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FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT

Wednesday, 12 February 2014

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WEDNESDAY, 12 FEBRUARY 2014

The Legislative Assembly met at 2.00 pm.

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

PRIVILEGE

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


 **Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, the Attorney-General wrote to me on 5 December 2013 alleging that the Leader of the Opposition misled the House in remarks made on 15 October 2013. I wrote to the Leader of the Opposition seeking further information. Members who wish to raise a matter of privilege are required under standing order 269(2) to write to the Speaker at the earliest opportunity if they wish to raise a matter of privilege, and I reminded the House of this requirement on 11 September 2012. In this instance, there has been a delay of 52 days between the statements being made in the House and a complaint about those statements being raised. The delay appears unreasonable and is not consistent with the requirements of standing orders. I will not be referring this matter to the Ethics Committee. I table the correspondence.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 5 December 2013, from the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Hon. Jarrod Bleijie to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Hon. Fiona Simpson, regarding remarks in the Legislative Assembly by the Leader of the Opposition on 15 October 2013 [4497].

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 17 December 2013, from the Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Annastacia Palaszczuk MP, to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Hon. Fiona Simpson, in response to letter concerning matters raised in the Attorney-General's letter dated 5 December 2013 [4478].

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Tabled Documents, Hard Copies

 **Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, in accordance with standing order 24, the Committee of the Legislative Assembly determines the quantity of hard copies of tabled documents to be supplied to the Clerk. Such copies are then available for distribution to members and the public upon request. Details of the quantities to be supplied are published on the parliament's website. An electronic copy of all documents tabled is also required for publication on the tabled papers database.


On 15 October 2013 the Attorney-General introduced the Criminal Law (Criminal Organisations Disruption) Amendment Bill. The bill was one of three introduced and declared urgent to be passed in the same week's sitting. Following debate of the urgency motion, the member for Nicklin raised a matter of privilege that a copy of the Criminal Law (Criminal Organisations Disruption) Amendment Bill had not been made available to non-government members in the chamber. The Clerk has advised me that the full quantity of bills to be supplied, as determined by the CLA, had not been delivered to the Table Office at the time of the bill's introduction, which led to some members not being able to be provided with a copy immediately after the bill was tabled. I understand that the full quantity was delivered within an hour after the bill's introduction. I was also advised that the bill was available online soon after its introduction.

On 17 October 2013 I wrote to the Attorney-General regarding this matter. The Attorney-General replied on 27 November 2013. I table a copy of the response. In his response the Attorney-General explains the reason for the initial undersupply of bills and states it was an extraordinary circumstance which he believes will not be repeated. I take this occasion to remind members of the importance of the provision determined by the CLA.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 27 November 2013, from the Attorney-General, Hon. Jarrod Bleijie, to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Hon. Fiona Simpson, regarding a complaint by the member for Nicklin about a number of hard copies of the Criminal Law (Criminal Organisations Disruption) Amendment Bill 2013 [4479].

PRIVILEGE

Speaker's Ruling, Referral to Ethics Committee

 **Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, schedule 2 of standing orders provides for the establishment of registers of interest for members and related persons. Section 18 of schedule 2 provides that a member who knowingly failed to comply with the schedule commits a contempt. In accordance with section 14 of schedule 2, when a complaint by a member against another member for failing to declare an interest is made with the Clerk, the Clerk must refer the matter to the Ethics Committee. Standing order 260 also provides for additional ad hoc disclosures when matters concerning a member or related person are debated or decided in the House, when the interest of the member is over and above that of other members—that is, in certain circumstances the declaration by the member on the register of interests is not sufficient and further declarations are required. There are no previous decisions by the Ethics Committee on standing order 260 but, consistent with the obligation in schedule 2, it would appear that a member who knowingly failed to comply with standing order 260 would also commit a contempt.

On 8 January 2014 I received a formal complaint by the Attorney-General that the member for South Brisbane had failed to declare an interest in the House as required by standing order 260. The member for South Brisbane arguably has an interest in a trust that in turn has an interest in a legal firm that operates in the area of employment law, including acting for employers, insurers and self-insurers. The member has disclosed this interest as required by schedule 2 of standing orders on her register of interests. The Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 was debated and passed in this House on 17 October 2013. The bill affected the state's workers compensation scheme, in which arguably the member for South Brisbane had an indirect pecuniary interest. On 19 November 2013 the Attorney-General, in responses to questions in question time, noted the failure by the member to declare her pecuniary interest when voting on the bill. In response, on 20 November 2013 the member made a personal explanation in the House denying any deliberate attempt to avoid disclosure but essentially alleging ignorance of the relevant requirement in standing orders.

I note that in this instance the member arguably has an interest that should have been declared. The real issue is whether the member knowingly failed to declare the interest. I note that the member has done the correct thing in making an early personal explanation and an apology. However, the importance of the issue of declarations of pecuniary interest, whether via the requirements of the register or other ad hoc requirements, needs to be treated seriously and consistently. Accordingly, I have decided to refer the matter to the Ethics Committee. I am certain that the committee will consider the member's explanation and apology.

PETITIONS

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

Eagleby, Bus Service

Mr Crandon, from 328 petitioners, requesting the House to reconsider the decision and extend existing bus services in the Eagleby area. [\[4481\]](#)

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

Wamuran State School, Flashing Lights

Hon. Powell, from 244 petitioners, requesting the House to prioritise the installation of school flashing lights at Wamuran State School [\[4482, 4483\]](#).

Elimbah State School, Flashing Lights

Hon. Powell, from 711 petitioners, requesting the House to prioritise the installation of school flashing lights at Elimbah State School [\[4484, 4485\]](#).

Maleny State School, Flashing Lights

Hon. Powell, from 72 petitioners, requesting the House to prioritise the installation of school flashing lights at Maleny State School [\[4486, 4487\]](#).

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

Woodford State School, Flashing Lights

Hon. Powell, from 54 petitioners, requesting the House to prioritise the installation of school flashing lights at Woodford State School [\[4488\]](#).

Petitions received.

TABLED PAPER

MEMBER'S PAPER TABLED BY THE CLERK


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

Member for Woodridge (Mrs Scott)—

[4480](#) Non-conforming petition relating to the installation of steel security fencing at Marsden State School


MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Chinese New Year

 **Hon. CKT NEWMAN** (Ashgrove—LNP) (Premier) (2.09 pm): I am pleased to be hosting a reception here at Parliament House tonight to celebrate Chinese New Year and to welcome the Year of the Horse. The Chinese horoscopes predicts that the Year of the Horse will be a fast paced year of ideas, growth and innovation. I agree. Since 2014 is the wood horse, the wood element is about reaching onwards and upwards and planning ahead—something the Australian Labor Party should think about occasionally.

China's long-term commitment to Queensland is far reaching and as we celebrate this Chinese New Year I wish to thank our Chinese community for their valuable contribution to strengthening our ties with China and, indeed, the Mandarin speaking world. Here's to a prosperous Year of the Horse—a year filled with new ideas, innovation and growth. As they say in Cantonese, kung hei fat choy! or in Mandarin, gong xi fa cai! Happy Year of the Horse.

Queensland Motion Analysis Centre


 **Hon. CKT NEWMAN** (Ashgrove—LNP) (Premier) (2.10 pm): I am pleased to advise the House today that Minister Springborg and I have officially opened the Queensland Motion Analysis Centre—or QMAC—at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital. The new centre is the first 3D motion analysis centre in Australia and is designed to dramatically improve the lifestyle of patients with mobility issues. Burns patients, stroke victims, patients with neurological disorders and those with other mobility problems now have access to this world-class technology to improve diagnosis, treatment and monitoring. The team uses technology initially developed, interestingly, by the computer gaming industry and the creative world of special effects—film special effects—to make a real difference to the quality of life for patients. The technology develops a far more detailed and precise 3D analysis of a patient's walk, gait and muscle movements. It allows doctors to view a patient's mobility from all angles and pinpoint which muscles are and are not performing properly.

Previously, only a 2D analysis was available, sometimes leading to misdiagnoses and unsuitable treatment plans for patients. This new technology is changing lives. It is helping people to get up out of wheelchairs and learn to walk again. It will be very interesting to see that happening. It will also decrease the number of surgery interventions required for patients with mobility issues, not only providing better patient outcomes but also providing significant cost savings for the health system. The team at the centre is also looking to use the technology to create a world-first 3D model specifically to treat mobility issues in babies.

The Queensland government, through the Metro North Hospital and Health Service, has funded just over half of the \$900,000 for this valuable project. The Queensland Motion Analysis Centre delivers on two of the four principal themes outlined in our government's Blueprint for better healthcare in Queensland: firstly, health services focused on patients and people and, secondly, investing, innovating and planning for the future. I would like to congratulate Dr Robyn Grote and the team at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital as well as the board of the Metro North Hospital and Health Service for this excellent initiative.

As I have said before, this government is committed totally to having the best free public hospital and healthcare system in the nation. I am delighted that Queensland is leading Australia and the world in delivering a better quality of life for those with mobility issues.

1 William Street

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade) (2.13 pm): One William Street will provide many of Queensland's dedicated public servants with an up-to-date and modern work environment. It will open an underutilised part of the Brisbane CBD up to investment

and will employ over 1,000 people during construction. I would like address a number of claims made by the opposition, particularly the claim that 1 William Street will come at a cost to taxpayers of \$2.6 billion. These claims are misleading at least and border on outright deception. They assume that the government currently pays no rent to house public servants in Brisbane. That is absolutely ridiculous.

For the benefit of the House and all Queenslanders, these are the facts: 1 William Street is being developed at a cost of \$652 million, funded entirely by CBUS at no capital cost to Queensland taxpayers. The rent payable for the 15-year lease is \$1.14 billion. This is an annual cost per workstation of under \$9,000. By comparison, workstations in the Executive Building come at a cost of \$15,000 per year and at 80 George Street of almost \$14,000 per year. One William Street will deliver a saving of up to 25 per cent per workstation. If 1 William Street did not proceed, the cost of continuing to house public servants in their existing run-down accommodation over 15 years is in the order of \$1.2 billion, which is more than the cost to lease 1 William Street. The Executive Building would need an extra \$100 million over the next 15 years simply to keep it up to its current poor standard.

What the opposition does not tell us is that the government plans to lease 15,000 square metres of space in 1 William Street to the private sector. The opposition conveniently forgot to include the rent revenue in its calculations. This revenue, estimated to be in the order of \$200 million over 15 years, will reduce the rent even more, bringing it down from \$1.14 billion to \$940 million over 15 years. That is a total saving of \$260 million from the existing status quo in the tired, worn-out, run-down buildings.

I turn now to the QIC transaction. The sale of government buildings for \$562 million was done to avoid future capital costs and reduce the state's debt. The proceeds were used to pay down Labor's debt—how much is it? Eighty billion dollars, \$4 billion a year in interest, \$450,000 an hour in interest—and reduce the debt, saving \$130 million in interest. And future capital costs of \$340 million over 15 years were avoided.

Much has been made of the state valuations of the buildings, but those valuations were based on book value and assumed long-term state government leases for all buildings. They assumed that they would be there for 15 years. That is not the case. Some of those leases were expiring in just four years time. Lease terms ranged from four to 15 years. This resulted in the book value—that is the 15-year term—being an inflated book value. The book value is not a cash value and, therefore, does not affect the deficit.


Opposition members interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: And importantly, if they did listen, they would understand that then we would not have had the \$80 billion problem in the first place. The departments were already paying rent for their offices and they continue to do so. There has been no change.

So instead of the fanciful and confected claims of those opposite, this is what we have achieved: rent for 1 William Street being \$260 million lower than would otherwise be the case and new offices for our hardworking public servants that will also be maintained to a high standard. They will not be allowed to degrade, as they were under Labor. There will be \$340 million in savings from no longer having to spend capital in maintaining a group of buildings whose average age is 30 years old, the oldest being 48 years old. That was good enough for them. There is \$130 million in interest savings on Labor's debt; \$60 million in savings per year across the government's workplace footprint by bringing it down to a manageable size; 1,000 new construction jobs, which they do not want; and over \$7 billion in further economic benefits for Brisbane and the state by opening up the Queens Wharf development and the facilitation of the Brisbane underground project. That is what 1 William Street and the Queens Wharf precinct is doing. It is not what those opposite could do or would do, even if they had the chance.

When we hear the opposition members claiming that 1 William Street is costing \$2.6 billion, what they have done is misrepresent the numbers and add up—albeit poorly, using the crayons—future expenditure over a 15-year period, which they too would have incurred. They could not have done it any differently, because they already had them signed up. This is the same type of accounting—or pretend accounting—that led them to rack up \$80 billion in debt and drive the state into a decade of deficits. This government is once again cleaning up the mess left by those members opposite while also delivering economic benefits for our great state with great opportunities.

Department of Justice and Attorney-General

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (2.18 pm): This government is working hard to make Queensland a safer place, reduce unnecessary red tape for Queenslanders and increase access to justice through the granting of funding assistance to important front-line services. I would like to take the opportunity to inform the House of some of the commitments that have been delivered within the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and also to talk about the great opportunities presented to us in 2014.

In the area of crime and youth justice, the government has cracked down on members of organised crime groups through the Newman government's tough criminal laws. We have introduced mandatory life imprisonment for repeat child sex offenders with a minimum non-parole period of 20 years—that is our two-strike policy. We have passed tough new drug offender laws and introduced the youth boot camp trials in four locations. We recently introduced amendments to the youth justice legislation to make sure young people take responsibility for their actions but also to make sure that we put a new direction in the path of these young people so that they do not want to commit crimes against persons or property in this state. In the coming months the government will be releasing our blueprint for the future of youth justice to transform Queensland's youth justice system into one that leads the nation. We have also announced that Queensland's sex offender laws will be reviewed, focusing on the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act. I will also be introducing a tough new mandatory penalty for sex offenders who tamper with their GPS tracking devices.

As part of the government's commitment to improve access to justice and to revitalise front-line services for all Queenslanders, we have provided support to a number of organisations that deliver vital services in our community. An additional \$2 million over four years has been allocated to organisations that support victims of crime. This is about putting the victims first. I am talking about organisations like Bravehearts. We have also allocated an additional \$750,000 over three years to the Women's Legal Service which has just introduced the Rural Women's Legal Service Hotline where rural women can now get free legal advice from the Women's Legal Service. We have also introduced JP reforms. We have refocused Justices of the Peace in Queensland and I can assure members that the thousands of JPs that I have seen across the state in the last 12 months to two years are appreciative of the fact that we have put them in the courtrooms deciding matters of justice.

In terms of reducing unnecessary red tape for Queenslanders, I am glad to say that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General is leading the way in this state. We have amended the workers compensation scheme to ensure that we have the best scheme in Australia in terms of workers and employers. We have reduced red tape for community clubs in terms of liquor licensing laws in the state. The Treasurer did not hear my statement before so I will repeat it: the Department of Justice and Attorney-General has been the leading department in terms of red-tape reduction in this great state of Queensland. We have moved to stamp out unlawful industrial action and we have returned the rule of law to construction sites by establishing the Building and Construction Compliance Branch. We have introduced accountability measures for industrial organisations. We did that 12 months ago. It is time that we reflect on that in terms of an impending royal commission.

We have reduced red tape for business in Queensland by slashing directors' liability from over \$3,800 to less than \$100—real red-tape reduction. We have removed 44 barriers for tourism businesses in this state and introduced four bills to split the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000 which contains dozens of red-tape reductions. A few nights ago the honourable Premier and I attended an REIQ dinner. To understand the REIQ's appreciation and enthusiasm for our reforms one only had to attend that dinner. There was great representation from around the state. The Premier made a speech and talked about the forms we are getting rid of for real estate agents.


Finally, last year this government engaged the Queensland University of Technology to conduct a review of property law within the state of Queensland. Today I am pleased to announce the release of the first two issues papers for public consultation. Issues paper 1 examines current seller disclosure requirements and issues paper 2 deals with the complex issues concerning the setting and adjustment of contribution schedule lot entitlements under the Body Corporate and Community Management Act. The Gold Coast members will be very pleased about that. Two further papers will be released for consultation in the second half of 2014. Issues paper 3 will seek industry and community feedback on issues concerning the Property Law Act, while issues paper 4 will be about body corporate governance issues under the body corporate legislation. Today's announcement further demonstrates the government's commitment to delivering real improvements for Queensland's property and construction industries.

On that note I table the Queensland Government Property Law Review Issues Paper 1: Seller disclosure in Queensland, and I also table the Queensland Government Property Law Review Issues Paper 2: Lot entitlements under the Body Corporate and Community Management Act 1997. This is going to be a great year for Queenslanders where everything comes together and it will be the same for the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

Tabled paper: Commercial and Property Law Research Centre: Queensland Government Property Law Review Issues Paper 1—*Seller Disclosure in Queensland*, February 2014 [4489].

Tabled paper: Commercial and Property Law Research Centre: Queensland Government Property Law Review Issues Paper 2—*Lot entitlements under the Body Corporate and Community Management Act 1997*, February 2014 [4490].


Tourism

 **Hon. JA STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games) (2.24 pm): In 2014 the Department of Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games, in partnership with tourism operators and small businesses around this great state, will build upon the solid foundations that we have laid since March 2012 when the Newman government recognised tourism as one of the four pillars of our state's economy. We are already witnessing the positive signs such as a \$1 billion boost to our economy from tourism between September 2012 and 2013—an increase, I say, of \$1 billion. This year the accelerator will be flat to the floor in pursuit of our ambitious yet highly achievable goals to double overnight visitor expenditure from \$15 billion to \$30 billion by 2020.

2014 started with a bumper summer tourism period. We will harness this energy as we continue to grow the industry, provide jobs and create wealth for the Queensland economy. We will further strengthen domestic tourism numbers and aggressively market to existing, new and emerging international destinations. Our whole-of-government approach under the DestinationQ strategy has flourished. The DestinationQ forums commenced in 2012 and have become Queensland's premier industry and government annual event and are envied by other states. The Sunshine Coast will be the location for this year's event. Forum outcomes have contributed enormously to the government's legislative agenda so proudly espoused by the Attorney-General and significant red-tape reduction commitments which have removed prohibitive restrictions to investment, infrastructure, ecotourism projects, hospitality venues and countless regulations imposed on small business.

Queensland's 13 regional tourism organisations spread right across the state are busy collecting gems of ideas, assessing future needs and identifying hero experiences for inclusion in their destination tourism plans to guide tourism well into the future. Our distinct, unique marketing campaigns, with a real 'wow' factor and authentic flavour, have excited the industry and, more importantly, tourists to rediscover Queensland's many attractions. Next week the government's 20-year tourism plan, Destination Success, will be launched. The Tourism Investment Attraction Unit continues to garner interest from developers and investors across the globe and the Aviation Attraction Investment Fund is an added incentive to bring new and expanded air services. Our events have hit the ground running for 2014. We have experienced a blockbuster Brisbane International tennis tournament and we have a smorgasbord of spectacular events lined up throughout the year. Following the Glasgow Commonwealth Games later this year, 23 July to 23 August, all eyes will be on Queensland and the Gold Coast as 2014 marks four years until the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games. Our Commonwealth Games Legacy Strategy, Embracing 2018, was released in January. Planning is on schedule and our budget is on track. None of this has happened by chance. It is the result of this government's commitment to tourism and its genuine partnership with industry.

Energy Costs

 **Hon. MF McARDLE** (Caloundra—LNP) (Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (2.27 pm): My absolute imperative as the Minister for Energy and Water Supply is to put downward pressure on the cost of electricity and water for all Queenslanders. Since it was elected, this is exactly what the Newman government has done. We promised to freeze tariff 11 for 12 months. We did it. We then closed the 44-cent solar bonus scheme to new participants limiting the impact on power bills, saving Queenslanders \$300 million. Ergon, Energex and Powerlink have saved more than \$3 billion by stopping the gold plating of poles and wires meaning less pressure on our power bills. While these immediate changes were being made, we were working with experts to develop the largest ever reforms to the Queensland electricity industry to be rolled out over the next 18 months.

In South-East Queensland we have put real downward pressure on water bills so they are lower than they would have been under Labor. We said we would deliver the one-off \$80 water rebate in South-East Queensland and we did it. We merged Labor's bureaucratic web of bulk water businesses into the new Seqwater. Along with abolishing the Queensland Water Commission, these changes have saved more than \$80 million.

