage and some people who had real need. I made the point to the member for Waterford on that day when he assisted in the clean-up that I had heard a lot of things about Logan; I had watched a lot of media reports and been told about all the bad things in Logan. However, on that Saturday morning I saw all the good things about Logan. I saw a great community

with a great spirit and they helped their fellow man. There were neighbours helping neighbours. There were strangers helping strangers. There was a group from the Muslim community and there were church groups and they all rolled up their sleeves to make a better community. So I thank the member for Logan for his contribution.

The member for Gladstone has been a tower of strength for her community during this. She spoke about all the responsibilities of all levels of government. She is right—all levels of government. Who cares about the politics in this? Our community is so much more important. She spoke about constructing in such a way that it does not get washed away.

The member for Maryborough mentioned sandbagging, and how appropriate! She was on the front line with her community as it waited for those record levels of water. The member for Lockyer, who has been through it before, spoke so strongly and he spoke about resilience and the need to make sure that the cost of reconstruction is not too restrictive. The member for Gaven spoke about consistency in terms. The member for Keppel articulated well all three elements of the bill. The member for Burnett spoke about rebuilding with common sense and engineering solutions. Finally, I can say to the member for Nicklin that we have said all along that we will consider and continue to mount the case for any region that can show need. We will put that case forward to the federal government and I think that we have done a pretty good job of negotiating with it at this point in time. I am confident that the affected local governments will work well with the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. I am confident it will be a great partnership. I want to place on record my great thanks to everyone who has played a role from all three levels of government and everyone in this House for their contributions. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 6, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

 **Hon. DF CRISAFULLI** (Mundingburra—LNP) (Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience) (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. DF CRISAFULLI** (Mundingburra—LNP) (Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience) (6.31 pm): I move—

That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (6.31 pm): I move—

That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 am on Tuesday, 5 March 2013.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (6.31 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Searle, Mr R; McNeill, Mr B

 **Mr MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.31 pm): I want to express my condolences to two great Mackay men who passed away towards the end of last year—Ron Searle and Brian 'Macca' McNeill. My thoughts and prayers go out to both men's families and friends. Ron died aged 78 on 7 October 2012 and is survived by his beloved wife, Helen. Ron held the chair of the Mackay Port

Authority for nine years and was the driving force behind the development of the marina. Today the marina is enjoyed by thousands of visitors to the region and by Mackay residents. Because of the major role Ron played in the community and the unselfish dedication he displayed while in those roles, Mr Searle's name became synonymous with Mackay and his contributions resulted in the naming of Ron Searle Drive at the Mackay Harbour. I worked closely with Ron during his time as the Mackay Port Authority chair, particularly on the city marina project. During this time we became very good friends.

Ron will be remembered by friends and family as a devoted member of the community, a proud Catholic and an astute businessman, growing International Motors, now Autocorner, with his brother, Colin, for more than 25 years. He and Colin treated their staff with great kindness and as part of their extended family. Ron told me that the greatest achievement in his life was his loving family, whom he was devoted to. He also had a deep Christian faith which helped him through his long illness. Privately, he and his wife Helen helped many people who were poor and destitute in the Mackay region. Six years after Ron's diagnosis with Parkinson's disease and a year after the death of his daughter, Megan, Ron and his wife Helen moved to Brisbane to be closer to their other children—Annette, Carolyn and Howard. Megan Place at the marina was named after their daughter, a touching tribute to a man who gave so much to his community. Ron provided a huge contribution to the betterment of Mackay and his passing will be felt as a loss by the whole Mackay community. Ron's contribution to the community was reflected by the large number of people who attended his requiem mass on 11 October. My thoughts and prayers go out to Helen and his family.