That was added to the savings from mothballing the disastrous \$2.6 billion western corridor recycled water project and putting the \$1.2 billion desalination plant into hot standby mode. This meant the bulk water price for the average household in South-East Queensland was reduced from about \$88 to \$49. However, we have not finished there. This government has a major electricity reform agenda to be rolled out over the next 18 months. We are changing the way the industry works so that it works better for all Queenslanders. We are changing the way electricity is billed so you can choose different plans that better suit your needs and the way you use electricity. We will increase competition in South-East Queensland through price monitoring and look at retail competition in the Ergon sector. This will come with improved consumer protections and a safety net to make sure that Queenslanders are getting a fair deal.

Madam SPEAKER: I ask the minister to wrap up, please.


Mr McARDLE: This is the Newman government's plan for the year ahead and there is more. The Newman government is committed to putting downward pressure on power and water prices. We are doing this for one reason, which is that we believe Queensland is a great state with great opportunity.

ABSENCE OF MINISTER

Mr STEVENS (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Leader of the House) (2.30 pm): I wish to advise the House that the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services will be absent from the House today. Minister Dempsey is absent for personal reasons, as he is attending the funeral of a family member.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Judicial Inquiry

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (2.30 pm): My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier immediately establish an independent public judicial inquiry into the legal brief scandal that is currently engulfing his government?

Mr NEWMAN: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question, the subject of which has been in the media this morning. I do not know the gentleman concerned. I have never met him. I do not think that until today I have ever had a conversation about him with anybody, so I really do not know what the Leader of the Opposition is on about. It says to me that after two years this highly resourced opposition, with its 22 staff, is at the point where it needs to focus on developing some policy. They are an opposition with absolutely no position on anything, no policies—

Ms Palaszczuk: Alcohol fuelled violence. You haven't reacted.

Mr NEWMAN: Alcohol and drugs! I take the interjection. I withdraw unreservedly what I just said. They have one policy, or is it two policies? The policy they have released showed a completely arrogant disdain, particularly for the young in our community, and indeed for anybody. What did they do? After two years and with 22 staff, the Leader of the Opposition and her colleagues failed to listen. To score cheap political points, they went out and, with a knee-jerk reaction, they said they would do things such as cut trading hours. That was something that they had the opportunity to do when in government only two short years ago. Alcohol and drug fuelled violence has been an issue in the community going back over the past decade. There were a number of concerns and flare-ups on this issue. The Leader of the Opposition and some of her colleagues were in cabinet, but did they reduce trading hours when in government? Alas, no, they did not. They had a recommendation from some learned people around town, but they did not do it. They do not listen, they do not consult and they have knee-jerk reactions. That is policy No. 1 after two years.

I suppose, in a way, they actually have announced another policy. They like the VLAD laws. They voted for the laws against criminal gangs. Clearly they must support them because they voted for them. The jig is up: they actually support them staying. They will not get rid of them. The member for Bundamba might want to tell the truth on her Facebook page. She might want to tell people that

the laws are staying, that they voted for them. At least we have seen one little bit of consistency, if I can call it that. It is time to get onto the big issues. One or two policies after two years ain't going to cut the mustard. If they want to be a proper opposition, they should get to work.

Legal Brief, Keim, Mr S

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have a very serious question for the Attorney-General. Did the Attorney-General or any of his staff have any discussions or any form of communication with the director-general of JAG or the Crown Solicitor last year regarding the allocation and then the retrieval of a legal brief to barrister Stephen Keim SC?

Mr BLEIJIE: I am pleased to be able to answer the question. The answer is no. Following on from that, it is completely a matter for the department. I am pleased to advise the House that this morning the director-general, Mr John Sosso, issued a media statement detailing the events that the opposition makes allegations about. He satisfactorily deals with that.

Tabled paper. Media release, dated 12 February 2014, by the Director-General of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General titled 'Statement from Mr John Sosso, Director-General, Department of Justice and Attorney-General on media reports regarding briefing of Senior Counsel' [4491].

I find it interesting that, in the question to the honourable Premier and the following question to me, the Leader of the Opposition talks about a judicial inquiry. I know a little bit about judicial inquiries, because since we have been in office this government has set up a few royal commissions. Members will recall that the first commission of inquiry we set up was the Carmody Child Protection Commission of Inquiry. Why? Because in the past 18 to 20 years, Labor governments had failed to address the significant issues of child protection in the state of Queensland. We set up the inquiry and now we have a road map for the future of child protection in the state. Guess what? Children will be better protected. I am a father of three beautiful children. It is our duty and responsibility to do everything we can to make sure that we make this state the safest place to raise a child and the safest place for children to live.

The second inquiry that we set up was the health payroll inquiry. I find it interesting that following a *Lateline* story last night the opposition leader is now all about inquiries, but they did not want the Carmody commission of inquiry into child protection and they did not want the health payroll commission of inquiry. Members may recall that they tried to hide the documentation from that inquiry. Of course, then we have had the racing inquiry. Oh boy, did they not want the racing inquiry! Labor power broker Bill Ludwig had serious adverse findings made against him. They did not want that inquiry. They are very selective in terms of the inquisitions that they want.

The federal government is now looking at a royal commission into union corruption and construction corruption in Australia. Bill Shorten and the Labor Party do not want an inquiry into that, but they want a judicial inquiry on this issue because it appeared in the media this morning. But racing? No, that's just water under the bridge! Child protection? Don't worry about the kiddies; don't have an inquiry on that one. Health? Don't worry about the \$2 billion wasted by the Labor Party, don't have a health inquiry and don't get to the bottom of that.

We have inquiries to shine in the light and it is like a good dose of disinfectant. That is why we had a racing inquiry, that is why we had a health commission of inquiry and I suspect that is why Tony Abbott is inquiring into union corruption and building construction corruption in this nation. We will give whatever assistance the federal government requires in terms of that corruption inquiry. I take it with a grain of salt when the Leader of the Opposition stands up here asking for inquiries, because she has had plenty of opportunity to support inquiries in the past two years, but has she? No, she has completely failed the leadership test for any leader of this state. If she wants inquiries, and there have been plenty of inquiries, I would ask her to follow the royal commission into union corruption.

(Time expired)

Redcliffe Youth Space

Mr KAYE: My question without notice is to the Premier. Can the Premier update the House on the decision to donate the fine handed to the former member for Redcliffe to a local community group and how that will benefit the constituents of Redcliffe?

Mr NEWMAN: I am delighted to answer a question that is of relevance and interest to Queenslanders. This government understands the pain and suffering that was inflicted on the local Redcliffe community by the former disgraced member Mr Scott Driscoll. We have always acknowledged that Mr Driscoll let down his community. That is why yesterday the LNP members

voted in an appropriate and reasonable way to give the \$90,000 that Mr Driscoll paid to this parliament back to the local community. I am pleased that, after consideration by the Treasurer, the Speaker and myself, on the advice of Kerri-Anne Dooley, the hardworking LNP candidate, we have indicated that we will give this money to the Redcliffe Youth Space. The Redcliffe Youth Space has a local focus. It is committed to helping young people build relationships, rebuild their lives, find employment and discover their potential. That is what it is about. It is a sanctuary for young people who are trying to cope with drug and alcohol issues, family breakdowns, bullying in the workplace or bullying at school.

Youth Space work alongside other community and youth organisations as well as schools, medical practitioners and government agencies, and have been doing so for the past 11 years. They have been successful and have a proven track record. Indeed some of their programs are duplicated elsewhere around Australia.

It is sad, but I must reflect. Yesterday afternoon in this place this team—the LNP team—voted to provide this money back to the community. The \$90,000 could have sat in consolidated revenue, in the overall government coffers, but we believed the right, proper and indeed just thing to do was to give it back to the Redcliffe community—the community that suffered injury and damage due to Mr Driscoll's actions. But what did the Labor Party do? They had an opportunity for that money to go to that organisation, but they sadly voted against it.

Mr Pitt interjected.

Mr NEWMAN: I will take the interjection. The other parts of the motion were absolutely true and correct. The fact is that the Redcliffe Hospital is performing better today, that we have delivered for the community down there and we do have a hardworking candidate.

Unlike the Labor Party, this government is proud of its track record in supporting the people of Redcliffe. This is a government that means what it says and delivers what it promises. We have a clear and positive plan for Redcliffe. I am confident that if on 22 February the people of Redcliffe choose a fresh start and give us a go and are prepared to forgive what happened down there—and I ask that they do that—that they will have a great, passionate local member who can provide support to hardworking community organisations that actually deliver for Redcliffe residents.

Legal Brief, Keim, Mr S

Ms TRAD: My question without notice is to the Premier. Will the Premier confirm that a former adviser to the Attorney-General benefitted from the dumping of Mr Keim by being appointed junior counsel assisting Mr Traves on the Normanby Hotel noise matter?

Mr NEWMAN: I cannot confirm anything because I do not know anything about these people. I know nothing about the matter.

Opposition members interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Premier, I will just ask you to pause. There are too many interjections on my left. The Premier is answering the question. I call the Premier.

Mr NEWMAN: I do not know Mr Keim. They might know him. I do not know him. I have never met him. I have never heard what he has said. Only today I have heard that he has actually criticised the government. I actually did not know this. I am busy. I am trying to get the economy of this state going. I am trying to work with the health minister to actually get our hospitals performing even better than they are today. They are performing better today than they did two years ago under the Australian Labor Party's inept leadership. I cannot call it leadership, can I? I cannot call it leadership. It was inept.

All they can do this afternoon is do what the Leader of the Opposition and the member for South Brisbane always do which is crawl around into the low drainage portals that service this city. That is what they do. They are down in the pipes that carry all sorts of materials away. That is what they do.

The member for South Brisbane has run smear campaign after smear campaign. That is her middle name. That is what she does. She ran the dishonest Griffith campaign.

Ms TRAD: I rise to a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! What is your point of order?

Ms TRAD: The Premier's comments are personally offensive. I ask that he withdraw them.

Madam SPEAKER: I ask the Premier to withdraw.

Mr NEWMAN: Madam Speaker, I withdraw. But again the record will show that the member for South Brisbane did run the Griffith campaign. Was it an honest campaign? Was it a positive campaign for the Labor Party? No, it was not.

Ms TRAD: I rise to a point of order, Madam Speaker. That was a qualified withdrawal and apology. I ask that he give an unqualified withdrawal.

Madam SPEAKER: Please take your seat. I was listening to the Premier's response. The Premier did withdraw. I call the Premier to return to the substance of the issue that was part of the question.

Mr NEWMAN: Indeed. I am trying to demonstrate for the members of the House and the broader Queensland public that what we have heard in the question is just typical of the member for South Brisbane and the Leader of the Opposition. When are we going to see more policies? We have seen one policy after two years, with 22 staff helping them. They are the opposition with no position.

We have a Leader of the Opposition who thinks that going to a lunch or two with the Labor glitterati today is the way back to government. It is harder than that. They actually have to use those staff to do research. What is their policy on the economy? How would they bolster the four pillars or do they see other pillars as important? What would they do about youth justice? We are having that date right now. How would they deliver relief to the long-suffering residents in Townsville who are putting up with a juvenile crime epidemic—the ongoing stealing of cars? How would they deal with these things?

If they do not like these criminal gang laws—they are going to support them—what is their answer right now for dealing with criminal gangs? They had 20 years in government and criminal gangs flourished. They voted for the laws in this parliament. They say now that they do not like them much but they would keep them if they came into government. I do not know. They are supposedly the alternative government. Let us see them behave like an alternative government and try to win government.

Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning

Mr MALONE: My question is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning. Could the Deputy Premier please highlight how he plans to build on the landmark reforms already delivered in his portfolio of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning by outlining the priorities for 2014?

Mr SEENEY: I thank the member for Mirani for the question. It is the sort of question that we would expect an opposition to be asking as we begin the parliamentary year for 2014. We would expect the opposition to be asking about the government's plans. We would expect the opposition to be asking about what Queenslanders can expect in the year ahead. As the Premier has just extensively outlined, we see none of that from the current opposition. So I appreciate the opportunity given by the member for Mirani to address some of those issues.

The first priority for my department is to implement the economic strategy and action plan that I tabled in the parliament yesterday. It is an extensive document that has taken six months of work across government and that the opposition have not asked any questions about today. That is of no surprise because they have not asked any questions about the government's economic strategy or the challenge of regrowing the Queensland economy for almost two years now.

The focus of my department will be getting Queensland back on track, growing the Queensland economy and stimulating economic growth so that we can address the horrendous financial situation that was left to us by the Labor Party. We will also be completing the regional planning process, especially focusing on the regional plan here in South-East Queensland—a very important initiative to ensure that the regional planning and the town plans of the local authorities here in South-East Queensland allow for the economic growth and facilitate the economic development that is so important for Queensland's recovery and to get Queensland back on track. Equally, the regional plan that is nearing completion or at least well developed for Cape York will be completed in the current year. We will, I hope, see the passage of the legislation that will give those regional plans statutory effect.

We will finalise, for example, the design work for a number of Commonwealth Games venues and let some contracts for some of those important developments. We will focus on the redevelopment of the Queen's wharf project here in the city precinct—a project that has been made possible by 1 William Street that the Treasurer spoke about this afternoon.

These are the things that the government has been pursuing that are now coming to fruition. These are the types of things that will ensure that Queensland does get back on track, that we do rebuild the Queensland economy, that we provide the economic growth and opportunities that Queenslanders will need not just today but for generations to come. That will be coupled with the continued development of our resources industry, our agricultural industry and our tourism industry that the Minister for Tourism has spoken so much about. Growing those four pillars of the economy that we have always recognised are so important to Queensland will be our focus in the year ahead.

Department of Justice and Attorney-General

Mr PITT: My question without notice is to the Premier. Given that the Justice and Attorney-General RTI website has still not been updated with the documents at the heart of this legal scandal, will the Premier table all released documents by the close of business today?

Mr NEWMAN: The question referred to the RTI process. So to start with I advise the honourable member that the way it works is that the applicant makes a request, the applicant gets the documents that they have requested and it is then posted on the website, as I understand it. These processes are handled by departmental officials. That is an important point. Let me just stop for a second. Who used to consider the RTI requests when the Leader of the Opposition was a minister? That is right—political staffers in her own office, ministerial staffers.

Mr Pitt: So your open government policy is failing already.

Mr NEWMAN: I know that the member for Mulgrave does not like to be reminded that, when RTIs went to his office, his politicians used to deal with them. Who knows whether they followed the law. We will never, never know because we have seen time and time again in this place them not wanting to release documents of their government even though it was in the public interest and it was the right thing to do to release those documents. Again, they come in here with the scary music when we know, as usual, that they are just down in those pipes under the ground.

Again, where should they be? Again, I have to give them a little bit of advice this afternoon. Where are your policies, because we have seen precious few of them? Let me tell you this afternoon why they do this, Madam Speaker. It is because this government has been true to what it said it would do. We made five pledges to this state. We said we would revitalise front-line services. There are 676 extra police on the beat today than there were in March 2012. Our hospitals, emergency departments, elective surgery performance and dental waiting lists are all vastly improved. There are more ambulances and fire engines. We are getting on with the job in that department. We said we would get the economy going, a four-pillar economy. We are seeing the lead economic performance of any state—powering ahead of the other states. What's another one? We said we would restore accountability for government. Well, it is again an offence to lie to this parliament and to committees of this parliament. What did they do? They legislated to protect Gordon Nuttall. I could go on.

The point is this: they do not have policies. They are the opposition with no position. We saw the *Courier-Mail* blow the lid off them this morning with this sort of thing and in the editorial. It is time to do the hard work. They have 22 staff. They are a well-resourced opposition. They are as well-resourced as we were when we were previously in opposition. They have to do the work. Queenslanders are demanding now to know what the alternative is. One of the honourable members on the other side said to one of our members yesterday that it is an election year. Well, if it is an election year, it is time to see those policies. And let's hope you listen to Queenslanders, rather than walk over the young of this state like you did last week.

(Time expired)

CEDA Political and Economic Overview Forum

Mr CAVALLUCCI: My question without notice is to the Treasurer and Minister for Trade. Can the Treasurer please update the House on his remarks to the CEDA 2014 Political and Economic Overview forum?

Mr NICHOLLS: It is a pleasure to actually have a question from someone who wants to know about policy development and the future of this great state and what we might do. Today I was fortunate enough to be able to attend the CEDA Political and Economic Overview forum. I outlined to the 250 or so people gathered there what we will be doing, what the Newman government wants to do and the conversation we want to have with Queenslanders as we look to the future.

The future and 2014 will all be about choices, the choices we have to make if we are to see this great state grow and prosper. As I said in the House yesterday, Queensland is on the cusp of strong economic growth, but we are being held back by the \$80 billion of debt that those opposite left as their legacy. The analogy is this: Queensland is like a family that has overcommitted on the mortgage, maxed out the credit cards but still needs to find a way to renovate the house because the family is getting bigger and educate the children. We face choices about the sort of future we want, the infrastructure and services we think are essential and what we need to do in order to be able to afford them.

The government has reined in its expenses, with expenses growth down to 0.2 per cent in 2012-13 compared to the decade-long average of nine per cent under Labor—twice the rate of revenue growth. But the almost \$4 billion a year we are paying in interest is dead money. More than \$450,000 an hour is going into the pockets of bankers. It is not going into roads or hospitals or schools. It is not going where a growing state on the cusp of a great future needs that money to go, and it is not going there because of the Labor debt legacy.

So our choices as a state government are limited. We can do what Labor always wants to do and what the shadow Treasurer, the member for Mulgrave, wrote about in his myth busters fact sheet: we can increase taxes, fees and charges. We can do what happened under the former government and reduce services and see waiting times in hospitals blow out, ambulance ramping, no attention given to the dental waiting lists, people not getting cochlear implants and school education standards falling, or we can have a conversation about selling or leasing government owned businesses. We want to listen to what Queenslanders have to say about these options. The Premier and I will be consulting widely, talking to Queenslanders across the length and breadth of the state.

Mr Pitt interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: I hear the member for Mulgrave talk about consulting. Coming from those opposite, consultation is nothing. We want Queenslanders to talk to us in a mature and sensible way, not the shrill screams from those opposite. We want to have a proper debate, and with Queenslanders' input we will make a careful and disciplined decision to make sure Queensland remains a great state with great opportunity.

(Time expired)

Crown Solicitor, Overruling of Decision

Dr DOUGLAS: My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier confirm that the act of a director-general overruling the decision of the Crown Solicitor, as stated by retired Supreme Court Justice Mr James Thomas, 'doesn't really look like best practice'? I table the quote.

Tabled paper: Article from ABC News, dated 11 February 2014, titled 'Senior barrister had Qld Government brief stripped days after criticism of LNP policies' [[4492](#)].

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gaven, I am going to ask you to repeat the question. I did not grab it all. Please speak clearly.

Dr DOUGLAS: Thanks, Madam Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier confirm that the act of a director-general overruling the decision of the Crown Solicitor, as stated by retired Supreme Court Justice Mr James Thomas, 'doesn't really look like best practice'?

Speaker's Ruling, Question Out of Order

Madam SPEAKER: Member, I have listened to your question. You are asking for an opinion which is contrary to the standing orders, and I rule it out of order.

Senior Medical Officers

Mr DAVIES: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. I refer the minister to yesterday's Auditor-General's report into Labor's scheme to pay senior medical officers, and I ask: is the minister aware that Mr Alex Scott of Together union, whose union oversaw and sanctioned the scheme, yesterday said that the then Labor government was 'trying to rip off the federal government in relation to Medicare billing'?

Mr SPRINGBORG: I thank the honourable member for the question. As the honourable member would have noticed, and indeed I noticed, this was a rather interesting, intriguing and somewhat instructive do-tell statement from Mr Alex Scott, who has been obviously around the union movement in Queensland for a long time. His current position is general secretary of Together and before that I think the state services union. He was on radio yesterday making a whole range of really interesting statements. Firstly, when this was raised last year he was saying he knew nothing about it. Indeed, that was the defence which was being adopted yesterday by the opposition spokesman for Health, who said that she knew nothing about it as well despite the fact that she was standing side by side, hip to hip, shoulder to shoulder and hand in hand with Gordon Nuttall as they introduced this scheme.

How do we know this to be the case? Because there was an established private practice oversight committee on which the government, through the department, had representatives and Alex Scott confirmed his involvement on that committee in November 2008. The specific purpose of that was to oversee the effectiveness and the accountability of the administrative arrangements. Indeed, what we see from Mr Scott is a really interesting position. He has known as far back as 2008 or possibly even earlier that this particular scheme was constructed by the member for Bundamba and the former health minister in Queensland to rip off the Medicare system in Australia. That is what he said yesterday and that is the very clear imputation.

I think it would be very interesting, as I send this information when established to the new royal commission on union corruption, to see what sort of involvement we have between the union movement and the Labor Party over what is clearly admitted on behalf of Mr Scott a direct criminal activity or something which is unethical or contravenes the Health Insurance Commission guidelines federally.

What other interesting things did he say yesterday? Clearly he no longer believes in the rule of law and natural justice. He has prejudged some 88 clinicians in Queensland. He said that a very small minority—88 hand-picked people who are absolute criminals within the system—should have the full weight of the law against them. They should go to jail. They have not even been convicted yet. They have not even gone to court. Maybe he knows even more. Maybe the honourable member for Bundamba knows a lot more than what she has been letting on because they were informed by KPMG in 2008 that this scheme lost \$115 million in its first year of operation and did nothing about it.

(Time expired)

Senior Medical Officers

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: My question without notice is also to the Minister for Health. Minister, individual contracts proposed for senior medical officers have created uncertainty and concern amongst SMOs. Will the minister review this proposal and its potential impact on health services?

Mr SPRINGBORG: I thank the honourable member for her question regarding the new proposed contract arrangements for clinicians in Queensland. In February last year I, alongside the Premier, quite clearly outlined the government's intention in our Blueprint for Better Health Care on 1 think 26 February last year to move towards contracts for senior clinicians in Queensland. This is absolutely and completely consistent with Julia Gillard's own Fair Work Act, which indicates that senior government employees on over \$129,000 a year should be on contract. Indeed, that is the environment that we are working in.

Following on from that there were discussions with VMOs. We undertook to enter contract negotiations with them which progressed far quicker than ever before and led to Dr Ross Cartmill going out in the community saying there was a document that he felt his members could consider with some degree of confidence. Contrast that to the previous iterations of agreements between the VMO and the Labor Party which did not come in until two or four years after the expiry of the previous agreement.

When it comes to senior medical officers, at the same time the department engaged them in the process of constructing the shell of the new contracts. There was a real dearth of participation from some of the representatives. One of the most vociferous advocates in opposition to this from the Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation of Queensland did not turn up for about 21 of the 23 meetings yet has been out there wailing and carrying on. By contrast, AMAQ under Dr Christian Rowan sat down at the table and negotiated things which, by and large, addressed many of their

concerns. Unfortunately for the AMA in Queensland, there is a hopeless and bitter battle going on between their collectivised arm, which hopes to hold onto the old union collective view, and a more modern arm, which is hoping to move to a new way of delivering health care in Queensland.

I assure the honourable member that the entitlements of doctors are preserved in what has been put forward here. It is an issue of ensuring that we have a transparent, modern and open system which drives better patient outcomes in Queensland. I know that the honourable member would have done this because she researches her matters well, but if she or any honourable member read the Auditor-General's report from last year that clearly showed an \$804 million loss in the right of private practice scheme and the failures of accountability around claiming overtime and a whole range of rostering issues, they would understand why we need the efficiencies of—

(Time expired)

Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

Mr PUCCI: My question without notice is to the Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services. Can the minister please update the House on how the Newman government's reforms in her portfolio are helping Queensland families?

Ms DAVIS: I thank the honourable member for the question. I know that the member for Logan has a great passion and interest in delivering for families in his electorate. As the Premier said yesterday, this year provides an opportunity for Queenslanders as the green shoots that appeared in 2013 grow and start to bear fruit. Before the election we pledged to revitalise front-line services. As minister, I have been committed to improving front-line services across the portfolio through our renewal agenda. This meant looking at the way that we do things and making sure that every ounce of energy, that every action in my portfolio, is dedicated to improving the lives of Queensland families. We have helped families faced with the challenges of caring for a family member with a disability, and the most significant achievement was signing the historic NDIS heads of agreement with the federal government last year, a commitment which we backed with an additional \$868 million to boost services when the scheme commences in 2016.

But it is not just about the money. Late last year I launched the Queensland Disability Plan, a carefully considered and detailed road map of how we would prepare for the transition to the NDIS. That plan brings to life this government's commitment to handing choice and control to people with a disability, their families and their carers. We have already commenced delivering on choice and control through the Your Life Your Choice initiative. I am delighted to inform the House that to date we have 750 people with a disability on the Your Life Your Choice program exercising choice and control with the services that they want.

In Child Safety we have committed to rebuilding Queensland's broken, unsustainable and overburdened child protection system in order to strengthen families. This commitment was underscored by accepting all of the 121 recommendations of the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry. This year will begin our journey on this 10-year road map to strengthen families.

Families are also the focus of the community services part of the portfolio. I look forward to bringing forward the Newman government's blueprint for investment in our social services system in the coming months. This blueprint will be our plan to build the best social services system to support some of Queensland's most vulnerable families.

Last year I introduced the Queensland Youth Strategy. It has been very well received in the youth sector. It is about connecting young people. The renewal programs that we are delivering across my portfolio are making a difference in the lives of families. It is strengthening families, and we will continue to do that.

Acland Coal Project

Mr HOPPER: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, the proposed revised stage 3 new Acland Coal project near Oakey will close roads and school bus routes will be severely affected. Can the minister inform the parliament what the department will do to assist these residents?

Mr EMERSON: I thank the honourable member for the question. As always with these things, as circumstances change we review them and look to see what we can do. In terms of our provision of school bus services, as the member knows, if they meet the criteria we do provide assistance for

students getting to school. We have always done that and we will continue to do that. Those rules have been in place for many years, they have not changed, and we will continue to do that. If circumstances change, we will have a look at it and examine what we can do in terms of that area.

In terms of our services, we have been working very hard on the issue of public transport, as the member is aware. I can point out that since we have come to office we have put on 2,000 additional weekly bus services across the state.

In terms of rail travel, we have achieved an additional 1,000 weekly rail services since we came to office. We have worked very hard to improve the frequency of our services. With rail in particular, we have also worked very hard to improve the reliability of our system. When we came to office, we inherited a three-year low in terms of rail reliability, but since then we have achieved a 10-year high in terms of rail reliability. When I talk to passengers about what they want in terms of public transport, one of the things that is raised repeatedly with me is reliability. Of course, affordability is that other key element of public transport, and we have kept to our election promise to halve Labor's planned fare increases. Labor's sole policy when they were in government was 15 per cent fare increases year after year after year, and we have kept to our election promise and we have halved Labor's planned fare increases.

Given the Redcliffe by-election is coming up, I make the point that, if Labor were in power at the moment, a Monday to Friday commuter who was travelling from Redcliffe to the city would be paying \$850 more a year. That is \$850 more a year for a Monday to Friday commuter travelling from Redcliffe to the city. That was Labor's policy.

Mr Newman: Who was that?

Mr EMERSON: That was under the now Leader of the Opposition, Anastacia Palaszczuk. That was her policy. That was Labor's sole policy—15 per cent fare increases every year. Labor do not like what we are doing because it saves people money and people are paying less than they would have been under them. Those Monday to Friday commuters in Redcliffe would be paying \$850 more a year if Labor were in power. That is what you get with Labor in power. We need to remind the people of Redcliffe that that is what you would get if you put Labor back in. That was their public transport policy—higher fares, less frequent services and less reliability.

Local Government

Mr SORENSEN: My question without notice is to the Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience. Local government really did it tough over the last 20 years under Labor. Can you please inform the House what is in store for the councils in 2014?

Mr CRISAFULLI: I thank the honourable member for the question—a member who is not only a great representative for Hervey Bay but a great friend of local government. His question refers to the dark days of local government. We do not just talk about the natural disasters that have impacted on local councils; indeed, there was the man-made one that went through in 2007 in the form of Peter Beattie and Andrew Fraser that provided huge challenges. We are seeking now to rebuild that relationship, and it is being rebuilt and it is working. We only need to look at the speed at which councils are recovering from natural disasters to know that things are happening.

I have told this place before that, in the case of Bundaberg, we are delivering work four times faster than ever before, and across the state this delivery is being seen on the ground. In the first half of this financial year, for the first time we have delivered two consecutive quarters of a billion dollars worth of flood restoration. That is partly because of the great work of the council and partly because of the great work of places like the Department of Transport and Main Roads, who have hit the ground running. We must continue this effort in 2014. Likewise we must continue working on mitigation. The member for Warrego has been with me as we have delivered projects for Roma and St George but more must follow. It is absolutely essential that we seize the momentum this year to capitalise on what was a very, very dark time for communities with natural disasters.

So what is in store for 2014? It is about relationships, and nowhere is that more evident than in Redcliffe where the mayor of Moreton Bay has clearly said that he does not believe he can work with the Labor candidate, the former member for Petrie. He has said very, very clearly that she was unable to deliver in government so how on earth could she deliver in opposition? This is a member who went AWOL during the local government amalgamations, a member who was nowhere to be seen when the GP superclinic sat as an empty shell, a member who went missing in action when the carbon tax was passed, a member who was the 'D'Ath Evader'.

This election is as much about working with local councils as it is about what sort of person the people of Redcliffe want to choose. Do they want someone standing on the outside looking in, or do they want someone to be a strong voice in a strong government? The year 2014 will be a year where local governments work with this state, where we will deliver the economic recovery and where a partnership will be forged for a generation.

Rural and Remote Communities, Support

Mr KATTER: My question without notice is to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Given the immense burden on rural and remote residents who have been impacted by the rural crisis, will the minister outline all existing support and plans for increased support for counselling that is desperately needed to assist with the wellbeing of these people?

Dr McVEIGH: I thank the member for his question. I acknowledge the impact of drought in his electorate and in many of the western electorates in particular in the state of Queensland at present. As members of this House would be aware, we have a drought condition that is slowly but surely spreading east across the state. We are in fact now in a position where as Minister for Agriculture I recently determined that almost 70 per cent of our state was officially drought declared. So we now have in total 27 local government areas, both full and part local government areas, that are eligible under that declaration for assistance under the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme that the Premier and I have been announcing over almost the last 12 months.

I take the House back to May of last year when the Premier and I were in Richmond to announce the first round of our Drought Relief Assistance Scheme. That included an element of mental health counselling and mental health support, ably assisted by the department of health and my cabinet colleague Minister Lawrence Springborg. A further announcement in Longreach with our colleague the member for Gregory of an extra \$20 million involves community assistance in terms of community hubs for, again, mental health counselling. It is very important that members in the House, including the member for Mount Isa, study those details so that they are in the best position to advise their constituents of the assistance that is rolling out. I am in the process this week of ensuring that all members are aware of those details, and I will be holding a briefing session for members tomorrow morning in that regard.

The Premier and I have been supported by our colleagues, particularly Vaughan Johnson and Howard Hobbs. I must say that they have worked with us side by side in developing this response, and they have contributed to the policy debate and they have challenged me and my department in a very constructive and robust manner to make sure that we are developing the best response possible. The Premier's announcement, supported by me and our colleagues, very much included the commitment to do more if required. That is based on a normal assessment of where we will be in this current wet season, and obviously that assessment, as rural members would realise, will happen in the next month or so. I have been in regular contact with the Minister for Health, Lawrence Springborg, about mental health counselling in particular. I endorse and compliment various agencies including Lifeline for their assistance in that regard. Our support will continue and it will remain for as long as possible.

Newman Government, Agriculture

Mr HOBBS: My question is to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Can the minister provide an update on how the Newman government is providing support for agriculture in 2014? What additional support is needed to assist landholders?

Dr McVEIGH: I thank the member for his question. I have already referred to the great assistance and input that the member for Warrego and members like him have provided in developing not only our agricultural strategy but the priorities involved at the moment in our drought response.

In 2014 we will see great strides in our primary industries as we continue to implement our agriculture strategy to achieve our long-term goal of doubling agricultural production by 2040, but as I have already mentioned, the current challenge is most definitely the fact that we are in the grip of a very serious and persistent drought. The Newman government has been closely monitoring conditions across the state from the outset and, as I have just mentioned in an answer to a previous question, significantly ramped up support for affected farmers, their families and local businesses. I have made it a point to personally visit the worst affected areas from Georgetown in the north to St George in the south and many points in between to see how difficult it is for family enterprises which are slowly being strangled by drought.

We cannot make it rain, but this government is committed to do everything we can to support those producers, as I have previously outlined to the House, particularly those doing it especially tough. Through the announcement that the Premier made alongside Vaughan Johnson and me in Longreach just a few weeks ago, struggling producers now have access to an extra \$20 million to assist with persistent drought conditions. It is a record investment of some \$5 million more at this stage with more to come if necessary over and above the previous record spend in 2007-2008 in the so-called 'millennium drought'. Producers now have access to up to 57 per cent of the eligible costs of water infrastructure, given the state government's 50 per cent rebate announced by the Premier and myself in May of last year and now topped up by a federal government contribution, for which I sincerely thank the federal Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce.

In terms of our agriculture strategy going forward, we are working on the growing agriculture workforce strategy; finalising the report on Queensland's foot and mouth disease preparedness; continuing our inshore net fishery buyback scheme; renewing the Queensland alliance for agriculture and food innovation; and of course developing an all-important interactive tool to help local councillors use the Queensland land audit in their own planning decisions. In 2014 we will build on the key achievements that have already been delivered through the agriculture strategy; we will deal with current challenges; and I look forward to working hand in hand with our agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors in this great state of Queensland.

(Time expired)

Queensland Health, Medical Contracts

Mr WELLINGTON: My question is to the Minister for Health. I refer the minister to his answer to the member for Gladstone's question earlier this afternoon. Will the minister make sure that all state government health and hospital boards have sufficient medical professional indemnity and run-on insurance cover for medical officers signing health and hospital employment contracts with their respective boards?

Mr SPRINGBORG: I thank the honourable member for his question. There are a whole range of issues which have been raised in the context of the new contract arrangements in Queensland. I can inform the honourable member that a lot of it is very much politically and union motivated and has little, if any, foundation. Anyone who has been involved in the process in good faith from day one would clearly understand that.

I think it is important and it is good timing that the honourable minister has asked this question. I can reassure Queensland Health workers that not only will you continue to have the very, very strong arrangements which are currently in place to indemnify you in the case of action being taken in areas where there has not been deliberate neglect on your behalf, but as I understand it there are to be some enhanced provisions which hopefully will pass through this parliament in the not-too-distant future around the area of civil liability which will make it much easier and less duplicating for those Queensland Health employees. It will ensure that they are absolutely protected and indeed, as I understand it, even better protected than they currently are.

Whilst we are waiting and not presuming the passage of such things—because it is another portfolio area and is dependent upon the machinations of this particular place—all of the current protections which exist for Queensland Health employees will carry forward as a part of these contract transitions, I can assure the honourable member of that. There will be—and should be—no concern for Queensland Health employees with regards to that. You can take that back to the constituents who have raised those particular concerns with you.

Indeed, if I can return to this particular theme. I think it is very important to understand the background against which we need to do these sorts of things. Modern, functioning health systems by and large are moving towards having their senior clinicians on contract, and indeed many of these clinicians do not fear contracts whatsoever. They are coming to me saying they cannot understand what this is all about because they have been on contracts previously, they are currently on contracts. Many of them have positions where they work for Queensland Health on a salaried basis and they will work for a private and not-for-profit provider such as Mater Health Services, Wesley, Ramsay, St Andrews, whatever the case may be. So they do not fear that in any way whatsoever. They are very intelligent, able people who are more than capable of negotiating their contracts with their chief executive and their management teams, and I know many of them are looking forward to doing so.

(Time expired)

Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs

Mr LATTER: My question without notice is to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs and Minister Assisting the Premier. Minister, can you please advise the House what the government is doing to ensure that Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from culturally diverse backgrounds are being included in the provision of government services and programs which will enable them to participate fully in the Queensland economy and lifestyle?

Mr ELMES: I thank my good friend the member for Waterford for the question. Implementing policy and programs to benefit Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be easier during 2014, because we now have a government in Canberra which shares this government's belief that the most effective way of addressing historic disadvantage is through economic development. There has been no lack of money which has been committed to Indigenous affairs from all levels of government. What was missing was a determination to see the funding return a dividend of a more cohesive community where people had jobs and economic opportunity, and that is something I have set about changing.

Employment, sustainable enterprise and land tenure reform to provide improved options for home ownership are high on my list as a means for Indigenous people to achieve better outcomes. Those priorities are being addressed through our Indigenous economic participation framework, which was released at the end of last year. An action plan is now being developed from the framework so that we can support Indigenous Queenslanders to achieve the same level of participation in the Queensland economy as non-Indigenous people in workforce participation, employment, careers and business ownership. There are three principal areas: business opportunities like the banana farm at Hope Vale, the joinery at Cherbourg, and the Indigenous run sawmill at Cooktown; Indigenous home ownership, which is beginning to happen in Hope Vale, Palm Island and Yarrabah; and freehold land legislation which will come before the parliament this year following extensive consultation with Indigenous communities.

The other main part of my portfolio responsibilities relate to how we welcome and support migrants and refugees who called Queensland home. Queensland is better socially and stronger economically as a result of the contribution made by migrants over the past century and a half. The new Queensland Cultural Diversity Policy reflects our dedication to provide equality of opportunity for all Queenslanders to participate fully in our strong economy and enjoy our vibrant society. The new policy focuses on improving outcomes in the areas of language independence, education participation, economic independence and community participation through whole-of-government actions. This year we will also see a bigger and better Queensland Multicultural Week to build on the success of last year's inaugural week.

The other portfolio area that I look after is the commencement of commemorative events for the centenary of the First World War, to which the Queensland government has committed \$50 million in funding. Earlier today I announced that applications are now open for the first round of community grants to provide funding for local communities to commemorate the role played by individual citizens or their community as a whole in Australia's First World War effort.

Unemployment

Mr BYRNE: My question is to the Minister for Education, Training and Employment. What support has the minister sought for the thousands of Queensland workers who will face the prospect of losing their jobs as a result of the pending closures of the Ford, Holden and Toyota car plants and the closure of GrainCorp's processing plant in Murarrie?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! I call the Minister for Education, Training and Employment. You have one minute.

Mr LANGBROEK: Mr Deputy Speaker, can I ask the member to repeat it, please? He is referring to factories in other states and I would like to hear the part that is relevant to Queensland and to my portfolio.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Stop the clock, please. Could the member for Rockhampton repeat the question?

Mr BYRNE: What support has the minister sought for the thousands of Queensland workers who will face the prospect of losing their jobs as a result of the pending closures of the Ford, Holden and Toyota car plants and the closure of the GrainCorp processing plant at Murarrie?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I call the minister for 40-something seconds.

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. In relation to the section that actually applies to my portfolio of Employment, we will ensure that we give appropriate support, that we have proper planning and that we have a proper plan for people no matter which field or support industry they are in. I will work closely with other members of the government including the Treasurer, who actually has appropriate responsibilities in these areas, and also the federal government, who have the majority of responsibility for employment in our system. As usual, we have the opposition throwing out questions willy-nilly, bringing in other jurisdictions. That is standard.

(Time expired)

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The time for question time is over.

PUBLIC SERVICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION (CIVIL LIABILITY) AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 19 November 2013 (see p. 3904).

Second Reading



Hon. CKT NEWMAN (Ashgrove—LNP) (Premier) (3.32 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.


It was with pleasure that I introduced the Public Service and Other Legislation (Civil Liability) Amendment Bill to the House in November last year. The bill's purpose is to support our hardworking public servants to perform their roles, to make decisions independently and innovate and improve service delivery without the concern of being sued and the accompanying financial risk by providing enhanced protection from civil liability. The bill does this by amending two pieces of legislation, the Public Service Act 2008 and the Police Service Administration Act 1990, to transfer civil liability for the actions of public servants from the individual to the state. I thank the Finance and Administration Committee for its prompt consideration of the bill. The committee's report was tabled on 3 February 2013 and contained three recommendations. I now table the government's response to these recommendations.

Tabled paper: Finance and Administration Committee: Report No. 37—Public Service and Other Legislation (Civil Liability) Bill 2013, government response [[4493](#)].

I note that the committee made reference in its report to the expected operation of the cost recovery provisions contained in the bill. These provisions allow the state to recover costs from employees where they have been found to have acted other than in good faith and with gross negligence. I acknowledge that this is a fairly high threshold to trigger the recovery provisions and consider that it appropriately aligns with the bill's intent to provide a high level of certainty for public servants. That being said, it is also important to note that, where it is necessary, management action and disciplinary processes can address inappropriate conduct and such action is not subject to the same threshold test. Importantly, the bill also provides for the issue of cost recovery to be ultimately determined by an independent umpire. It is not the individual or a department deciding how much costs should be recovered but a court determining what is just and equitable in the circumstances.

The committee's additional recommendations relate to the implementation of the immunity scheme established by the bill, namely, to review the immunity scheme within five years and for the Public Service Commission to facilitate central collection of data about the implementation of the scheme. The government accepts both of these recommendations.