Brian Anthony 'Macca' McNeill passed away on 26 October 2012. Brian was involved in the Mackay Brothers Football Club as a player and committee member for 45 years. Brian's contribution to rugby league in Mackay is unsurpassed. A great player, he was one of the strongest players in the team when the reserve grade won their first premiership in 1978. Brian was elected to the club committee in 1975 and was integral in raising funds between 1976 and 1984 for the establishment of the licensed club. He was also a member of the Mackay Rugby League Management Committee from 1980 to 1984. From 1984 for the next 20 years he was involved in St Patrick's College teams in various roles. Brian's contribution to the Mackay community through his involvement in rugby league will be remembered by the hundreds of football players whose lives and games he helped. Brian would give you the shirt off his back. Brian is survived by his wife Jilian, Tracey and Matty and a large extended family. He will be sorely missed by his friends and the wider Mackay community.

Breaka Burleigh Pro

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (6.34 pm): After the terrible tragedies of two weeks ago and the wild weather that we had on the Gold Coast over that period, it was a pleasure to see Burleigh come to life last week with the 2013 Breaka Burleigh Pro, and I have spoken about that a few times in the House this week. Burleigh really came to life. We had wonderful weather and a wonderful set-up. We had about 60,000 people over the week of the Breaka Burleigh Pro. It was a wonderful lead-up event to the first round of the world surfing tour, which will begin at Coolangatta at the end of this month and early next month with the start of the 2013 ASP World Tour, the Quicksilver and Roxy Pro. They have already started to set-up down the southern end of the Gold Coast and that will be a fantastic event. A few weeks ago we saw some quite dramatic waves. We actually had waves breaking through some of the restaurants at the beach at Burleigh, so to settle back to a four- or five-foot swell was great for that surfing event.

As I said, there were not only 60,000 visitors but also numerous cameras projecting this image out to the world. There were about 300,000 webviews of that every day of the tournament, which was really fantastic. I want to thank the organisers and Scott Gillies from Surfing Queensland for inviting the Minister for Tourism and myself to that event on the Saturday and for broadcasting the Australia Day 2 celebrations. They showed that video on the big screen and broadcast it on their web broadcast and put signs around the place promoting the Red Cross appeal. At the same time they donated a surf board signed by some of the world's leading surfers to sell at an event to raise money for the floods in the coming weeks. I want to congratulate Sally Fitzgibbons, the winner of the inaugural ASP 6-Star Women's Breaka Burleigh Pro. She defeated No. 5, Courtney Conlogue from the US. Owen Wright, another Australian, put up a masterful display of backhanded surfing to defeat fellow Australian Adam Melling from Lennox Head, New South Wales, in the men's final. As I said, it was a great day. We had great weather. It was really nice to see Burleigh come alive during that time.

Mount Coot-tha Electorate, School Zones

 **Mrs RICE** (Mount Coot-tha—LNP) (6.37 pm): Mount Coot-tha is a bustling inner-city electorate with a high daily volume of car, bus and bicycle traffic. With so much activity on local roads and hundreds of primary school students using school crossings, parents in the broader community have welcomed the Newman government's election commitment to deliver flashing school zone lights. I am pleased to report that as we begin the new school year flashing school zone lights are now installed at Bardonia, Milton and Toowong state schools. Throughout my election campaign in 2011-12 the school communities from these

three schools expressed their concerns about safety around their school zones. Each school has unique considerations. As the then LNP candidate, I fought for the installation of the flashing lights to enhance safety for school students. I particularly want to thank the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, the Hon. Scott Emerson, and his department for their assistance in ensuring that these lights went up in time for the start of the school year. These lights assist to warn motorists to slow down and take care in local school zones. The lights flash between 7 am and 9 am and again from 2 pm to 4 pm on either side of the school zones. The purpose of the lights is to provide greater exposure of the school zones and increase safety outside Bardon, Milton and Toowong state schools. From the feedback I have received, they are doing a great job.

Principals and parents have welcomed the government's initiative to make our children and local streets safer. Brendan Madden, the principal at Toowong State School, said that he has noticed that cars are slowing down as they turn the corner into Sylvan Road and approach the main school zone. This is a great result for Toowong State School, where many students are deaf or hearing impaired.