As I noted when I introduced this bill, it is about letting Queensland's public servants know—letting our police, our teachers, our doctors and nurses, our staff on the front desk of client service centres—that they will be supported in performing their roles. It does not take away the responsibility or accountability. I particularly note a question from one of the crossbench members earlier today, and this goes to the heart of the question he asked. I hope he is satisfied, although he did not stay in his place to hear it. The bill does provide a level of certainty for our employees that does not currently exist, and this certainty will ultimately contribute to better service outcomes for the Queensland community. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (3.35 pm): I rise today to contribute to the debate on the Public Service and Other Legislation (Civil Liability) Amendment Bill 2013. Broadly speaking, this legislation is supported by the opposition. We will not be opposing the passage of the bill. There are some points of clarification that I will be seeking from the government throughout the debate and I trust that those questions will be addressed accordingly in the government's reply.

As has been outlined in the introduction of this legislation, the fundamental element of this bill is to protect individual employees from the risk of personal civil liability for conduct undertaken by public servants and police officers in carrying out their official duties. There is a range of protections already in place across a wide range of public sector areas. This legislation introduces a new centralised protection against the personal liability of employees across the Queensland public sector. This purpose is carried out through effectively transferring the liability of individual employees to the state of Queensland.

Changes to the Public Service Act 2008 provide protection from civil liability for state employees engaging in, or as a result of engaging in, conduct in an official capacity. The rights of potential victims, or possible future claimants, are preserved by transferring the civil liability from an individual employee or employees to the state of Queensland. To encourage employees to act appropriately and to ensure the state has some ability for cost recovery in appropriate circumstances, the state maintains an ability to recover financial contributions from an employee if an employee engages in conduct other than in good faith and with gross negligence.

Similar changes are made to the Police Service Administration Act to strengthen protection to: provide officers, recruits, staff members and other members of the QPS with immunity from civil liability for engaging in, or as a result of engaging in, conduct in an official capacity; preserve the rights of potential victims or claimants by transferring liability from individual employees to the state; and amend recovery provisions to provide the state with the avenue to recover damages when an employee or employees engage in conduct other than in good faith and with gross negligence.

As I outlined at the start of my contribution, the opposition is broadly supportive of this approach. One benefit of the changes was highlighted by the Anti-Discrimination Commission in Queensland. The submission from the commission outlined that this legislation could improve the timeliness of the complaints mechanism that is undertaken through the commission's authority. The commission submitted—

The State will be a respondent to complaints where it is alleged the State has primary liability (e.g. discrimination in a policy or requirement) and / or vicarious liability for the conduct of an employee or other agent (e.g. sexual harassment by an employee or agent). The majority of accepted complaints involving the State include individual public or police service employees as respondents.

The government's current prescribed procedure for State employees to obtain legal assistance or indemnity necessitates the departmental decision-maker obtaining advice from Crown Law. The time taken to complete this process can interfere with the statutory expectation that the Commission conduct a conciliation conference within 6 weeks of notifying the acceptance of a complaint. Where a decision has not been made before the date set for the conciliation conference, the respondents will usually request the conference take place at a later time. Changes to scheduled dates and arrangements for conciliation conferences can often cause distress and lead to further polarisation of the parties.

Accordingly, the transfer of civil liability to the State as provided for in the Bill is likely to overcome this negative aspect, and aid timeliness in the Commission's complaint handling process.


Providing the ability for members of the Queensland public to lodge complaints with an appropriate body and to have those complaints dealt with genuinely and in a timely manner is a real strength of our system. If these changes assist the commission in the important work that it undertakes, that then is an additional bonus of this legislation. However, as I indicated at the start of my contribution, there are some issues about which I seek clarification from the government.

The avenue for recovery for contributions from those responsible employees requires both limbs of the test to be met—that is, for the state to recover contributions from an employee, they must have engaged in conduct that was both other than in good faith and with gross negligence. That could be a very high bar for the state to be able to recover some contributions. This point was discussed at the December committee hearing and was raised in the submission of the Bar Association of Queensland. The Bar Association's submission stated—

As presently drawn the Bill (by proposed s 26C of the *Public Service Act* and s 10.5 of the *Police Service Administration Act*) provides for a right of contribution, and that right only exists where the state employee or police officer has been guilty of both lack of good faith and gross negligence. There is no sound policy reason for wishing to prevent the State or the Crown as the case may be from recovering contribution, or indeed a full indemnity, from a state employee or police officer who has acted (let it be assumed) in good faith but grossly negligently. Similarly, there is no sound policy reason for wishing to prevent the State or the Crown from recovering contribution or indemnity from a state employee or police officer who has acted other than in good faith even if not grossly negligently, but in a way (for example by negligence) so as to give rise to civil liability in the State or Crown.

I seek clarification from the government in reply about what analysis has been undertaken for what sort of conduct would meet both limbs of the test. Has the government considered whether there is conduct that one might naturally assume would be covered under the purposes of the legislation that would actually fall beyond the realm of the test? It was made clear by the department in the December briefing that the legislation covers the wide variety of employees that make up the public sector, including health workers, teachers, ambulance officers and firefighters, amongst others. In relation to health workers, it was unclear in the hearing if the existing provisions for employees who may have to deal with issues of conscience regarding particular elements of health care would still apply. I ask the government to please clarify whether this legislation would interact with those existing provisions or whether the new test imposed by this legislation regarding the definitions under the contribution recovery provisions might affect expectations placed on employees.

I also note that contractors and public servants employed by GOCs are not covered under this legislation. I make that point because, with the explicit intention of the government to outsource large chunks of services, including in the provision of health care, we will need to consider the impact of any changed employment status of our state employees. There was also a concern raised in the January committee hearing that individual employees at the centre of any claims could risk being excluded from the process. Because the state would negotiate as the liable party, the situation could arise where the state would settle a case for financial purposes and administrative expediency. That may be the prudent and well intentioned action to take, but there could be significant side effects for an employee, including those who believe they have a strong case in defence of any allegations against their actions. This could clearly have implications for the professional reputation of those employees. The department gave assurances that any employees at the centre of a claim would be central to the progression of the matter, including the opportunity to present their side of the matter and discuss the circumstances of the claim. I seek confirmation from the government that individuals at the centre of any allegations will be afforded natural justice, be given the opportunity to present their evidence and that the settlement between the state and claimants should not unfairly impact on the reputation or employment status of individual employees, with appropriate natural justice being afforded. As I said at the outset, the opposition will not be opposing this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr DAVIES** (Capalaba—LNP) (3.42 pm): This afternoon I rise in support of the Public Service and Other Legislation (Civil Liability) Amendment Bill. I commend the Premier and his office for bringing forward this much needed legislation. This legislation is yet another example of the Newman government's commitment to its election promises to our hardworking police officers. It was in fact an election commitment of the Newman government prior to the election that some of the challenges that they face in their jobs would certainly be considered, so this is the fulfilment of a promise of the Newman government. As chair of the Finance and Administration Committee it was an absolute pleasure to be part of the process of reviewing this legislation and I commend the other members of the committee, including those from the crossbenches such as the member for Mulgrave and the member for Gladstone, who support this legislation. Again, as a committee this legislation was something that we all agreed on and saw as being a very positive thing.


The committee's task was to consider the policy outcomes to be achieved by this legislation and we saw the positive impacts through a number of hearings that were held, and I will talk about those later. The bill is an omnibus bill amending a number of acts. The committee has recommended that the bill be passed. The two acts that are going to be amended are the Public Service Act 2008 and the Police Service Administration Act 1990. The committee made a number of recommendations and, as the Premier said, those recommendations have been accepted. The first recommendation was that the bill be passed. The second recommendation was that the review of the effectiveness of the proposed changes be undertaken. The third recommendation was that the committee recommends that the Public Service Commission facilitate a centralised data collection system to ensure a valid assessment of the effectiveness of the proposed changes can be undertaken.

As I said, the committee held a number of public briefings and a public hearing. The committee held a public briefing on the bill with officers from the Public Service Commission and the Queensland Police Service. The committee also held a public hearing on the bill with representatives from organisations providing submissions. Those organisations included the Queensland Police Union, the Bar Association and also the union that represents protective services officers such as those working in prisons and so forth. It initially was opposed to this bill until it came to understand the fact that there are two limbs to the legislation—that is, that it had to be in good faith and gross negligence. Those two aspects certainly made the particular union that I am talking about feel much more comfortable with this legislation and in the end it was wholeheartedly in support of the objectives of this bill.

The bill will achieve its objectives of providing greater certainty for state employees by amending the Public Service Act 2008 by inserting new provisions providing protection from civil liability for state employees for engaging in, or as a result of engaging in, conduct in an official capacity; the preservation of the rights of potential claimants by transferring civil liability of state employees to the state; and for the state to have the right to recover financial contributions from state employees who have engaged in conduct other than in good faith and with gross negligence. The bill will achieve its objectives of providing certainty regarding liability for police officers and other members of the QPS by amending existing provisions of the Police Service Administration Act 1990 to provide officers, recruits, staff members and volunteers with immunity from civil liability for engaging in, or as a result of engaging in, conduct in an official capacity; by preserving the rights of potential claimants by transferring the civil liability of QPS employees to the state; and by amending the recovery provision such that the state may recover the contributions from an officer, recruit or staff member only where they have engaged in conduct other than in good faith and with gross negligence.

The only dissenting voice in this process, as the member for Mulgrave mentioned, was the Bar Association because the Bar Association just felt that that was a bar too high. However, it was the only dissenting voice in the whole report. All of the other people who attended the hearings were in absolute support of the bill in terms of the objectives of the bill. In particular, the QPS felt that this was very overdue because it was something that its officers had been crying out for for many years. It did acknowledge that this was indeed the fulfilment of a promise made by the government. The Public Service Commission advised that one of the rationales for the bill is that there are currently 300-plus immunity provisions contained on the statute books, with varying tests or application, and seven different indemnity guidelines that require employees to apply for assistance.

The amendments provide a consistent standard. Ultimately, the purpose of this bill is to provide a high level of certainty that currently does not exist for our hardworking public servants. I really think that what the Premier has brought forward today is wonderful legislation and I commend it to the House. I thank the Premier.

 **Dr FLEGG** (Moggill—LNP) (3.49 pm): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak to the Public Service and Other Legislation (Civil Liability) Amendment Bill. I say to members to not be fooled into thinking that this is dry, uninteresting legislation. In fact, this is very important legislation because, in the litigious day and age that we live in, the civil liability of the people who work for the state of Queensland is a very big issue for them. One of my favourite phrases is when people act in 'good faith'. As people go about their work, good faith is a very critical concept. As someone who has worked in public sector hospitals and who has known many other doctors and nurses—and for our teachers and our police force—I can say that the existing system simply is not good enough. There are seven different jurisdictions for different parts of the public sector. We also have something that I do not think is acceptable at all and that is uncertainty.

Many of these staff members are young. They may be a police recruit, a newly graduated resident doctor or a young teacher and they can be confronted with a lawsuit relating to something that has arisen in the course of their employment. I see the Minister for Education is in the House. This legislation applies to the dentists who work in the public sector as well. Even though these people have acted in good faith, they have uncertainty as to whether the existing provisions will give them indemnity. Under some of these jurisdictions, they have to prove that they have acted in good faith before they have confirmation that they will be covered. I do not think that that system has been good enough. It has meant that many of the state's employees have had to go to the AMA or the Teachers' Union or a number of other agencies to take out further cover because they cannot be sure that they are covered.

As the member for Capalaba pointed out in his address, there are two aspects to this bill. One aspect is that you cannot take away personal responsibility. You cannot hide from the fact that, as an agent or employee, if you do not act in good faith, if you do not act honestly or, even worse, if you act criminally, there must be some comeback to you and that is provided for in the bill. So it would be a mistake to think that if a Dr Patel situation or some other set of circumstances arose there would be no responsibility on those individuals.

Once the legislation is enacted, public servants will automatically be eligible for financial assistance to defend civil actions brought against them because of events that occurred while carrying out their official functions. If it is determined at a later point that the employee acted without due care and with gross negligence, then the state may seek to recover any costs incurred as a result of the action. I think everyone here would want to join with me in saying that the overwhelming majority of our police, our doctors, our nurses, our public officials, our emergency services personnel

and our dentists act in good faith while carrying out their duty and that, therefore, this amendment would not be necessary. They simply find that the level of certainty about their protection was much greater. If in that rare case someone has done the wrong thing or perhaps even acted illegally, the CEO of that person's agency will decide if an action to recover costs is appropriate. If the employee disagrees with the decision of the CEO, then the validity of that decision will be tested through the independent civil court process.


The broad range of government employees being covered is one of the key strengths and important features of this legislation—doctors, nurses, teachers, ambulance and fire officers, public servants working on the front desk of a consumer service centre. For police, the legislation covers officers, recruits and volunteers. The protection of volunteers in the SES is covered separately under the Civil Liability Act. Employees will be provided with protection for conduct performed or decisions made as part of a person's official role. So the legislation will not apply to what they are doing on the weekend or what they are doing in other aspects of their life. For their official role they will have this protection.

Some examples of where this protection may apply would be in the case of a police officer executing a search warrant who may inadvertently break some property in the process of undertaking that search or even possibly, if he was acting in good faith, perhaps executing a search warrant at the wrong premises owing to some wrong information. Another example would be where an ambulance officer breaks the rib of a patient while doing CPR. Most of us in the medical area who have performed CPR have done that from time to time, because it goes with the territory. Another example would be where an administrative officer is accused of discrimination when applying government policy in the granting of a liquor licence or where an employee provides advice about obligations under legislation but the advice is incorrect and the recipient of the advice suffers some loss. Employees will not be covered by the provisions of the legislation where their conduct is outside of their official duties. Importantly, this legislation does not excuse or justify action that is criminal.

The legislation provides security to staff that they will be supported by the state provided they have acted within the scope of their official role. Recovery against an employee can occur only where there has been a lack of good faith and gross negligence. Instead of focusing on the small number of employees who do not meet the standards expected of them, this legislation recognises that the majority of employees do the right thing—trying to ensure the best outcomes for Queenslanders—and this legislation supports them in so doing.

That high level of support is warranted to support a change from a risk-averse culture to one where employees are empowered to make sensible decisions and put their ideas into action. The clear and high expectations of government employees continues. For example, as set out in the code of conduct, it is important to note also that there are other avenues to address poor performance or conduct, including discipline and potential termination of employment in the rare instances where that may be applicable. Where an employee is found not to have acted in good faith and—an important 'and'—has acted with gross negligence, the state may decide to recover the costs of any action against the employee. Individual agency CEOs will be involved in that decision.

Finally, I would like to offer my congratulations to our committee chair, Mr Steve Davies, and thank the wonderful staff of the committee for the work that they have put into the examination of this bill.

 **Mr GULLEY** (Murrumba—LNP) (3.58 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Public Service and Other Legislation (Civil Liability) Amendment Bill 2013. I note that I am a member of the Finance and Administration Committee which has inquired into this bill and produced report No. 37, which was delivered on 3 February 2013. This report has recommended the adoption of this bill and I welcome the Premier's acceptance of all of the committee's recommendations. At this point I would like to acknowledge the high standard of the speeches made by the Premier, the member for Capalaba and the member for Moggill. I concur with the sentiments of the member for Moggill in that this is a very important bill. Even though it might look very dry and straightforward, it certainly gives great certainty for our hardworking public servants.


I speak on behalf of the community of Murrumba which includes hardworking teachers, nurses, ambulance drivers, administration officers, police officers and other public servants across the entire Queensland Public Service. The bill today amends two acts, the Public Service Act 2008 and the Police Service Administration Act 1990. Our state services are critical to the protection and maintenance of Queensland. However, the civil liability imposed on the public sector has inhibited their innovative capacity and has ultimately restricted the state and the Queensland Police Service

from serving the people to their utmost ability. Our Premier has set out to make our Public Service the best in Australia, a revitalised Public Service delivering great front-line services. This bill assists with this objective and I believe that our hardworking public servants deserve the support and protection of this worthwhile legal reform.

At this point I want to focus on the key concept of the bill: good faith and without gross negligence. This bill protects our public servants where they are, in fact, acting in good faith and without gross negligence. I take this opportunity to rebut the Bar Association's submission to change the key test to 'without good faith or'—and the key word there is 'or'—'gross negligence.' This topic was touched on by previous speakers. I certainly believe that the amendment of that test would have provided a very wide gate for lawyers to walk through and would have ultimately undermined the intention of providing a high level of support for our Public Service. The proposed amendment bill also sees this civil liability instead transferred to the state allowing state employees to improve their service through new means while removing the financial risk of litigation from honest and hardworking men and women who serve our state not only in Murrumba but in every electorate across Queensland. It is important to note, however, that the rights and potential claimants will be protected through this bill with the state of Queensland assuming the civil responsibility. A logical mind at this point will then ask whether the state has the opportunity to recover from a state employee. Again I refer to the good faith and gross negligence test. This bill retains the right of the state to recover costs where an employee has not acted in good faith and with gross negligence.

This amendment bill demonstrates the Newman government's commitment to looking after its staff. No state service worker should be at risk of litigation when they are performing their duties responsibly. It is only fair that as a state and as an employer that it takes responsibility on behalf of the Public Service and police. I am not surprised that our union mates have been very silent on this reform. Many hardworking public servants admit to me that they are members of a union solely to access the legal defence against vexatious and trivial allegations. Let us explore this. Our union friends rely on fear, anxiety, conflict and uncertainty to drive union membership. This bill today gives our hardworking public servants relief from those emotions and they now have a certainty that they can conduct their role without fear or favour.

Thank you for your generosity in allowing me to speak on behalf of Murrumba. Murrumba is a good place and the residents of Murrumba will greatly benefit from a Public Service that is ready to act without the burden of civil liability. This is another example of a can-do government delivering on its election promise to revitalise front-line services. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mrs OSTAPOVITCH** (Stretton—LNP) (4.04 pm): The Finance and Administration Committee were tasked to consider the Public Service and Other Legislation (Civil Liability) Amendment Bill. During this time I informed the committee, and again during the public hearing, that I may be considered to have a conflict of interest considering both my sons work in the Public Service. I am very proud that both my sons serve the public, one as a police officer and the other as a public hospital emergency doctor. It gives me great pleasure to give my thoughts on why this amendment should be adopted. Neither of my sons discuss their jobs with the QPS and Queensland Health. However, because of their work I do read the Police Union magazine and listen keenly to news that affects my sons' lives. It is bad enough that police officers and hospital staff have to live with the threat of being killed by drug and alcohol fuelled individuals, but why should they have to live with the constant and increasing threats of litigation that hover over our dedicated and hardworking public servants: our police, our hospital doctors and nurses, our ambulance officers, firemen and correctional service staff. I apologise if I have missed any other public servants who also have the burden of fear of litigation hindering their best work.

We received much correspondence in relation to this amendment. In its submission the Queensland Police Union of employees stated—

The QPUE has long advocated for legislative protections for officers (sworn and unsworn) in circumstances where they undertake their duties in good faith and without gross negligence. The QPUE welcomes the Public Service and Other Legislation (Civil Liability) Amendment Bill 2013. Legislation of this nature is far too long overdue.


Our only criticism of the Bill is that it is restricted to civil liability, the QPUE position is that officers (sworn and unsworn) should also be protected criminally when they are conducting their duties in good faith and without gross negligence.

Representatives of the Queensland Police Service attended the public hearing. I took that opportunity to ask whether there would be any extra training given to our police in relation to their duties to conduct their work properly and with the safety of the community and offenders in mind. I was assured that training is of utmost importance to them and that they would certainly let their new

cadets and trainees know that they do have a responsibility to perform their duties well and with the least amount of potential threat to their lives or to the lives of those who they are trying to apprehend. I also asked at that time would officers guilty of criminal activities be covered. They said that while they had hoped that this would be the case, it was not. Any person who feels that they have been wrongly harmed would have the opportunity to take that action in a criminal court. This legislation is all about civil liability and not criminal liability.

I thank our hardworking staff who put this report together and also our chair, Steve Davies. Considering the shortness of time that we had I think that we put together a good report. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Order! Before I call the member for Sunnybank, I remind members to please refer to other members by their correct parliamentary title.

 **Mr STEWART** (Sunnybank—LNP) (4.09 pm): I will ensure that I do that throughout my contribution this evening, Mr Deputy Speaker. Today I rise to contribute to the debate on the Public Service and Other Legislation (Civil Liability) Amendment Bill 2013. Late last year when the bill was introduced by the Premier, the Hon. Campbell Newman, its purpose was clear: to protect our public service employees as well as our police officers from civil liability when acting in good faith and without gross negligence in the course of their employment. However, the question put to the Finance and Administration Committee, of which I am a member, was whether or not the bill does in fact achieve this stated purposes. The two groups of people, the public servants and the police officers, this bill seeks to protect obviously are integral to the mechanisms of government. As members of government, we each have an appreciation of the work performed by the diligent public servants and this bill seeks to support and protect them in their endeavours. Likewise, our dedicated policemen and women who have the critical job of protecting our community require legislative protection to ensure that they can discharge their duties appropriately. It is my opinion, and the opinion of the Finance and Administration Committee, that this bill does achieve its stated purposes and that it is necessary to ensure that public service employees and members of the Queensland Police Service can perform their duties confident that they are protected while performing those duties.