At Milton State School, the school zones on Baroona, Haig and Bayswater roads all light up. While standing at the corner of Baroona and Haig roads one morning, I personally witnessed the change in speed and driver behaviour while the lights are flashing. Although the lights do not provide a complete safeguard and children, parents and teachers still must cross school zones with care, it is great to have another reminder present for drivers to slow down.

I commend the government for its \$10 million commitment to deliver flashing lights at over 300 schools over the next four years. This commitment clearly demonstrates that the safety of our youngest Queenslanders is a top priority for us and we want every child to have the best chance of getting to school safely. Finally, I again thank the Minister for Transport and Main Roads for driving this initiative and I would also like to place on the record my recommendations to the minister, together with their school communities, for both Rainworth and Ithaca state schools to be included in the third round of flashing lights.

Kessels and Mains Roads, Noise Barriers

 **Mr JUDGE** (Yeerongpilly—Ind) (6.40 pm): I rise to speak on behalf of my constituents living in the vicinity of the intersection of Kessels and Mains roads at Macgregor and emphasise the critical need for the state government to fund the construction of noise barriers in the area. The intersection of Mains Road and Kessels Road is one of Queensland's busiest intersections, accommodating around 90,000 vehicles per day. The intersection is presently being upgraded, with \$300 million allocated to the project by the Australian government. Although the federal funding includes a component for the construction of a noise barrier, residents are concerned that the barrier will be constructed only on a small section of the road. The sheer volume of traffic—90,000 vehicles per day on average as I stated—tells the story of what local residents are suffering. Young families with children, elderly residents and shiftworkers are especially affected by the impacts of this huge volume of traffic.

The reality is that the state government must do more to mitigate the impact by funding noise barriers for residents not being protected under federal responsibility. It could be argued that, just like it is local government's responsibility to consider future flooding in town planning, the state government should diligently consider the future impacts of road corridors and fulfil its obligation to protect the community lifestyle.

The lifestyle of residents at Macgregor has been progressively eroded over the years because of the ever-increasing volume of passenger vehicles and truck traffic. Long-term residents who purchased their homes years ago could not have been expected to reasonably foresee the volume of passenger vehicles and trucks increasing to 90,000 vehicles per day. Basically, residents in the area are becoming prisoners in their own homes, not able to leave windows open because of the environmental impacts of traffic. People have put air conditioning into their homes in an attempt to block the noise attributable to traffic. There is a legitimate need for the state government, and in particular the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, to thoroughly examine the situation and do something about it—to shield people so that they can again enjoy the sanctuary of their homes.

I have conducted community corners in the area to listen and speak with local residents about this issue and, as promised, I will continue to represent them on it. The reality is that the federally funded noise barriers will go towards reducing the levels of road traffic noise for some locals, but it will not address it for many. The state government and the ministers responsible for departments have an obligation to properly and ethically administer public funds to address public problems like this one on a merit basis. Noise barriers to protect residents living near one of Queensland's busiest intersections should surely be a priority for the Newman government.

Nudgee Electorate

 **Mr WOODFORTH** (Nudgee—LNP) (6.43 pm): Tonight I rise to talk about a few events that I have attended in my electorate already this year. May I start with Australia Day and firstly say that my electorate was one of the lucky ones to be able to celebrate our great day, but my thoughts and prayers go

out to those that were not as fortunate. My Australia Day morning started at Toombul Bowls Club, which held its annual Australia Day breakfast. Numbers were down owing to the weather, but everyone had a great time.

Following that it was over to the Toombul Croquet Club for a quick meet and greet. There was definitely no croquet for me. I am flat out spelling the word, but the regular croquians—if that is even a word—had a great day. After that it was a quick change of clothes and off to the Lilley Awards day, where numerous Nudgee electorate residents took home a Lilley Award. I would like to congratulate Karen Burgess, Janet Peterson, Frank Meoni, Dawn Kluch, Janice Dunn, Alan Dellit, Christine Contoleon, Rod Chiapello, Fay Coman and Jeanie Cotterell. I say: well done to you all. Your efforts within the community are greatly appreciated.