The present framework for protecting our police officers from civil action is unsatisfactory. In fact, one of the few circumstances in which police officers are shielded against civil suits is when providing emergency assistance to persons with injury or illness. This protection is far too narrow. Many of our officers work in high-pressure and high-risk environments and they are often called on to make decisions in the heat of the moment. While their extensive education, training and experience will often ensure that this is the right course of action under the circumstances, the reality is that things can go wrong and can be perceived to go wrong. Despite the best of intentions and without gross negligence, the assistance that police officers provide might expose them to the risk of civil action being taken out against them.


Because of the nature of the critically important work that officers undertake, there will be occasions when a police officer may cause personal injury or property damage. However, given the role that they perform in protecting our community it is only right that officers should be indemnified for civil wrongs when carrying out their duties in good faith and without gross negligence. If we do not provide this protection, police officers may be reluctant to act in circumstances that may lead to civil action being taken against them and that is not really appropriate. We would rather our police officers act and be protected when things go wrong than not act at all. Queensland police officers have a great deal of training that will ensure that they will act with those intentions. Queensland police officers have a difficult enough job already. We want to remove the additional stress of the threat of civil liability.

There is no doubt in my mind that job performance is affected by stress, especially the stress of legal action. That is also true for our public servants. As a government, we are committed to having an effective and efficient public service, but we want the output of our public servants to be effective and they do not want to be liable for the consequences of decisions made in good faith and in the course of their duties. Arguably, that situation exists at the moment. Mistakes are part of human intervention in a perfect system. That is true for our doctors, firemen, teachers and nurses. No matter how extensive their training and no matter the level of their experience, mistakes can and do happen. Nevertheless, by removing the hanging sword of legal action and offering, instead, a shield of immunity from civil liability, we are giving our public servants the best opportunity to perform at a high level. That can be only a good thing for the wider community. That is why both the Finance and Administration Committee and I support this bill. It has direct benefits for our police officers and our public servants. Just as importantly, it has positive ramifications for front-line service delivery.

Finally, it is important to note that those people who unfortunately suffer injury or property damage through the actions of an individual employee will not be left without the means of redress. Rather, liability will be borne by the state. As those employees are essentially in the service of the state, I believe that making the state the legal wrongdoer is appropriate and accords with the principles of vicarious liability. Above all, liability residing with the state sends an important message to every police officer and every public servant, which is that they are valued, that the work they do is valued and that they have no reason to fear civil action if they have acted in good faith and without gross negligence.


I thank the Premier, the Hon. Campbell Newman, for introducing a bill that will enable our public servants and police officers to continue to work for the good of the community without the threat of civil suits being taken against them. The amendments contained in the bill essentially shield those employees so long as they are acting, of course, in their official duties in good faith and without gross negligence. In the event that a staff member has not acted in good faith and without gross negligence, the state may recover the costs.

I thank the chair of our committee, Mr Steve Davies, for the job he has done in representing our committee and chairing the committee meetings. I thank the staff and the support staff of the Finance and Administration Committee for their assistance. I thank the members from both sides and the Independent member for Gladstone for their contributions and discussions throughout the process. Finally, the committee acknowledges the assistance provided by the Public Service Commission, the Queensland Police Service and all who provided submissions. I support the bill and I encourage all members to support its passage through the House later this evening.

 **Mr YOUNG** (Keppel—LNP) (4.16 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the Public Service and Other Legislation (Civil Liability) Amendment Bill 2013. The amendments proposed to the bill will assist in achieving its objectives by providing greater certainty for state employees, enabling them to perform their roles in more effective ways by allowing decisions to be made independently, thus improving service delivery. All this will be achieved without the concern of personal litigation, coupled with the associated financial risk, by providing enhanced protection from civil liability through amendments to the Public Service Act 2008. This will be achieved by providing new provisions for the protection from civil liability for state employees engaging in, or as a result of engaging in, conduct in an official capacity, preservation of rights for the potential claimants by transferring civil liability from state employees to the state, and for the state to have the right to recover financial contributions from state employees who have engaged in conduct other than in good faith and with gross negligence.

This bill will also achieve its objectives by providing certainty regarding liability for police officers and other members of the Queensland Police Service by amending the Police Service Administration Act 1990. These amendments will reflect our ongoing support for our diligent public servants and Queensland Police Service staff. Across the breadth and width of this state and in the electorate of Keppel, our dedicated police officers deserve a review of the civil protection laws to ensure they can get on with the job of protecting our community without fear or favour. The risk of reduced service because of the concern of liability is not limited to police officers. It is also an issue for public servants performing a range of roles, including ambulance and fire officers, teachers, doctors and nurses. The amendments to the Public Service Administration Act 1990 and the Public Service Act 2008 will address this situation by providing our hardworking public servants and police officers with legislative immunity against civil liability. Through these proposed mechanisms, liability will be borne by the state. Transferring liability to the state ensures that anyone who suffers an injury or loss as a result of an action by a state Public Service or a Queensland Police Service employee still has the opportunity to seek recompense appropriate to the circumstance.

The bill proposes that the state has the right to recover contributions from employees who are subsequently found to have engaged in conduct other than in good faith and where it amounts to gross negligence. The amendments proposed in the bill provide a level of certainty to our Public Service employees and Queensland Police Service officers that does not currently exist. At present there are a range of policies and procedures that offer forms of indemnity—namely, assistance with legal costs and penalties—those employees have to apply for after civil proceedings have been brought against them. The amendments proposed within this bill give public servants and police officers certainty that we are going to support them from the outset for the ultimate benefit of the people and the communities of Queensland. I commend the Premier and his departmental staff and the Finance and Administration Committee, its chair and its members for their work on this bill.

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (4.20 pm): I rise to support the Public Service and Other Legislation (Civil Liability) Amendment Bill 2013. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our Premier, the Hon. Campbell Newman, and the Minister Assisting the Premier, the Hon. Glen Elmes, on bringing this bill to the parliament. I would also like to thank the chair of the Finance and Administration Committee, Mr Steve Davies MP, member for Capalaba, for his committee's recommendations in relation to this bill.

Again we see before the House a bill that delivers on our government's election promises. Our government has promised to revitalise front-line services. This bill will amend the Public Service Act 2008 and the Police Service Administration Act 1990 to provide protection of Public Service employees, police officers and other people like ambulance officers, doctors and nurses engaging in conduct in an official capacity. I would particularly like to reflect on the implications of this bill in relation to our dedicated Queensland Police force. This bill will allow Queensland Police Service employees to perform their daily duties without the fear of being held liable while conducting their official work duties.

As I said in this House only last night, we have an amazing police force. Our government is increasing the size of our police force in an attempt to reduce crime rates. As I mentioned in the House last night, this has been done very successfully on the Gold Coast. The crime rates there have reduced by 20 per cent. The increase in number of police on the beat is currently around 660.

This is what our government is about. We are a can-do government. We are about getting the state back on track and revitalising our front-line services. The way we are doing that is by bringing in good, solid, practical legislation that does not cost the state. I note in the explanatory notes that the cost to the government of this proposed legislation is nil. It is common sense that all those in this House would join in supporting the Premier and passing this bill.

I am very proud of the hard work of our police officers and what they do to keep our communities safe. Obviously, I am very proud of the local police officers from the Nanango electorate. I have spoken to numerous local police about the pressures of civil liability that they face in their everyday duties. This places unnecessary pressure on our police and can interfere with their decision making. Our police require protection against civil liability to ensure that they can get on with the job and focus on what is important—that is, keeping our community safe.


This bill reflects our government's commitment to support our police officers and public servants to work with legislative immunity against civil liability when engaging in conduct in their official capacity. Currently, Queensland police officers are only indemnified if they act in good faith and without gross negligence in circumstances that involve assisting people in emergency situations. This common-sense legislation broadens that and thank goodness for that.

Police perform a critical role within our community and are an essential emergency service. Therefore, our government needs to do everything it can to get out of their way and allow them to do what they do best which is protect our communities, protect our children, protect the elderly and protect the vulnerable.

Even though our police officers perform their duties professionally and in difficult and complex situations, properties can be damaged, claims of discrimination or defamation can be made and injuries can occur. It is distressing to note that again we have to legislate to ensure liability for these situations will transfer to the state. However, this is what we need to do in this day and age.

Our public servants are of high standing and are well-respected people within the community. These people form the fabric and the backbone of our communities, and it is important that they can go home each night to their families and feel certain that their daily job will not see them end up in our courts facing legal proceedings. Our public servants and police officers will no longer have to worry and stress that they will face these proceedings for engaging in conduct that would be seen as just their everyday duty.

I reiterate that this is a great example of our government delivering on another election promise—reviewing civil protections available to police officers and other public servants whilst performing their duties. This bill will be very beneficial to our public servants and will ensure that these hardworking people can get on with the job. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (4.26 pm): I rise to speak to the Public Service and Other Legislation (Civil Liability) Amendment Bill 2013. Our front-line services within the Queensland Public Service are the most essential part of any department. It is the men and women who perform their daily duties such as police officers, prison guards, youth workers, child safety officers, mental health


workers, fire officers and nurses and doctors who are at great risk of being liable for civil or criminal lawsuits whilst performing their duties. I commend the Premier for his courage to take action and take responsibility to introduce a bill which will enable front-line employees to carry out their duties in good faith, with the confidence of knowing that the government has their back.

I recognise that the Queensland Police Commissioned Officers Union of Employees, the Bar Association, the Queensland Protective Security Officers Association, the Anti-Discrimination Commission and the Queensland Police Union support the bill. On 20 November 2013 the *Brisbane Times* reported—

The Queensland Police Union had been calling for the change for several years, after a Brisbane constable was found guilty of an assault of a 65-year-old homeless man in 2006. Bruce Rowe brought a private prosecution against Constable Benjamin Arndt following his own arrest. Mr Arndt was found guilty in 2011 and fined \$1000 and ordered to pay court costs.

Clearly this is the sort of situation that this legislation aims to address. QPU president, Ian Leavers, said this is a 'great start for police to achieve criminal and civil protections for police acting in good faith without gross negligence'. The comments from Ian Leavers resonate with other Public Service front-line employees who have to carry out their duties on a daily basis in highly complex situations such as performing protective actions to restrain a client who is showing intent to harm others or themselves. It is generally accepted that Public Service employees are acting in good faith when they perform their duties. However, there are situations which occur when employees act in bad faith.

I am very pleased that the content within the bill has made clear provisions that the government has the right to recover financial contributions from state employees who have acted in bad faith and with gross negligence. There is no place in the Queensland Public Service for this type of misconduct, including from members of this House. The government must continue to structure policies which will ensure the greatest public confidence in Queensland's Public Service. I think this bill moves towards that goal. I commend it to the House.

 **Miss BARTON** (Broadwater—LNP) (4.28 pm): I rise today to make a brief contribution to the Public Service and Other Legislation (Civil Liability) Amendment Bill. At the outset I thank the opposition for their support. It is great when we have bipartisan pieces of legislation go through this House which are all about supporting hardworking Queenslanders and hardworking public servants.

One of the great things about this particular amendment bill is that it reiterates and reaffirms this government's support of hardworking public sector workers, whether they be the police officers who live and work in my electorate of Broadwater or the ambulance officers, the firies, the doctors and nurses, or even indeed the very hardworking Parliamentary Service officers whom we have here in this great House. This government is committed to revitalising front-line services. By ensuring that we clarify what happens where there are civil liability issues means that we are supporting those public sector workers, and that means that we will be in a much better position to revitalise front-line services for Queenslanders.

One of the key things about this particular amendment bill is that there will be no liability for a public sector worker if in the course of carrying out their lawful duty they have acted in good faith and without gross negligence. Sir Richard Eyre once said that the principle of acting in good faith is at the heart of decent work. I think ultimately that is what this is all about—supporting decent people who are doing a decent day's work, looking to support Queenslanders.


I think it is also important to note that we will not be impinging on the rights of legitimate claimants. They will still have an opportunity to seek action against the state. But what we have simply said is that if, for example, you are a QPS officer who might hurt someone whilst you are arresting them or you are an ambulance officer who breaks a rib whilst resuscitating someone, you should not personally be at risk just because you have done your duty to protect Queenslanders and to look after Queenslanders.

As I said, it is important that we do protect public sector workers in this state because they do an absolutely fantastic job. I would like to particularly note the great work that the QPS have done on the Gold Coast. I noted last night that we have seen crime rates drop by about 20 per cent, which is absolutely fantastic. I am very honoured and proud to be part of a government that is looking to support those public sector workers. I look forward to supporting this bill in consideration in detail.

Debate, on motion of Mrs Smith, adjourned.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Tabled Papers Database

 **Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, last night I made a ruling regarding a document tabled by the member for Bundamba yesterday which contained offensive material and asked the member to redact the unparliamentary language. I did note that some of the documents have been tabled before in another parliament and that they were not available via the tabled papers database. However, I made no ruling in regard to the documents tabled in 2010.

Since my ruling I have become aware of 'backgrounding' of media by members of the opposition or their staff after my office was contacted by a media outlet with allegations that an historical tabled paper was inappropriately removed from the parliament's tabled papers database by me or under my direction. The member for Bundamba has been quoted by several media outlets today relating to this issue and questioning transparency and accountability of the parliament.

I note with disappointment that the member for Bundamba has never directly raised any concerns or allegations with me or my office. After the allegations were raised with my office by the media last night, I sought advice from the Clerk regarding the tabled paper. I table a letter from the Clerk explaining the results of the investigations.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 12 February 2014, from the Clerk of the Parliament, Mr Neil Laurie, to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Hon. Fiona Simpson, regarding tabled documents [4494].

The Clerk's advice makes it clear that the decision to remove the link to the tabled paper from the Table Office website front page must have occurred over three years ago, sometime in the last parliament. This most probably occurred around the time the document was tabled due to the discovery of unparliamentary language within it. The Clerk's advice also makes it clear that the comments being made to or in the media are incorrect when they infer that the removal of the online access to the tabled paper only occurred after Mr O'Sullivan's nomination to the Senate. This is simply incorrect. The Clerk also clearly advises that no-one has asked officers for the removal of the link to the document. In short, the information being peddled to the media is incorrect, misleading and disrespectful to the authority of the chair.


I remind all members and their staff that 'backgrounding' the media with serious allegations against the chair and parliamentary staff is not acceptable. A member who makes vague allegations in the media rather than raising a clear allegation through the proper avenues is acting counter to transparency and accountability. This may not protect them or their staff members from contempt proceedings. Members and staff involved in the misinformation campaign overnight should take it upon themselves to rectify their actions. If members have any legitimate concerns, they should approach me directly to ascertain the truth of the matter.

PUBLIC SERVICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION (CIVIL LIABILITY) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 156, on motion of Mr Newman—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mrs SMITH** (Mount Ommaney—LNP) (4.35 pm): I rise today in support of the Public Service and Other Legislation (Civil Liability) Amendment Bill 2013. I must commend the Premier and his team on preparing and presenting this legislation—legislation that will honour this government's commitment prior to the election that we would initiate a review of the civil protection laws to ensure our police can get on with the very important job of protecting our community.


Only last November here in this chamber we all heard the Premier describe the very complex situations our police respond to in the line of duty and how occasionally while performing these duties injury to people or damage to property can occur. This then places our officers under the threat of civil liability while carrying out their duties to protect us and our communities. This legislation provides far greater certainty for our police who must make decisions in intense operational circumstances for the best outcome without fear of civil liability.

This legislation will not only protect our police but also all public servants who while performing their duties fall under this category—for example, doctors, nurses, ambulance and fire service officers as well as child safety officers, to name but a few. I am proud today to speak up in support of this bill which in turn supports all of our public servants who on a daily basis are out there working for us in the communities where we both live and play.

So let's examine this bill a little more closely. This bill will achieve its objective of providing greater certainty for state employees by amending the Public Service Act 2008 by inserting new provisions providing protection from civil liability for state employees for engaging in, or as a result of engaging in, conduct in an official capacity; preservation of the rights of potential claimants by transferring civil liability of state employees to the state; and for the state to have a right to recover financial contributions from state employees who have engaged in conduct other than in good faith and with gross negligence.


Daily we hear or read where our police and public servants are often put in a position where such decisions have to be made and this legislation will take away the fear of retribution from civil liability and allow them to make these decisions without fear or favour. In effect, this means that our police and public servants can carry out their duties in the knowledge that any civil liability will lie with the state which did not occur prior to this bill. If we empower our police and public servants in that knowledge that they will be supported in the event of an incident that causes either injury or property damage, we as Queenslanders will benefit along with them.

It is also important to note that this legislation does, however, provide for recovery action to be taken by the government against an employee who has engaged in conduct other than in good faith and with gross negligence. This, I believe, provides the correct balance of both support and accountability and takes a common-sense and practical approach. I support the passing of this bill.


 **Mrs FRANCE** (Pumicestone—LNP) (4.39 pm): I rise to speak to the Public Service and Other Legislation (Civil Liability) Amendment Bill. The objective of the bill is to support state government and Queensland Police Service employees by providing certainty regarding liability protection for those employees engaging in conduct of an official capacity and by providing certainty regarding liability for police officers and other members of the Queensland Police Service engaged in the normal course of their duties.

Queensland police officers in the normal course of their duties face increasingly turbulent and violent sections of the community. Daily news bulletins in the print and electronic media chronicle the events of domestic violence, armed robberies, uncontrolled street violence, and social media inspired and alcohol fuelled gatherings of young people which rapidly spiral out of control. Police officers are dealing with these complex matters in the context of a community well aware of its rights, quite prepared to resort to litigation and a media driven by commercial and social imperatives to sensationalise events. Against this background, this legislation is timely and appropriate but there is no cart blanche certainty here. This legislation does not and should not provide indemnity to state employees and Police Service members who act outside the constraints of good faith or whose conduct amounts to gross negligence. This legislation does not absolve the state of its vicarious liability for the actions of its employees.

The notes to the legislation detail specific definitions regarding state employees—in particular, those employees referred to as our first responders from the ambulance and fire services. Employees of hospital and health services are defined under this legislation to ensure they can carry out their demanding roles in our hospitals. This legislation picks up the responsibility of the state for its employees and reflects the Newman government's determination to provide our state employees and police officers with the protection they deserve as they discharge their duties towards the citizens of the state of Queensland. This is another example of our Newman government delivering on its election promise to revitalise our front-line services. I support the bill before the House.

 **Mr KAYE** (Greenslopes—LNP) (4.41 pm): This Public Service and Other Legislation (Civil Liability) Amendment Bill is a fantastic bill, and I commend the Premier and his team for bringing it to the parliament. As I have discussed on many occasions throughout my career in the Police Service, one of the things that weighed heavily on the minds of police and many other public servants was the threat of civil liability and the ramifications that that would bring. Quite often, police are required to make very complex decisions in only a matter of seconds. Quite simply, police—and any other public servant for that matter—could end up in trouble merely by doing their job.

I know many of my former colleagues are extremely happy about this. Indeed, my wife is extremely happy about this as she is a public servant and deals with situations that through no fault of her own could result in a civil liability action. This legislation provides certainty for thousands of public servants and our police. I really do commend the Premier. This is a very short contribution, but well done.

 **Hon. GW ELMES** (Noosa—LNP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs and Minister Assisting the Premier) (4.43 pm), in reply: First of all, I thank all members for their contributions to the debate this afternoon. As the Premier noted in his earlier remarks, the Public Service and Other Legislation (Civil Liability) Amendment Bill 2013 seeks to encourage greater independence in decision making and innovation by public servants. By providing public servants with immunity from civil liability, the bill reduces employee concerns about being personally sued and the accompanying financial risk, ultimately supporting improved service delivery.

The bill builds on important work that occurred in the Public Service in 2013—the setting of whole-of-service culture and values. These values were developed in consultation with approximately 20,000 employees and underpin the goal of making Queensland's Public Service the best in the nation. The extensive staff consultation process produced five values to guide and drive Queensland's public sector into the future: putting our customers first; turning great ideas into action; unleashing the potential that exists amongst our 220,000-strong workforce; taking calculated and courageous decisions rather than doing things the same way we always have; and empowering our people by developing and supporting them to perform at their best. If we ensure those values are manifested, we will provide better workplaces, more engaged employees, increased productivity, better services to the people of Queensland, and reduced cost of services to taxpayers.

Our culture and values renewal is an investment in our people and central to the broader renewal framework, to achieving the government's goal of becoming the most responsive and respected Public Service in the nation. The new values will support public servants in their workplaces as they strive to deliver smarter, simpler and better outcomes for Queenslanders. This government's goal is to reform and renew the Queensland Public Service to make it the best Public Service in Australia.

The people of Queensland are entitled to a Public Service that provides the services they need, and the Public Service has a responsibility to deliver those services as efficiently and in the most professional manner possible. The provisions of this bill support our public servants to be better in the job they do. Currently there are a significant number of indemnity provisions that apply to different groups of public servants. There are also seven different guidelines that prescribe processes to be followed before indemnity is granted, and affected employees could be waiting weeks to find out if they are being supported.

By bringing in these amendments we are providing government employees with certainty. We are empowering them to think outside the box and look for innovative solutions that will deliver the best outcomes to the Queensland community. We have taken on board the committee's recommendation to have a centralised data collection process. This will allow the government to monitor the number and types of matters where immunity is provided and provide valuable information for a future review.

I will now address some of the comments made by members during the debate. I say at the outset that I am pleased the opposition is supporting this bill. I expect that both sides of this House share a common goal for Queensland to have an efficient and professional Public Service, and to provide our hardworking public servants with the support they need to do their job properly. The member for Mulgrave mentioned the height of the bar set by the bill for deciding whether the state should seek to recover costs from an employee. The threshold for recovery is set intentionally high because we want to support our staff to act in the best interests in any given situation and know they will be supported in the decisions they make. The high level of support is warranted to support a change from a risk-averse culture to one where employees are empowered to make sensible decisions and put ideas into action. No-one who is doing their duty, particularly in the high-pressure situations that emergency and hospital staff face every day, should be worrying about being sued.

The only other jurisdiction to have a broad public sector legislative immunity scheme in place is South Australia. The significant difference between this bill and the South Australian legislation is that this bill proposes a higher threshold for recovery action to be instigated. South Australian legislation provides that recovery can be taken under the lesser standard that an employee has only breached the standard of good faith. It does not require that the actions under review are shown to be even

negligent, let alone grossly negligent. Accidental injury and property damage can happen, and none of us want to see police officers, for example, having to second-guess their legal liability as they try to stop a crime, or paramedics worrying about being sued at an accident scene.

Recovery against an employee would only be pursued where there has been a lack of good faith and gross negligence. It is the responsibility of the chief executive of an agency to decide whether recovery proceedings should be initiated. Should an employee accept a CEO decision that recovery is appropriate, agreement could be reached in respect of the quantum of the recovery. If the employee rejects the agency assessment that recovery is appropriate, then recovery would occur through civil court action taken against the employee. That would allow an independent umpire—a court—to determine if recovery is justified and what amount is just and equitable in the circumstances.

The test for recovery is a high threshold but it will not result in public servants running rampant. The clear and high expectations on government employees continue—for example, as set out in the code of conduct. This addresses another question the member for Mulgrave had. The provisions of this bill do not conflict with any of the existing conduct and disciplinary principles set out in the Public Service Act. It is important to also note that there are other avenues available to address poor performance or conduct, including discipline and potential termination of employment. The member for Mulgrave also raised the issue of what effect settlement by the state might have on the professional standing of any employee involved. A decision to settle a claim is not a decision about the liability of an individual. Any settlement made by the state would be on the normal commercial basis that liability is not admitted, either on behalf of the state or the individual involved.

The member for Mulgrave also raised the question of whether employees of government owned corporations are covered. They are not. The current indemnity guidelines do not apply to GOCs. GOCs operate in a more commercial environment and have their own processes for managing risk, including insurance to cover liability. This bill does not disrupt that environment and allows GOCs to continue to make decisions relating to how they manage risk and liability relating to actions of employees.

I know that in my electorate of Noosa and across Queensland there are many thousands of government employees doing their best—from the teachers developing and educating our children, to the doctors, nurses and other health workers keeping Queenslanders healthy, to the myriad public servants who keep the business of government running, to the police and emergency service workers who sometimes have to make split second decisions to keep Queenslanders safe. The bill protects these workers and says that, if you back your judgement, we will back you. 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 14, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

Hon. GW ELMES (Noosa—LNP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs and Minister Assisting the Premier) (4.52 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. GW ELMES (Noosa—LNP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs and Minister Assisting the Premier) (4.52 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.

**EDUCATION (QUEENSLAND CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY)
BILL**

Resumed from 29 October 2013 (see p. 3591).

Second Reading

 **Hon. JH LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Minister for Education, Training and Employment) (4.53 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I would like to thank the Education and Innovation Committee for its detailed consideration of the Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Bill 2013. The committee has prepared a comprehensive report on the bill. I note that the committee received a detailed briefing from the Department of Education, Training and Employment, considered written submissions from stakeholders and invited selected stakeholders to a hearing before preparing its report. The committee tabled its report on 18 December 2013 and I am pleased to note that the committee supports the passage of the bill.

The committee also made a number of recommendations for minor amendments to the bill, which I will respond to now. Recommendation 2 was that clause 73(2)(a) of the bill be amended to clarify that the minister may direct the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority—the QCAA—to grant a licence to use QCAA material to bodies other than the state. Clause 73 does not prevent the QCAA granting a licence to use QCAA materials to bodies other than the state. As such, the bill does not need to be amended.

Recommendation 3 was to amend the bill to define the term ‘chief executive’. Section 33 of the Acts Interpretation Act 1954 applies to the bill to determine which chief executive is referred to—that is, the chief executive of the Department of Education, Training and Employment. The reliance on the Acts Interpretation Act to define the term ‘chief executive’ is standard drafting practice, and therefore the amendment is considered unnecessary.

Finally, recommendation 4 was to amend clause 41 to specify that it applies to casual staff employed to carry out the statutory functions of the QCAA as specified in division 2 of the bill. The government supports this recommendation. Clause 41 enables the QCAA to employ casual staff under this section rather than the Public Service Act 2008. The terms and conditions of employment for these casual staff employed will be set by the Governor in Council. This clause is similar to section 69A of the current Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2002. However, section 69A is restricted to employment of casual staff to assist in carrying out testing, moderation and certification functions. The section is primarily used by the Queensland Studies Authority to engage and remunerate teachers engaged in moderation, assessment and testing. Clause 41 expands on section 69A to enable casual staff to be employed by the QCAA to assist with any of its functions. This enables flexibility regarding which functions casual staff can be employed to undertake.

The committee is concerned the provision could be used to enable the QCAA to employ staff on a casual basis to undertake activities unrelated to its statutory functions—for example, cleaning staff—without regard to industrial relations arrangements setting minimum conditions. This was not the intention. Accordingly, I will move an amendment during consideration in detail to clause 41 to clarify the policy intention that casual staff may only be employed for the purpose of carrying out the statutory functions of the QCAA.


The committee also raised a number of points for clarification in its report. Responses to these matters are contained in the government’s response to the committee’s report, which I now table.

Tabled paper: Education and Innovation Committee: Report No. 28—Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Bill 2013, government response [\[4495\]](#).

This bill marks another step forward by the government in preparing Queensland’s education sector for the future. In light of the significant reform and change underway in the sector, this bill will modernise the statutory framework and provide the necessary governance arrangements for QCAA to lead the implementation of major educational reforms on behalf of the government. As a result, the QCAA will replace the Queensland Studies Authority, the QSA, and be responsible for initiatives such as the implementation of the Australian Curriculum.

Importantly, the bill will establish QCAA as a robust curriculum authority. Parents can be assured that the QCAA will operate at arm's length from both the executive branch of government as well as the schools sector. This will enable the QCAA, without fear or favour, to administer high stakes assessment processes, such as senior certification and tertiary entrance ranking, as well as develop syllabuses where there is no Australian Curriculum.

The QCAA will continue the important work that has already begun in response to the parliamentary committee report on senior assessment in mathematics, chemistry and physics. It will be charged to give effect to changes arising from the independent review of senior assessment and tertiary entrance processes currently being conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research. It will also lead the development and rollout of new senior subjects based on the Australian Curriculum. These are important reforms and underpin the government's commitment to improving education outcomes for Queensland students. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Mrs SCOTT** (Woodridge—ALP) (4.58 pm): I rise today to contribute to the debate on the Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Bill 2013, which was introduced in this House by the Minister for Education, Training and Employment on 29 October 2013. At the outset, I would like to put on the record that the Labor opposition will be supporting this bill. However, we have some concerns about various areas of the bill which I will outline today. As all members of this House know, this bill—the Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Bill 2013—will abolish the existing Queensland Studies Authority, commonly referred to as the QSA, and replace it with a new body called the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

We on this side of the House value the importance of education, and that is why we support any amendments and change in this space to ensure that bodies which govern the education of our youth in Queensland are properly resourced and provided with the appropriate charter within which to work. This bill, as the explanatory notes outline, will establish a new body which will primarily be focused on, and responsible for, the development of the syllabus, the creation of supporting material, the oversight of the implementation of the Australian Curriculum testing and certifications and the way that individuals enter into our tertiary system through the tertiary entrance ranking, just to name a few.

As we all know, the former Labor federal government struck an historic decision on 2 October 2008 at the Council of Australian Governments, COAG, to establish a national education authority with the primary function to craft national curriculum and assessment and act as the reporting agency at a national level. Subsequently legislation was brought before the Australian parliament in the form of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Bill 2008 and received assent on 8 December 2008, thus creating the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. The authority is run by a 13-person board with Professor Barry McGaw AO as the chairperson and deputy chairperson Mr Tony Mackay. The authority receives directions from the Australian government and state and territory ministers for education through the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood.

This federal authority is now responsible for a variety of tasks which were being undertaken by our state based QSA. These tasks, as indicated on their website, include: a national curriculum from kindy to year 12 in specified learning areas which extends to 15 subjects in the areas of English, mathematics, science, history and geography; a national assessment program aligned to the national curriculum that measures students' progress; and a national data collection and reporting program. While the national curriculum will cover the majority of subjects taught within our Queensland schools, there will be some subjects such as accounting or language subjects, which are usually taught at a senior level, which will not be covered by the national curriculum. That is why it is so important as state legislators that we amend our model to ensure that we have a working system for our children which will integrate with the national curriculum, but also allow for an organisation—in this case the new Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority—to fill the void by creating the syllabus and associated supporting material for subjects that are not covered by the national curriculum; that is, accounting.

Before I continue with some of the concerns that the Labor opposition has with the bill, I would like to briefly talk about the current Queensland Studies Authority. The Queensland Studies Authority was established on 1 July 2002 after the passing of the Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2002 and will be 12 years old on 1 July 2014, when it is abolished and replaced with the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority. The QSA has overseen many changes within the education landscape in Queensland as the peak education body. The QSA has overseen the introduction of

NAPLAN testing; the expanding interests in vocational education; universal access to kindergarten; the replacement of the Senior Certificate process with the new Queensland Certificate of Education; and, one of Labor's key achievements, the introduction of the prep year to Queensland.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has been involved in the QSA over the many years it has been in operation. From the senior leadership team, staff of the QSA, members of the governing body, teachers who actively participate in the education process on a daily basis and the students themselves, on behalf of Queensland Labor I thank you for your service. I would particularly like to thank the current members of the governing body, which is comprised of a wide range of individuals from teachers, parents, representatives from the state, Catholic and independent schools, union and high education groups. Particularly I would like to thank those members who are currently on the governing body who have a background in a union or the tertiary sector, because they will no longer have a seat at the table representing their members. So thank you to Professor Robert Lingard from UQ; Alan Finch from Bond University; Margaret Leary, a parent representative; Matthew Campbell from Griffith University; Samantha Pidgeon from the Queensland Teachers Union; and Dr Paul Giles from the Independent Education Union of Australia (Queensland and Northern Territory Branch), just to name a few. May I also thank Miss Petria Walton, the official nominee of the chief executive and acting director-general of Education Queensland, who was so helpful to the committee in her explanation of the work of the QSA.

These people and the organisations that they represent will no longer have a seat at the peak decision-making table in Queensland. I note with interest the minister's comments during his introductory speech on 29 October 2013 in this House where he stated—

Members of the governing body will be selected on the basis of knowledge, experience and standing relevant to the functions of the authority.

Minister, I do not think you could get any closer to individuals who have a deep knowledge and experience of the education system than members of the tertiary system who are actively engaged in education in Queensland and in educating our future educators. Members of the Queensland Teachers Union and the Independent Education Union of Australia have a wealth of priceless experience in our education system that would be valuable to the new Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority. Reducing the overall size of the governing body from 20 to seven, with three members of the schooling sectors and four ministerial nominees, is not representative, as it purposely excludes members of unions who represent principals and teachers, and also excludes members from tertiary bodies and parent representative organisations.

As the Queensland Teachers Union of Employees and the Independent Education Union (Queensland and Northern Territory Branch) stated in their submission to the Education and Innovation Committee—

A fundamental characteristic and strength of the Queensland curriculum assessment and reporting structures over the past forty years has been the wide representation at the governing body, committee and LARC levels. All stakeholders—employers, universities, parents and teachers through their unions—have been part of the decision making of the QSA. Such representativeness has contributed to the public and professional confidence that exists at the QSA. The proposed structuring of the QSCA will undermine that confidence created by wide representation.

These two unions continue to oppose the limited membership of the new governing body, which does not comprise any direct representation of teachers, principals, teachers unions, universities and the tertiary sector or, most importantly, parents. They say—

Nominees from each of the schooling sectors may no longer be practising teachers and school leaders, and may not be familiar with the day to day operational challenges of implementing curriculum and the associated tasks in terms of assessment, including moderation and reporting.

That takes me back to the minister's remarks made during his introductory speech, and I will repeat them for the benefit of not only the minister but all members of this House. He stated, 'Members of the governing body will be selected on the basis of knowledge, experience and standing relevant to the functions of the authority.' I ask: how could you exclude a class of people from being mandatorily provided a seat at the table considering their combined level of knowledge and expertise? If the minister truly values and means what he said, he would change the configuration of the governing body or give a guarantee today that the members whom he as minister gets to approve are selected from not only the education union movement but also the tertiary sector and parent representative bodies.

The make-up of the governing body was not the only point of contention raised during the submission process with the notion of commercialisation being raised by many stakeholders who made submissions to the parliamentary committee inquiry. What we on this side of the House have

seen and, indeed, what all Queenslanders have seen is a government which panders to the top end of town and puts profits before the interests of the people of Queensland. Time and time again we have seen this from ministers opposite, and we saw it in one of the government's first actions on coming to government in commissioning a so-called independent Commission of Audit, headed up by a Liberal, which recommended asset sales and the latest buzz word, contestability. We all know what that means. So it is no surprise that key stakeholders are worried about our education system being outsourced.

As the QTU and Independent Education Union have stated, both unions are greatly concerned by sections of the bill which give the new authority, under direction from the minister, the power to develop and sell products to end users in schools such as teachers and principals. While we acknowledge that the minister during his speech advised there is no intention to charge Queensland schools and students for the products, he did state that he would generally expect that the implementation of new syllabuses and Australian Curriculum subjects would be funded by the authority while ongoing support would be provided on a user-pays basis. The QTU and the Independent Education Union stated—

The intellectual property of teachers who contribute to support materials for syllabuses should not be commercially exploited for profit. In addition, it is highly likely that commercialisation of products such as professional development programmes will lead to an increase in costs for schools seeking to access professional development ... provided by the new authority.

It is absolutely vital that our education system does not become a user-pays commercialised system in which principals, teachers, parents and students have to purchase resources, support material and syllabuses that were once provided to them without charge. The minister today must rule out that he is planning to commercialise Queensland schools at arm's length.

Let me now turn to the issue of the relationship between the Minister for Education of the day and the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority. While we agree with the notion of a statement of expectation set out by the minister, which is reflective of what occurs in the national authority—the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority—we do have concerns with the content of the statement of expectations and support the QTU and Independent Education Union of Australia Queensland and Northern Territory branch view that the expectations outlined in the statement must be realistic, achievable and sufficiently resourced to meet the expectations, particularly given budget and staffing cuts which have been imposed and continue to place pressure on the authority. I call on the minister today to guarantee that there will be adequate resources and funding provided to the new authority to ensure that our education system in this state will thrive.


While on the topic of it being at arm's length, I find a statement in the explanatory notes contradictory to what the minister stated in his introductory speech. On page 1 of the explanatory notes for all to see is this statement, 'Putting responsibility for syllabus content at arm's length from government helps to address any perceived concerns with the politicisation of school curriculum.' Contrast this statement with the statement made by the minister in the House. He stated, 'The bill also enables the minister to direct the authority in the exercise of its functions if circumstances arise where it is in the public interest to do so.' This appears to be very contradictory to the intention of the explanatory notes. I ask the minister to explain and to assure the House that no undue pressure or directives will be made under his watch. I also ask him: what safeguards will be put in place to ensure that the politicisation of school curriculum does not occur?

Finally, I would like to thank the hardworking secretariat of the Education and Innovation Committee. The committee has worked tirelessly over the past few months not only on the bill before us today but also on a variety of important issues such as our inquiry into the assessment of senior maths, chemistry and physics in Queensland schools, which has spanned many months. On a personal note I must say that I found this a very interesting committee to be on. I thank in particular Ms Bernice Watson, research director; Ms Emily Booth, principal research officer; Ms Carolyn Heffernan, executive assistant; and all other parliamentary staff, including the Parliamentary Library, who worked tirelessly assisting us as legislators to scrutinise bills and the issues of the day. I want to thank the hardworking members of the committee. They were very capably led by our chair, the member for Burdekin, Rosemary Menkens. I thank Rosemary for her leadership.

As I said at the outset of my contribution today, the Labor opposition will be supporting this bill. Queensland Labor believes in the value of education. We believe that education is the cornerstone to a successful and prosperous life. Education can open doors and provides opportunities. Queensland Labor has a proud track record on delivering on education, and the Queensland Studies Authority has been involved every step of the way over the past 12 years. We introduced the prep year to Queensland. We launched our earning and learning program to ensure that every young

Queenslander is either learning or has a job. Labor made changes to the school starting age for year 1 pupils, making students on average six months older when they commenced school. We introduced the new Queensland Senior Certificate, which the current Queensland Studies Authority was a part of implementing. We funded an \$850 million State Schools of Tomorrow initiative, which revolutionised some of our most needy schools. We established, with the support of the Queensland Studies Authority, the first two Queensland academies in 2007, providing students with an opportunity to excel in science, maths and the creative arts, with a third health services academy opening shortly after. We shifted year 7 into high school. A total of 74 new or refurbished schools were constructed, and we increased the Education budget over time.

We could not have achieved this without the support of the many teachers, principals, teacher aides, clerical staff, cleaners, parents, students and in particular the hardworking staff at not only the Queensland Studies Authority but the Department of Education, Training and Employment. This bill before the House today provides the next step forward for our education system and I look forward to seeing the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority work with our new Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority into the future to deliver positive results. With those remarks and queries to the minister, I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (5.22 pm): I rise to support the Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Bill 2013 and thank the Minister for Education, Training and Employment, the Hon. John-Paul Langbroek, for bringing this bill before the House and for also providing Queenslanders with amazing improvements in the educational sector since becoming the Minister for Education almost two years ago. It is also important to note the contribution of Rosemary Menkens, the member for Burdekin, in reviewing the bill. I note that her committee, through its hard work, has recommended that this bill be passed.

It is extremely important to have an opportunity in the House today to talk about the amazing improvements in terms of the education system. This bill is something that our government is doing to ensure that we are continuing to improve education of all of our children, because that is what we promised to do. As a can-do government we have promised to improve the educational outcomes for all Queensland children, and debating this bill in the House today is just one small step towards that. However, I do note—and I will touch on it later in my speech—that there have been just some amazing improvements, particularly improvements in the amount of funding that our can-do government has provided for education in this great state of Queensland. I thank the Minister for Education for his hard work in that regard.

In the context of significant changes occurring within the education system, in particular the introduction of the Australian Curriculum, as a parent of three school-aged children it is really important to note that we need to move with the times. The previous authority was called the Queensland Studies Authority. Whilst we need to thank it for its contribution, it is clear that this legislation is required because the legislative framework that the previous authority worked under was quite out of date given that it was over 10 years old. Obviously that has prompted the decision to establish the new body, the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

Whilst this new statutory body is responsible for numerous things such as syllabus development, it is really an interesting key to what is actually happening in the education space. Whilst I get to speak to numerous teachers around my electorate—and I note that there are some 36 schools in the great electorate of Nanango—I understand that, while the introduction of this new national curriculum is a positive move, it also has been a great challenge to implement such a major change. That is why I am happy to support the establishment of this new authority as it will play a pivotal role in helping to change our educational landscape in Queensland and supporting our teachers under a new, modern legislative framework.