Earlier this month it was great to represent the parliament in a celebrity volleyball match at Sandstorm Beach—aka ANZ Stadium—for the battle against ovarian cancer. The match was hosted by five-time Olympian Natalie Cook, and Madam Speaker was there as well. A great time was had by all. I really do not know how we lost, with some eight, nine or 10 players on the sand, but we managed to do a good job in losing—maybe from lack of skill, but who knows?

Last week I was able to present the Earnshaw College captains with their badges. I congratulate college captains Jamie Lines and Jerome Abalahin and vice-captains Hayden Edge-Williams and Bridget Greathead. I am looking forward to working with the college again this year.

I would also like to note the great efforts of Craig Micheals from Connected. Connected, which runs out of Banyo in my electorate, started after the 2011 floods to help families free of charge that needed anything from furniture to clothing, whitegoods—just about any item one would need in order to get by in their time of need. And this is not just after floods. Craig has helped out victims of house fires, where he has fully decked them out with every item they needed to get by. This is a true charity in every sense of the word. No person or family in need would have to put their hand into their pocket; Craig and his team at Connected are there to truly help the people of Queensland. I say well done to Craig. To back up the great work that Connected is doing, on the weekend I attended a flood appeal sausage sizzle put on by Russell and Cathy McDonnell from the Northgate newsagency, with all proceeds going to Connected so that Craig can continue with his great work.

Last Sunday, I had the pleasure of handing out the trophies at the midyear awards for Toombul junior cricket, hosted at Virginia State School by Virginia State School Principal Tim Farrell. I congratulate all award winners. I would like to thank the Northgate ambos, who took me on a ride to experience firsthand the situations and problems they face each and every day. It was not a busy emergency day, and that I say was a good thing. If only every day was the same. But I thank them all for their time and insights into what goes on in their daily working lives and environment.

Sandgate Electorate Office, Work Experience Student

 **Ms MILLARD** (Sandgate—LNP) (6.46 pm): Late last year I was fortunate enough to provide an opportunity for another work experience student to work alongside me in my electorate office. As part of our program, we cover speechwriting and students can write about any topic they wish. So with that said, this is young Makoi's story—

Good evening Premier Newman and Members of Parliament. My name is Makoi Makuel. I'm here today to share my story as a Sudanese refugee now living in Australia.

Today, I am 17 years old. I go to St. Patrick's College at Shorncliffe, and as part of my studies, I have been able to get work experience with the Honourable Kerri Millard, in her Sandgate office. But, my journey began in Khartoum in Sudan in 1995 when I was born. My two brothers, Makuel and Masot, were also born in Sudan.

At the time, my father worked as a Police Officer and my mother worked as a cleaner. My only memories of Sudan are travelling to school on the train, and the school itself. I went to a small school and so classes were combined, not like here where we are in different year levels. I can remember too there was a big focus on staying clean, for instance, our nails had to be spotless.

It wasn't until 2001 that my father made the decision to move from Sudan. At the time we moved, life was very difficult in Khartoum. My mother tells me it was very strict. They wanted the area of South Sudan to be wholly Muslim, which was a problem because we were Christians. We wanted to be able to freely practice our religion; a right under Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. My mother and father both worked as hard as possible to save as much money as they could to be able to make the move from Sudan. Our goal was to move to Australia, but we had to move across several countries to be able to get there.

I don't remember a lot about the journey, but we did get a train from Khartoum to Haifa, at the north of Sudan, and from there, we travelled to Egypt in a boat. We lived in Alexandria in Egypt; a small town in the north. We lived there for about one and a half years. I was six at the time. My mother and father continued working to help save as much money as possible to get to Australia. My youngest brother, David was born while we were in Egypt.

When we were in Egypt, my father sent a letter to the United Nations asking for permission to move from Egypt. It was declined. We were fortunate enough however, for my Uncle to sponsor us to come to Australia. He had already arrived here and had completed a University degree here.

In 2003, we travelled to Singapore via Bahrain. From Singapore, we flew to Sydney, and then onto Newcastle. I was nine at the time. My first impression of Australia was a surprise. A pleasant surprise. I'd never seen a place like this before—I saw the cities and the beaches. When we were in Newcastle, we lived near the Newcastle Stadium so we could walk to watch a few games. It was fantastic. My Uncle kindly arranged for our own place as soon as we arrived. We were lucky.