While I am speaking about the amazing work that the good teachers do in the Nanango electorate, I want to quickly congratulate our senior students who graduated from grade 12 in 2013. If you reside within the Nanango electorate, you have the opportunity to go to either Kingaroy, Nanango, Kilcoy or Toogoolawah state high schools as well as St Mary's Catholic College. After meeting many of our graduates at presentation nights around the region last year, I know that our future is in very good hands. For example, the Kingaroy State High School senior dux Thomas Stevens received an OP1 and has elected to study electrical engineering at the Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra. Another four students at Kingaroy State High achieved a score of OP2, including Lauren Cross and our international women's cricketer Holly Ferling. She got an OP2 whilst doing two international tours during year 12. I very much look forward to introducing young Holly Ferling to the Minister for Education, who has made time in his very busy schedule to meet with

young Holly Ferling next month, and thank you, Minister, for making the time, because I believe she will be an amazing ambassador for state highs across the state. Also achieving an OP2 at Kingaroy State High were Jess Elford and Karl Humphreys. At St Mary's in Kingaroy, of the OP eligible students, 25 per cent received an OP between 1 and 5 and 93 per cent received an OP between 1 and 15.

Mrs Menkens: And I used to teach at Nanango high school.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is really interesting to note the amazing success of Nanango State High. The committee chair, Mrs Rosemary Menkens, contributed very well to that school as she was a teacher there—

Mrs Menkens: A long time ago.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON:—apparently a long time ago, but maybe that was the foundation—

Honourable members interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mrs Menkens clearly understands where I came from when I said that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ruthenberg): Member for Nanango, would you like to withdraw that statement? Please continue.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I withdraw. Mrs Rosemary Menkens—

Dr DOUGLAS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I found that comment offensive and I ask that it be withdrawn.

An honourable member interjected.

Dr DOUGLAS: It is not so much about Mrs Menkens. I am sure that if it was withdrawn it would be recorded fairly, that Mrs Menkens—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Gaven, while your intention is honourable, unfortunately you cannot ask for a withdrawal on behalf of somebody else. If the member for Nanango would continue.


Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I withdraw. It is the wonderful contributions of great teachers like Mrs Menkens that produce great results. The other issue that is really important for me to note is that the education minister, along with Dr John McVeigh, the Minister for Agriculture, has enabled Toogoolawah State High to become an agricultural state high.

This is just amazing. Last year, 93 per cent of that school's senior students achieved a QCE and 80 per cent received an OP of between 1 and 15. I apologise because I went off track a little bit when talking about Nanango State High School. I needed to say that 10 per cent of the senior students there received an OP of 1 to 5 whilst 55 per cent of senior students achieved an OP of between 6 and 15. But most importantly, 100 per cent of Nanango State High School senior students received their QCE certificate. That is an amazing result for my region.

Ultimately, this bill is all about achieving these types of results. It is helping to shape the best possible education system for our children so that they have the best possible opportunity to live their dreams and achieve to the best of their ability. If we can help set up a system that allows teachers to get on with the job of teaching without worrying about the administrative systems involved in creating a good syllabus, then that is worth supporting.

In the small amount of time remaining to me, it is important that I note our government's amazing Great Results funding, which is all about achieving better student outcomes. The great electorate of Nanango was extremely lucky because I am able to announce, thanks to the hard work of the education minister, \$1.8 million worth of Great Results funding into that electorate. I hear members opposite talk about us supporting only the top end of town. That offends me. Small schools in my electorate have received large amounts of Great Results funding. Crows Nest State School is one of the Flying Start schools. We are working towards the Australian Curriculum through Flying Start. That school received \$65,000. Nanango State High School received \$52,000. Kilcoy State High School received \$146,000. Kingaroy State School received \$137,000. Some small schools did not miss out either. Unfortunately, my list is too long for me to rattle off here today, but Coolabunia State School received \$30,000. This school achieved 100 per cent in the Premier's Reading Challenge. This school really needs congratulating.

I again thank the Minister for Education for bringing this bill before the House. I am really proud to be a member of this can-do government so that I can stand up here and support this legislation.

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (5.32 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Bill 2013. It is great to be able to follow the member for Nanango, who made such a passionate speech. This bill will help bring our education system in Queensland into step with changes that have occurred in education during the years since the current Queensland Studies Authority—the QSA—came into existence. Changes such as the introduction of the Australian Curriculum, the introduction of a preparatory year, universal access to kindergarten, NAPLAN testing and the trend towards vocational education in our schools means that this is a very exciting time for those who care deeply about setting up a better education system for our young people in Queensland.

However, this time of great change needs to be managed carefully. There is no better time than right now to take a step forward by replacing the QSA with a new body that is better structured to work with the current and future educational landscape. Having worked as part of the committee on its inquiry into this legislation, I firmly believe that the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority—the QCAA—that will be established by this bill is vital to achieving quality educational outcomes in Queensland schools now and into the future.


A key role of the QCAA will be to provide guidance, content and assessment processes where no provision exists in the Australian Curriculum. As the minister outlined in his introductory speech, the Australian Curriculum will set content and standards for key school subjects but not the entire range of subjects taught in our schools. It will still be up to each state to develop its own syllabus to determine content, standards of achievement and assessment processes for any subjects that are not covered by the national curriculum. In particular, with regard to the senior years 11 and 12, the Australian Curriculum goes only so far as to provide guidelines for content and standards of achievements in 15 subjects. It is still up to the states to provide a syllabus that determines how the content needs to be delivered and the assessment process in those subjects.

Apart from developing the syllabus for subjects where no provision exists in the Australian Curriculum, the functions of the QCAA will also include developing and accrediting kindergarten guidelines; developing and administering tests such as the Queensland Core Skills Test and NAPLAN; developing and administering processes to support school based assessment; supporting schools and early childhood education and care providers in the implementation of syllabus, the Australian Curriculum and kindergarten guidelines; handling student certification and the associated management of processes and student accounts; and ranking students for tertiary entrance. Clearly, this type of work that the QCAA will be doing should be the role of experienced educators representing a cross-section of our schools. Putting the responsibility of determining syllabus content and assessment procedures with an authority that is at arm's length from the government ensures that the most qualified people are doing this very important work and relieves concerns about the politicisation of our school curriculum.

I support the sentiments of the minister who, in his introductory speech, recognised the hard work of those who served on the QSA. However, it is now time for a more streamlined governing body to take over the job of guiding education outcomes in Queensland. I believe that the new QCAA, with its seven-member governing body, will be capable of providing clear strategic direction and managing resources and effort across a range of demands. I note the provision in the legislation to include representatives from the three major school groups—state, independent and Catholic—to provide a balance of interests. Although the size of the governing body may have been reduced, the working committees that will advise them will include participation by a range of stakeholders including parents, employers, universities and training providers, thereby retaining vital input from a cross-section of our community.

I turn now to another significant difference between the existing QSA and the new QCAA. The new authority will be well positioned to take advantage of the significant commercial opportunities that come with having a world-class education system. The QCAA will have the capacity to commercially develop its own intellectual property. Strong opportunities are emerging to market high-quality educational products and services to international schools and students and it makes sense to utilise those opportunities. I note that during the inquiry a number of submissions expressed concern that such commercialisation may signal an intent to charge Queensland schools and students for core syllabus and curriculum products. I thank the minister for the assurance provided in his speech in response to the committee's report that there is no intention on the part of this government to charge Queensland's schools for those products.

This bill, which establishes the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority, is a positive step towards fulfilling this government's commitment to bolstering our education system to meet the needs of modern Queensland. In closing, I thank my colleagues on the Education and Innovation Committee. I thank the secretariat—the wonderful people we work with—and, of course, I thank the minister for bringing this bill to the House.

 **Dr DOUGLAS** (Gaven—UAP) (5.37 pm): This bill replaces the Queensland Studies Authority with the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority. As has been stated by multiple speakers to this bill, this will occur on 1 July 2014. The justification for the change seems to be that many things have changed other than the children themselves. In the latter case, the faces have changed but the expectations of them from their parents, the state and themselves would not seem to be any different. In the former case, from prep to year 10, in Queensland we have moved to an Australian Curriculum with an initial emphasis on English, mathematics, science and history with SOSE and geography, which are set to follow the 2016 placement of the former subject for years 11 and 12.

To be fair, the states are being asked by the federal government to provide subject development, but content and standards set by the Australian Curriculum senior syllabus of other subjects inclusive of the assessment program will be provided by the states. There is probably a reasonable case that can be mounted for a new authority to oversee these changes, so we intend to support this bill.

Despite all of those functions, the authority will be the overseeing body that defines the senior certificate and tertiary entrance. I am aware that the minister has now flagged that the OP score system is to be scrapped. I accept that the minister has stated that these decisions are still up in the air and are part of a consultation process and review being completed by ACER and the government.

I support the decision regarding the potential removal of the OP scores. It has become too widely used to rate schools and areas rather than being used as a guide for tertiary entrance. It has led to a new industry—although I would have to say it is fairly well evolved—in both schools and student curriculum choices which are not always beneficial to children's education and their learning for life. I realise it is a very difficult mechanism over which to fairly select and rank different students, but it does seem that the OP score has outlived its usefulness. It may be that all such scores have a twilight clause from the time of their inception and we must plan for this repeatedly in view of the minister's flagged intention to replace it.

Critically, the universities would rank students under the new system as occurs in New South Wales with senior students' subject results decided by 50 per cent external assessment, set and marked by the Queensland Studies Authority, the rest from school based assessments which are proposed to be externally moderated. That seems fair. Strangely, this proposal also suggests universities use individual subject results, special tests, interviews and student portfolios when ranking school leavers. I say this because it has been found that for the Queensland medical school, when it reviewed the process and removed the interview from part of the GAMSAT process for entry, only 26 per cent of females were able to gain entry from the original 58 per cent when they were admitted under the old interview system. So essentially where grade point average and GAMSAT were used alone to assess domestic graduate entry, near 50 per cent of the previous number of females were excluded. This seems an inherently loaded gender bias which, in fact, gives a negative result. While this is purely in relation to females and medical school entry, it could be argued that one could extend this argument right across-the-board because the new scoring system could be used widely.


To date, using the prior method, there was no objective difference in students' performance from entry to graduation. It could be said that if we want to achieve a loaded gender result with an imbalance it may be that if the government makes proposals that are ultimately accepted with no demand from the QCAA, the new authority, that interviews are not included as part of the entry process as mandatory rather than just optional as the assessment criteria, we will see a standard of gender bias that gives us a poor end outcome because we allow the university ranking control and, by default, the loss of total control over those accepted for entry. Whilst some people might think this inherently addresses what could have been loaded the wrong way, to actually have a result where it is a 50 per cent load and reduces the number of women entering university is a very poor result when we only have five million people.

There is obviously a lot more to the QCAA than its role in determining tertiary entrance or senior certification, but it can be argued that this is the culmination of the whole educational package offered and funded by a state government. This could be stated because the federal government

essentially part funds and controls tertiary education without state input. VET funding by the states continues but it is always being reconstructed. While every year from prep to grade 12 is in itself a fundamental step in its own right, it is grade 12 graduation in 2014 and beyond where the big money is acquitted as worthwhile or not. It always has been.

The last 30 years seem to have been years of declining literacy and numeracy for no other reason than we took our eyes off the ball. Until NAPLAN here in Queensland it can be sustained that we had no real comparative data that allowed us to assess where we all were at critical points in time—that is, over time working out where we were using comparative data that was accurate and measurable. NAPLAN and the Queensland Core Skills Test will be administered by the QCAA. One wonders whether the Core Skills Test needs to be looked at again because people try to coach for that test and that may inherently lead to a loaded bias.

It is of concern that there is a statement in the minister's introductory speech on this bill that there is a user-pays element to the support for schools implemented in the syllabus and also the Australian Curriculum subjects. I am aware that the QTU have questioned the minister's right to intervene and also imposed the possible later introduction of an HSC type external examination. On the latter point, I cannot agree with them on the basis of one review that has occurred over the last 20 years. The HSC has stood the test of time on most of the research in other states. It is very difficult to see that their argument holds any water. There is an unacceptable view, in my opinion, that the HSC external exam is to be opposed for all manner of reasons, none of which can survive scrutiny when one examines what has occurred in other states and what has not been occurring in Queensland. Sadly, I almost wonder whether they are only using stress levels in students, which is the argument that was used to justify their own position. It could be easily said that external exams are more equitable for the students themselves. This new arrangement should be about what is better for students and their future.

 **Mr SYMES** (Lytton—LNP) (5.44 pm): I rise to support the Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Bill 2013 as a member of the Education and Innovation Committee. Under this bill the main objective is to establish a new statutory body which will be responsible for developing syllabus, testing, moderation, certification, tertiary entry rankings and the administration of student accounts. The authority will have all the powers of an individual, such as the ability to establish committees to report to it on specific matters, including syllabus development. The authority, however, must not enter into any agreement in relation to property, for example leasing premises for its accommodation and functions, without written approval from the Minister for Education. Even after the establishment and implementation through ACARA of the Australian Curriculum there remains the need for a single body to oversee school curriculum assessment and testing frameworks within Queensland due to four reasons, including that the state body will retain responsibility for assessment procedures and the structure of senior courses, and the Australian Curriculum will extend to 15 subjects in English, maths, science, history, geography. Any syllabuses that are needed in other areas will be developed by the states. Another point I would like to make in relation to the debate of this bill is that all Australian states and territories have statutory bodies that are responsible for senior curriculum processes to ensure comparable school based assessment, including moderation and issuing student certificates.

Under this bill the authority will replace the Queensland Studies Authority which will create a robust and flexible statutory entity with strong governance which is clear and consistent with the current educational environment within Queensland. This bill allows the authority to have widespread functions including developing, purchasing and revising the syllabus for senior subjects—years 11 and 12—whilst the QCAA must adopt the Australian Curriculum content and standards of achievement if there is an Australian Curriculum for a specific subject. This will also help with flexibility for subjects that are not included in the Australian Curriculum. The bill allows the authority to develop, purchase and revise the marking prescribed tests, for example, the Queensland Core Skills Test, as well as national common tests including NAPLAN.

Student accounts under this bill relate to the records kept on individual students' results in certification studies and the participation in eligible options during the compulsory participation phase. Under the provisions of this bill, recognised schools will be given access to information in students' accounts as well as the authority. Clause 70 of this bill gives the power to the minister, if required, to direct that the authority must report to the education minister about the effectiveness, efficiency, economy and timeliness of the authority and its systems and processes, including the operational processes of the authority.

The composition of the governance arrangement under this bill includes a seven-member body with nominees from the three schooling sectors and four ministerial nominees on the basis of expertise. I believe this is the best approach for a fair and equitable representation for such an important board as it covers a cross-section of educational systems and institutions which is very similar to most Queensland electorates, including Lytton, which have a mixture of independent schools, independent public schools, public schools and flexible learning centres. This bill will help the Queensland education system stay in line with educational systems in other states and territories, especially with regard to the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. This bill is in line with the Newman government's stance on making Queensland's educational system the best in the nation and investing in young people's education to the same degree as the Great Results Guarantee which was announced in January.

Last week I had the honour of attending the Wynnum State School assembly to discuss the importance of studying hard and the Queensland government's guarantee of \$223,975 for 2014 to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes so that those school students will have the basics to take them through higher education and beyond. This LNP government is committed to improving the education of Queensland students through investing in improving existing school buildings and establishing the Great Results Guarantee to help resource the early years of primary and secondary schooling, providing the building blocks and fundamentals for students to reach their goals through their adult years.

Mr Costigan: A great initiative.

Mr SYMES: It is a great initiative. I applaud the education minister and I commend the bill to the House.



Mr BOOTHMAN (Albert—LNP) (5.50 pm): I rise to support the Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Bill 2013. As all members know, education is a continually changing landscape that is heavily influenced by technology. New fields of endeavour are constantly emerging and employers have expectations around those fields of endeavour. They expect results. They expect individuals to be well and truly trained when they leave school. Gone are the days of a set career path. Today, students have countless opportunities before them. We have to ensure access to education in many different forms so that individuals can develop and hone their skills. With evolution comes opportunity. Certainly, this places an enormous pressure on educational professionals who are continually creating new ways to learn to meet ever-changing demands. The advent of technologies such as mobile networks, the internet et cetera puts additional pressures on educational institutions.

In recent years we have witnessed fundamental changes in the standardisation of testing with the implementation of NAPLAN and national schools reporting. That gives the families in our electorates the ability to sit down and say, 'Okay, this school is performing very well in this area and I feel it will be a very good school for my child because she will get the education that she needs.' That information is on the internet. It is important information for parents, because we all want what is best for our children. That is crucial to us as parents. While I know that all members will say this about their own electorates, in the Albert electorate we are truly blessed with fantastic educational facilities and principals and staff who are proactive.

Mr Costigan interjected.

Mr BOOTHMAN: I take the interjection from the member for Whitsunday.

Mr Crandon: You are right beside the electorate of Coomera.

Mr BOOTHMAN: I am right beside the electorate of Coomera.

A government member interjected.

Mr BOOTHMAN: No more queuing. It shows how important is our focus on education. One of the key outcomes of the Queensland Plan was the importance of education and skilling the next generation for the rigours of tomorrow. Over a decade ago, the QSA, the Queensland Studies Authority, was formed. Since that time, education has continued to evolve and change. The creation of the Australian Curriculum content and standards of achievement means that we need to change. In recent times, the Australian Curriculum has been rolled out in Queensland schools from prep to year 12 in the subjects of mathematics, English and history. In the not-too-distant future, other subjects will be developed for years 11 and 12.

The Education and Innovation Committee had a long and extensive inquiry into mathematics, chemistry and physics. That inquiry was very in-depth and it ran for a long period. We listened to all parties involved. Our committee chair, Rosemary Menkens, my fellow committee members and the committee staff did an absolutely fantastic job. This is about the future education of children in this state. We listened to industry professionals and all the parties involved, which was absolutely crucial to understanding what is needed. It was an extremely interesting and thought-provoking inquiry.

As I have previously stated, education needs to keep up with demand. When it comes down to it, the Queensland Studies Authority has served its purpose. However, we cannot sit on our hands. We must rise to meet the challenges for the next generation. We need to put something in place for the next decade and beyond. It is a testament to the Newman government that we are committed to putting in place a statutory body to oversee school curriculum and assessment. This framework should be instigated by independent experts who have a deep understanding of education to ensure that we are prepared for the changing landscape of education. We need to accommodate the potential changes arising from the work of the Australian Council for Education Research. That shows the foresight of the legislation introduced by the minister, John-Paul Langbroek, which will implement changes to the curriculum without the need for significant legislative amendments. That is foresight. It is about understanding that education is continually fluid and that we need to be able to make changes where necessary.

As proposed under the legislation, the governing body of the new Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority will have seven members to give a strategic and streamlined approach. It is most important that those individuals have a clear understanding of school operating environments. Appointing individuals who do not have the necessary knowledge about how our schools work is a waste of time. Again, this shows that the government is listening to the experts in our school environments and is proactively approaching this situation by understanding what it is that we need on the front line. The governing body will include one nominee from each of the three schooling sectors and potential stakeholders will include parents, teachers, principals, training providers, and industry and university representatives.

The authority will be independent in key areas such as individual student achievement, certifications and work programs. To give the House and the residents of Albert a bit of an overview, I point out that the authority's functions will be issuing senior certificates; school based assessment moderation; implementing syllabus in schools and early childhood education centres; developing kindergarten guidelines; ranking students for tertiary placements; and, as I previously highlighted, most importantly, developing the senior syllabus and syllabus for subjects which are not covered by the Australian Curriculum for prep to year 10.

These changes and other announcements in recent times, such as the Great Results Guarantee, have made a real difference to the schools in the Albert electorate. Some \$2.1 million in funding for 2014 is making a real difference. I have a very good working relationship with my principals. I enjoy their company and seeing them on a regular basis. I can certainly say that this funding is music to their ears. This funding will directly help them solve local issues. It gives principals the ability to hire additional specialist teaching staff to actually get on top of the issues faced by students when it comes the RRRs—reading, writing and arithmetic. It is a testament to this minister that he is actually working with his federal colleagues to get a no-strings attached approach to dealing with this issue.