...

The other kids at school too, were really welcoming. Each of them made a special effort to get to know us all. They invited us to play games with them at lunch and morning tea, and gladly showed us around the school. The difference in the school were amazing. The teachers weren't strict and the school buildings were much bigger than what I had been used to.

In 2005, we moved to Brisbane ... a lot of my family and friends ... I didn't even want to move... When we did move to Brisbane, we first lived in Bracken Ridge. Bracken Ridge State School was my first school in Brisbane.

...

Australia has given me opportunities for my life—

(Time expired)

North-West Minerals Province

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (6.50 pm): Recently the north-west graciously received the Premier on his tour where the opportunity was taken to show him what opportunities exist in that part of the world that can progress Queensland. He acknowledged that the Carpentaria Mineral Province Stage 2 plan represents a good opportunity to go forward—a prescient claim because, make no mistake, this is a region that can drive industry in the state well beyond our lifetime. Furthermore, it offers a broad industry base not just relying on a single commodity such as coal or gas.

But what is required to take the region forward? Well, we can start with our supply chain and, more specifically, our rail line to the port. The north-west Queensland minerals province is the third greatest mineral province on the planet and, in addition to vast mineral resources, boasts hundreds of thousands of hectares of farmland ready to be developed with an overabundance of water—approximately 25 per cent of the nation's fresh water, almost none of which is used. It stands at the precipice of Queensland's future wealth-creating potential. We will still be opening new mines and developing new farming areas in the north-west well beyond the lifetime of members of this House. It produces some \$15 billion for the economy annually and is projected to produce some \$40 billion within the next three decades.

The burning question is: what is holding the brakes on industry development? It is the lack of strategic infrastructure investment and management of the same over the past 20 years. One western mayor recently put a person on the train at Cloncurry and recorded a travel speed of 14 kilometres an hour between Cloncurry and Hughenden. Trains should normally be travelling along the track at 60 to 80 kilometres an hour. For a region with 11 operating mines and many more approved mines waiting to be developed, plus a large cattle industry, this is not acceptable.

Mount Isa Mines this year celebrates 90 years of operation. That is 90 years of mining in the region, pumping money and opportunity into the economy. At the very least, gratitude should be shown by government by making an attempt to stop the decline of the rail service. Instead, we have access issues with new mines and substantial speed reductions due to maintenance issues and there is even discussion about taking away the *Inlander* passenger service. These are issues that will only be encountered by speaking to the people at the coalface who are trying to gain access or who are maintaining the line and fixing the rollovers.

The rail line to the coast is one of the most valuable arterial lines for resources and industry in the state. If this government wants to do something significant to build industry it need look no further than to this issue staring it right in the face. The rail to the port requires immediate attention with regard to safety and productivity. The good news is that the answers may not necessarily require large capital expenditure. Safety and productivity are addressed in the 50-year plan. I am now putting this House on notice that I will be dedicating my time and energy this year to finding out why we have trains travelling at 14 kilometres an hour. I want to know why this government backs the 50-year plan funded by the federal government but will not implement it. I will be asking questions in the House this year about why this train travels at 14 kilometres an hour in an area that is set to provide \$40 billion per annum within the next three decades.

Natural Disaster Events of 2013, Recovery Assistance

 **Mr DAVIES** (Capalaba—LNP) (6.52 pm): I rise to speak as a very proud local member of my community of Capalaba. The recent floods brought some of the worst things that can happen to people, but I think they also brought out the best in people. I was very proud of the response of my local community. We were blessed in that we did not have major flooding. Capalaba is a very treed area. The worst that happened was that during the storms many trees fell over and people lost their electricity supply. In many respects that is the worst that happened. A couple of people had minor flooding but nothing in comparison to what happened to the people of Bundaberg.

In response to what happened in Bundaberg, the owner of one of my local businesses, Hammond 4WD Centre, rang me up on the Wednesday after Australia Day and said, 'Look, Steve, we need to do something.' Previously in the floods of 2011 they set up their business as a hub to get all different goods in. They said, 'Let's do it again.' On the Wednesday we did a bit of a shout-out on Facebook and said we were going to start raising foodstuffs—not second-hand clothes or anything like that, simply food and cleaning

goods. We went to some of the local shops at Capalaba Central. I would like to give credit to Kay Henderson, the manager at Coles, and Tim Kenman, the manager at Woolies, and the staff at the Alex Hills Woolies. They put bins out the front.

Mr Dowling: And at Victoria Point.

Mr DAVIES: I am talking about Capalaba today. All through the Redlands the shopping centres joined in. On the Thursday night Andrew Laming, the local federal member, and I handed out brochures on what the people of Bundaberg needed. Over that two days we got 26 pallets full of food, cleaning goods and general items that people in Bundy needed.

One of the highlights was a lady who came to me when I was at Capalaba Central. She said, 'Steve, do you need ladies' stuff?' I told her I thought they probably did. She went into the shopping centre—she was not a person of high means—and she walked out with a trolley full of girls' stuff. I have two daughters and I know what that stuff costs. This lady had bought at least \$500 worth of amenities. It was an amazing example of the generosity of my electorate. We organised a truck to go up to Bundy. We actually had to get another truck. Bayliss from the local area donated a truck and Lindsay Transport donated another truck. It was a wonderful thing. I commend my electorate, and the electorate of Redlands, for the way they got together and supported the people of Bundaberg.

Mary Valley Tenant Purchase Scheme

 **Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—Ind) (6.55 pm): This morning in responding to my question about the Mary Valley Tenant Purchase Scheme the Deputy Premier invited me to be part of the solution. Tonight I accept his offer and look forward to working with other people to make sure that secret, preferential land sales do not happen in our Mary Valley.

In his answer this morning the Deputy Premier spoke about the work that the member for Gympie was doing in the valley. I have been informed by numerous valley residents and tenants about the member for Gympie's work. That was the reason I wrote to the member for Gympie on 9 and 10 January. I also wrote to the Deputy Premier on 9 and 10 January. The letter was very simple. It read—

Dear Minister Seeney and Mr Gibson, (as Chair of the State Development, Infrastructure and Industry Committee).

I refer to my request for information sent yesterday and seek specific advice if there have been any offers made by the government to former landowners in the Valley, along the lines that the government will sell the land back to them as previous owners at approximately half the original price paid by the former government to them. If this is the case can you urgently advise why this price is not set as a reserve for the property and other Queenslanders are able to express an interest in purchasing the properties either at that price or a higher value.

That letter was as a result of what people were telling me. I thought I would do the right thing and write to the chair of the committee and the Deputy Premier and hopefully they would respond. Members have no idea how hard it was to get a response. I have still not received a written response from the member for Gympie. During that time my office contacted his staff. Do members know what the staff said? No-one has authority to answer that question. The member cannot answer a simple question in writing but he can go out via social media and comment about the member for Nicklin and he can comment on the radio. We got a response on the 16th and guess what it said?

Mr Gibson: Do you remember the floods we had in Queensland?

Mr WELLINGTON: I know when it happened. I was in the middle of it. We got a response from the Deputy Premier's office and his staff simply referred me to the Mary Valley Tenant Purchase Scheme and apologised for the delay in responding. I put it to members that this is not the action of an open and transparent government. This is the action of a government that wants to be secretive and do secret deals. I repeat my acceptance. I am happy to work with good Queenslanders to make sure the right decisions are made for the Mary Valley and that no secret, preferential deals happen. If I can be involved and do the right thing, I look forward to being involved.

Mary Valley Tenant Purchase Scheme

 **Mr GIBSON** (Gympie—LNP) (6.58 pm): It is a pleasure to rise after the ranting of the member for Nicklin, to set the facts straight. The member for Nicklin has clearly displayed to this House a level of ignorance that is very rarely seen by any sitting member of parliament. I can only assume that the member for Nicklin has been engaged in other activities, rather than trying to find out the facts. He comes to this House, a chamber of debate, but does he present any evidence to support his claims that sweetheart deals would be done? No! He goes on to social media to expand those claims and to say that they are sweetheart deals with LNP mates, but does he provide any evidence? No!

I say to this House that when you rise in this chamber to make allegations, you had better be willing to put up or you should shut up, because we have processes in this state. We have a CMC to which he can refer any of those allegations of sweetheart deals. If any member fails to do so, they should be held accountable for abusing the privileges that are extended to them within this House.

The member for Nicklin, within his rant—and this afternoon it was nothing more than that—made a series of very damning allegations about the people of the Mary Valley. He accused them of being greedy. He said, ‘They could not get to the solicitor quick enough to accept the offer.’ How dare he, when the people of the Mary Valley were kicked in the guts by a Labor government—a Labor government that was put in place by the member for Nicklin. Let us never forget that.

Mr WELLINGTON: I rise to a point of order. The member is misleading the House. The words are untrue and offensive. I ask that they be withdrawn.

Honourable members interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order, members! Under the standing orders, the member can request any matter that they find offensive to be withdrawn. I ask the member for Gympie to withdraw.

Mr GIBSON: I withdraw. The member for Nicklin further insulted the people of the Mary Valley by saying, ‘Then they were able to enter into long-term leases at peppercorn rents ...’. Clearly, the member for Nicklin has not done his homework. Clearly, the member for Nicklin has not spoken to people in the Mary Valley. If he had, he would know that there are no peppercorn rents. The previous Labor government established a stage 1 lease that was set at \$1,000 per annum, they set a stage 2 lease at 25 per cent of market value and all other leases were at commercial values.

The member for Nicklin should put up or shut up. He should stop attacking the people of the Mary Valley. If he believes that sweetheart deals were done, it is because of the sweetheart deal that was put in place to establish a Labor government, with the support of the member for Nicklin. That is the sweetheart deal that has resulted in Queensland facing the debt that we face today. That is the sweetheart deal—

Mr WELLINGTON: I find those comments offensive and untrue, and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Honourable members interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order, members! Under standing orders, members can request anything they find offensive to be withdrawn. I ask the member for Gympie to withdraw any comments that were found to be offensive.

Mr GIBSON: Those elements that he found offensive I withdraw; the facts will speak for the rest.

Mr WELLINGTON: Madam Speaker, with respect, that is not an unequivocal withdrawal. I ask that the total matter be withdrawn unequivocally.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Nicklin, resume your seat. The member for Gympie will withdraw anything that is found offensive. Under the standing orders, that is the only thing that can be withdrawn. With respect, member for Nicklin, there was a lot of noise going on in the chamber. Member for Gympie, did you withdraw that comment?

Mr GIBSON: I am happy to withdraw anything that was found offensive.

Madam SPEAKER: The time for the adjournment debate has expired. The question is that the House do now adjourn.

Mr Wellington: You are a disgrace.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! I now warn the member for Nicklin under standing order 253A.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 7.03 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Barton, Bates, Bennett, Berry, Bleijie, Boothman, Byrne, Cavallucci, Choat, Costigan, Cox, Crandon, Cripps, Crisafulli, Cunningham, Davies, C. Davis, T. Davis, Dempsey, Dickson, Dillaway, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, France, Frecklington, Gibson, Grant, Grimwade, Gulley, Hart, Hathaway, Hobbs, Holswich, Hopper, Johnson, Judge, Katter, Kaye, Kempton, King, Knuth, Krause, Langbroek, Latter, Maddern, Malone, Mander, McArdle, McVeigh, Menkens, Millard, Miller, Minnikin, Molhoek, Mulherin, Newman, Nicholls, Ostapovitch, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Powell, Pucci, Rice, Rickuss, Robinson, Ruthenberg, Scott, Seeney, Shorten, Shuttleworth, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Symes, Trad, Trout, Walker, Watts, Wellington, Woodforth, Young