Colin Torr is the principal at Mount Warren Park State School. He is a fantastic principal. I told him about this funding at midnight. The next day he said to me, 'Mark, I asked for a quick emergency meeting with my staff members to discuss how we could best spend this money.' Quite literally, it is the best funding they have ever had for early intervention and to deal with students who are falling behind and need a bit of assistance to get up to the national standard. This money from the Greater Results Guarantee is absolutely fantastic and it is certainly appreciated.

Another proactive approach of this government to education in this state is independent state schools. It is an absolutely fantastic initiative. I have schools literally lining up to be a part of this program. I am happy to say that we had two last year that became independent state schools—Highland Reserve State School and Coomera Springs State School. Fingers crossed we can get more this year.

It gives schools the independence and autonomy to run their school in the best possible manner they can instead of waiting for someone from George Street to give them directions. It is a great initiative. For the principal at Highland Reserve State School, David Roach, and the principal at Coomera Springs State School, Martine Gill, it is a golden light. It gives them the say they need to help their students. This is a proactive approach to education in this state taken by this government.

I thank the minister for his foresight and for his absolute ability to get out there and say, 'This is what we need' and get it done. John Langbroek, if I had a hat I would take my hat off to you. It has been an absolutely fantastic effort. Education in this state is certainly moving in the right direction. It is accommodating the demands of the real world. It is accommodating the changes facing us in this world.

Lastly, I would again like to thank my fellow committee members. Rosemary Menkens does a fantastic job as the committee chair. It is always great to have her as our committee chair. Sometimes she gives me a bit of leniency when I start talking about the Gold Coast, as I did today. We appreciate her efforts. The committee staff are absolutely fantastic. This bill is going in the right direction. It is servicing the constituents of Albert. I thank the minister for his proactive approach.

 **Hon. DF CRISAFULLI** (Mundingburra—LNP) (Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience) (6.05 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak after my good friend the member for Albert. He has set a wonderful example of the dedication of a local member. In my time in public life, both in this place and as deputy mayor, which I have enjoyed immensely, I thought I had done some pretty reasonable hard yards, but never have I spoken to a school principal at midnight. That is a fairly high bar to set and proof of just how good the member for Albert really is.

I support the Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Bill 2013 and the replacement of the Queensland Studies Authority with a new curriculum authority. I rise in support of the bill because I think it is good legislation from a good government that cares about education.

Our government's support for education in Queensland has been unwavering, as has been the determination of the member for Kawana in many of the things that he has addressed. We only have to look at the announcement two weeks ago of the Great Results Guarantee—I will touch on that very briefly shortly—to see that support. The amendments to this legislation are just another example of our ongoing commitment to schools and their teachers and students. The bill provides a new legislative framework and revitalised curriculum and assessment authority.

The Queensland Studies Authority operates under legislation that is now over a decade old. It predates the establishment of the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority and the development of the Australian Curriculum. We all know that our teachers do an amazing job on the front line delivering this curriculum to the kids. They set our children up with vital skills and it is important that we give them every opportunity to be the best possible educators they can be.

These changes ensure that the new curriculum can be overseen properly. For example, unlike the existing QSA Act, the bill includes a specific function to support schools in implementing that curriculum. It also streamlines and simplifies a number of the operational processes set out under the QSA Act, such as processes for the establishment and operation of student accounts. Of course, the previous government had their chance to make these changes when they were in power and did not, but I do acknowledge their support for this bill this evening.

I will make the point that there was some talk before about the composition of the board and the fact that there is not a huge union influence anymore. This is about outcomes. This is about children. It is not about political deals. It is not about making sure there are jobs for mates. It is about getting the right outcome. That is what this does. We have always said that, wherever possible, we will devolve power back to the communities, to the real people—people who are there and want to serve at the grassroots level.


I want to briefly touch on the announcement of the Great Results Guarantee and what is in it for my electorate of Mundingburra. I want to briefly run through my schools and the commitment that was made. The commitment was as follows—I am rounding it to the nearest thousand: Aitkenvale, \$138,000; Annandale, \$195,000; Cranbrook, the first school I went to as a local government councillor, \$128,000; Currajong, \$193,000—

Mr Hathaway interjected.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I will acknowledge that and I will acknowledge the presence of the member for Townsville. We do share a boundary, but, member for Townsville, the saying is 'close but no cigar'. It is in my electorate, thank you very much. The commitment continues as follows: Heatley Secondary College, \$87,000; Heatley State School, \$204,000; Mundingburra State School, \$209,000; Townsville Community Learning Centre, which is the state special school, \$52,000; Vincent State School, \$129,000. That is a total of about \$1.3 million. That does not include Pimlico, which is in the member for Townsville's electorate but well serviced by me.

This has been a great win for the community. I particularly want to acknowledge the enthusiasm that Heatley primary school's principal, Louise Wilkinson, afforded us when she heard the news. She is someone who is doing an incredible job with that school, which is in a very low socioeconomic area, is very disadvantaged and has a large percentage of children with a disability. It is a wonderful school and she does an absolutely amazing job. To hear her enthusiasm about some of things she seeks to achieve with her funding is very exciting.

In closing, I applaud the Minister for Education, Training and Employment. I will not enter into the removal of hats, as the member for Albert sought to do. It is an outstanding piece of legislation. It establishes a robust new Curriculum and Assessment Authority, which will operate to a modern standard, and is from a government that cares about education.

 **Mr LATTER** (Waterford—LNP) (6.10 pm): What a pleasure it is to follow on from the member for Mundingburra, the Minister for Local Government, Mr Crisafulli, because I think he articulates very well the issues that I feel are important in this matter. Whilst I rise to support the Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Bill 2013, I am not going to go into a longwinded explanation of what the bill is doing. I think we understand by this point the establishment of QCAA and its role following on from the QSA and where it fits in with regard to ACARA as the national curriculum body.

What I would like to do is express my sincere appreciation for the work of the Queensland Studies Authority in years gone by. I can tell the House that as a proud member of the Education and Innovation Committee I often get the opportunity to meet people in the education sector, be they teachers or professionals, be they part of a school or professional body or indeed unions. This is a sector where all involved in it are incredibly passionate about it. Indeed, the QSA have served their role with a great deal of pride and distinction. So to them I express my thanks and appreciation for what they have achieved in years gone by.

There were a couple of issues that were raised with the committee as we were looking at the bill and seeking comment. There were issues around tertiary entrance. There were some concerns in that space about perhaps there being a disadvantage with regard to international students having some edge in getting into tertiary studies. I think that was addressed in the committee's report—that those concerns were unfounded and indeed there was no further advantage other than the opportunities that presently exist for international students wanting to study in this space, and that was a sentiment that was supported by the universities.

The other issue that came up concerning commercial exploitation centres around QCAA's ability to develop a syllabus or curriculum and for the potential to market and sell that. There were concerns raised with the committee about that then creating a commercial environment that would subsequently lead to schools having to pay more and more for good-quality curriculum. This was a road that the committee went down with some great interest to determine that that in fact was unlikely to be the case and that by putting QCAA in a position where they could develop the latest and greatest by way of curriculum and by being able to market that—by being able to create a competitive market-driven environment with their product being competitive in its own right—it would in fact potentially drive the price down.

I have to say that not only did I and the committee agree with those findings but also the universities who were consulted through this process and also industry partners in this space felt that that would be the case. That is important when I look at my schools and what is happening in my space, given that through previous funding models, through national partnership models, they were able to develop in their schools programs that enabled them to best deliver, to best meet the needs of the community. Through that sort of environment we really do get an opportunity to develop great processes and programs.

Like the member for Mundingburra and indeed the member for Albert, who expressed their gratitude for the latest round of funding that was made available through Guaranteed Results, I would like to outline what this means for me and my community. Before doing so, though, I note that the education minister, Minister Langbroek, from the very beginning has been advocating with some strength to both the previous and current federal government the importance of securing funding—no-strings attached funding—for schools to be able to deliver and meet the needs of their communities. That is a very individualised approach.

I will not go into the details of the individual line funding that each of my schools have received. Frankly, I think that it is never enough and I think that to do so would devalue the great work that my schools are doing. But let me just say that over \$2 million worth of funding coming into Waterford,

coming into my high schools and primary schools—no strings attached—allowing them to deliver on great results, guaranteed great results, is certainly a very, very welcome relief and that, on the back of the previous government's national partnership funding expiring, it has been a very, very welcome relief.

I promised to keep this brief, but I will say that QCAA, being a very lean, mean machine, if you will—which will still enable consultation with industry partners through the creation of their committees, to make sure that we are engaging with our tertiary education providers, to make sure that we are providing an appropriate level of education in partnership with ACARA so that we meet national curriculum expectations but also giving us the ability to grow and develop in our space and the ability to market that both internally and externally—I think presents a wonderful opportunity. Once again, I think it is in line with this government moving Queensland forward. On that note, it is my pleasure to support the introduction of the bill. In closing, I congratulate the Minister for Education, Minister Langbroek, for doing so.



Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—LNP) (6.17 pm): The purpose, as we have heard, of the Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Bill is to establish a new statutory body known as the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority from 1 July this year. It will replace the Queensland Studies Authority, more frequently referred to as the QSA. This bill repeals the QSA Act.

The Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act was reviewed by the department in 2012-13 from the perspective of the significant changes to the education sector that the introduction of the Australian Curriculum would incur. The government responded to this review and appreciated that there is an ongoing need for a statutory body to oversee school curriculum and assessment framework.

This bill was referred to the Education and Innovation Committee on 29 October. The committee did recommend that this bill be passed, as well as make three other recommendations and outline three points for clarification. I particularly thank the minister for his comments today about those recommendations—particularly the fact that the government has accepted recommendation 4—and also for his response to the points for clarification. Congratulations on the introduction of this bill. It is certainly timely. There was a need for the change and for this new body. It has been accepted right across the sector that there were changing circumstances and we did need this new structure.

The committee's inquiry received nine submissions and all gave either full support or qualified support as well as raise various issues. These issues have received a very detailed response from the department. I thank the departmental staff for their very fine efforts. The government's position is that there be a statutory body that is at arm's length from the executive government and the schooling sector and is in a position to administer assessment processes such as senior certification, tertiary entrance ranking as well as developing syllabuses—or syllabi; I am never quite sure what the plural of 'syllabus' is. Whereas this new statutory body has some very similar functions to the QSA, it also has significant changes in governance, it reflects the Australian Curriculum and it has a commercial ability as well as several other different aspects.

The committee in its report identified and discussed those key differences between the QSA and the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority. The new body, QCAA, will be responsible for syllabus development for all senior subjects in years 11 and 12, syllabus development for prep to year 10 where there is no Australian Curriculum, and guideline development for kindergarten. The QCAA also has other responsibilities in relation to the implementation of syllabus, testing, moderation, tertiary entrance ranking and administration of student accounts.

It is interesting to note that the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority—ACARA—has developed 15 senior subject curricula. As a point of note, there is a difference between a syllabus and a curriculum. A syllabus is more detailed than a curriculum. The ACARA website advises—

... senior secondary Australian Curriculum for each subject should not, therefore, be read as a course for study. Rather it is presented as content and achievement standards for integration into state and territory courses.

That is why QCAA has the role of developing the syllabus over the curriculum content that has been set by ACARA. Subjects studied at senior level that are outside of those 15 subjects would have curricula developed by QCAA. The QCAA will also continue to develop and approve kindergarten guidelines for use in education.

Some submissions did express a wish that QCAA retain a role in syllabus development for national curriculum subjects in P-10 because they felt that the C2C—the curriculum to classroom—which is developed by Education Queensland does not compensate for a lack of a quality syllabus. The department points out, though, that the proposed approach has been supported in consultation with the three Queensland schooling sectors and that QCAA would have a specific function to support schools in the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. This would include the implementation of P-10 Australian Curriculum subjects. It is also important to note that P-10 assessment is now and will remain a matter for determination by individual schools and school authorities. That is certainly this government's approach.

The QCAA will have an additional function of commercial exploitation of its products and services, which is a function not held by QSA. Concern was raised about this issue. However, the department's response that QSA does not charge for core syllabus and curriculum is that there is no expectation that QCAA would change that practice by charging fees. Professional development that is currently provided by the QSA, and no doubt in future by QCAA, is currently paid for by individual schools. It was quoted that 10 per cent of a school's budget is set aside for PD, and this bill will not change that.

The committee did ask for clarification of what the impact of the commercialisation function with respect to costs for schools may or may not be as the matter was raised, and this has been answered. It is the role of QCAA to support schools and provide support materials to them. There were some allegations that the bill provides for senior assessment to be by way of an exam when there has not been a decision made in that regard. It is worth pointing out this bill does not pre-empt any government decisions that could result in changes to the senior assessment process. There has been a change in the governance of the board, which my committee colleague the member for Woodridge raised, and I know that concerns have been expressed about this. There has been a change of numbers from the current 20-member board to seven members, but I fully support the decision that the government has made because modern board governance recommends smaller rather than larger boards. I have been on several boards and there is nothing more unwieldy than a board that has 18 or 20 people on it. We have modern governance principles that apply to all serious board positions. You will not see larger boards than five or seven. Even nine is considered a very large board. I have no doubt that this board will gain the experience of other groups. There are also committees. It will be up to the QCAA board to develop committees beneath that governing board, which I have no doubt they will. There will be a director or CEO appointed. From my experience of working on boards, I would hate to see a larger board than that.

As chair of the Education and Innovation Committee, on behalf of the committee I would like to thank all of the individuals and organisations who provided meaningful submissions to this inquiry. I also wish to thank those people who attended hearings and the departmental heads who provided briefings and further information. As always, I thank the members of the committee. It is a committee that does work very well together. We work well together because we are all passionate and committed to education in Queensland. Most importantly, I must extend the committee's thanks to the research committee, particularly Bernice Watson, who performed such an excellent role, ably assisted by Emily and Caroline.

I am proud to be part of a government that is fully committed to education in Queensland. The government's Great Teachers = Great Results is part of a raft of reforms focused on delivering for Queenslanders. We do have a wonderful group of teachers in Queensland, and this government is supporting them and assisting them to develop their professionalism. I would like to quote from the Great Teachers = Great Results website—

Education is central to the economic prosperity of our great state and it creates opportunities for every Queensland student. The Queensland Government is committed to supporting schools in boosting educational outcomes for young Queenslanders.

Part of that initiative is this legislation. Part of the initiative is a review of the Education (QSA) Act, which are the beginnings of this particular bill. Teaching is one of the most important professions, and I will argue this point any day with any professional because our teachers mould and influence our young people. It is teachers who are creating the pattern for the next generation. The Newman government recognises that. Our focus is on developing the quality and the professionalism of our teaching staff right across Queensland. I certainly commend the minister for his efforts in this respect.

In the very short time I have left, I would like to express my appreciation for the funds that have been flowing into the schools in my electorate. Under the Advancing our Schools Maintenance initiative, we have had \$3.34 million coming into my electorate. The joy on the faces of those

principals when we were able to announce to them that they were finally getting funding for the backlog of maintenance was just amazing. We have heard quite a lot today from other members about the Great Results Guarantee funds that have come into schools. Altogether my electorate has received \$1.63 million, which is an enormous amount of money and certainly will go a long way. I have great pleasure in supporting this bill. I thank the minister for bringing this bill to the parliament.

Debate, on motion of Mrs Menkens, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm.

CRIMINAL CODE (LOOTING IN DECLARED AREAS) AMENDMENT BILL

Order Discharged

Mr JUDGE (Yeerongpilly—UAP) (7.30 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That general business order of the day No. 1, Criminal Code (Looting in Declared Areas) Amendment Bill, be discharged from the *Notice Paper*.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Withdrawal

Mr JUDGE (Yeerongpilly—UAP) (7.31 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That the bill be withdrawn.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

PUBLIC HEALTH (EXCLUSION OF UNVACCINATED CHILDREN FROM CHILD CARE) AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 23 May 2013 (see p. 1798).

Second Reading



Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (7.31 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Health and Community Services Committee has examined the Public Health (Exclusion of Unvaccinated Children from Child Care) Amendment Bill 2013 and tabled its report on Thursday, 26 September 2013. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee for its consideration of the bill and for the work done by the committee and its staff. I am, however, disappointed that the committee's first recommendation was that the bill should not be passed. The committee's second recommendation was that, despite its concerns about the current bill, it would consider supporting a future bill that took into account the need for a vaccination exemption on the grounds of informed conscientious belief as well as for medical reasons. The committee provided a number of constructive comments about what such a future bill should address. The committee's third recommendation was that the Minister for Health consider implementing a well-planned, multifaceted and ongoing public education campaign about the benefits of childhood immunisation, particularly in localities where immunisation rates are low.

The government considered these recommendations, and the government's response to the committee report was to support recommendation No. 3 and make no comment on the remaining recommendations. The minister's response was to acknowledge the importance of communication about immunisation, pointing out that Queensland Health is undertaking an ongoing public education campaign that includes a range of proactive and reactive media. The minister also advised that the department of health is currently developing a strategy for Queensland's immunisation program—again, with a focus on education via the media. I am pleased that the key messages for this strategy are to include the benefits of immunisation and the risks of not immunising, and that this will be particularly targeted towards parents of under immunised children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Just as importantly, this campaign will also target regional areas of low coverage and will be implemented across a range of settings, including early childhood and early learning centres and community organisations.

I indicate at this time that I will be moving amendments during the consideration in detail stages of the bill. These amendments have been circulated in my name and are accompanied by the explanatory notes. The purpose of these amendments is to address the issues raised through the consultation processes of the health committee hearings and submissions. This is why it is important that we make use of our parliamentary committees—to seek wider ranges of views from the public and from relevant experts. It is a shame that this Newman LNP government has not made better use of our committee system to prepare effective legislation to achieve its policy aims. I am sure members present can think of quite a few examples of where legislation has been poorly prepared and appears to be largely unimplementable or at odds with the community views. I particularly cite the so-called war on bikie legislation that has turned in fact into a war on all Queenslanders who happen to ride bikes.

The circulated amendments provide definitions for age-appropriate vaccinations, authorised practitioners and vaccine-preventable conditions. The amendments to clause 5, which amend proposed sections 160B and 160C, clarify that vaccination certificates provided by an authorised practitioner are for age-appropriate vaccinations. An added subsection 160B(2) details the exemption process for either medical contra-indication or in response to issues raised by the health committee for exemption based on informed conscientious belief.

I firmly believe that these amendments address the concerns raised by both the submissions and the expert opinion presented to the committee. On the Labor side of this parliament, we listen to the people, we listen to the professionals, we listen to the doctors and we tonight are acting in accordance with listening to the views of all of the people, particularly the parliamentary committee. The amended bill now provides the government with the opportunity to declare its support for the bill.

I am imploring this parliament to give bipartisan support to this bill tonight. If the government fails, however, to support this bill, it will be denying Queensland an opportunity to address declining child vaccination rates in some local communities and an opportunity to bolster the state-wide immunisation strategy. Immunisation is one of the most successful and cost-effective health interventions ever. The low incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases in Australia attests to the effectiveness of our immunisation services, programs and policies. Since the introduction of routine immunisations in Australia in the 1950s, death or disability from many once common infectious diseases is now rare.


Australia has an excellent record on childhood immunisation coverage, achieving at or above 90 per cent average coverage for children at 12 months, 24 months and 60 months of age. However, a high national coverage rate can mask geographic areas and population groups that have low coverage. This is what has occurred in some pockets of Queensland, despite ready access to vaccination services. Nationally, the number of children whose parents or guardians have decided not to vaccinate their child on non-medical grounds has grown over the past 13 years from 0.23 per cent or 4,271 children in December 1999 to 1.44 per cent or 30,880 children in May 2012. These numbers reflect a disturbing increase and, where concentrated in geographic areas or close-knit groups, potentially present a risk to disease control efforts. The National Health Performance Authority identifies the Sunshine Coast region as an area of Queensland with the lowest rate of compliance with the national immunisation schedule. Some 1,502 local children on the Sunshine Coast are not fully immunised. The rate of immunisation for children in the Noosa, Nambour, Surfers Paradise and Kuranda areas is comparable to that of developing countries like Africa.

The NHPA report also shows that in Brisbane's inner city there are 3,371 unvaccinated children, and fewer than 85 per cent of five-year-olds are fully vaccinated. Recent outbreaks of measles in a number of Queensland locations during 2012 and 2013, including in my home city of Ipswich, illustrate the importance of achieving high vaccination coverage rates. Particularly sad have been the preventable deaths of infants from whooping cough elsewhere in the state.

The LNP blueprint for health makes no reference at all to the importance of immunisation programs as a key strategy in preventative public health policy. None. Most of the health cuts and closures in Queensland communities have been in relation to the loss of health promotion and disease prevention staff and programs. The Premier has denied that the state has the responsibility for primary healthcare services. The health minister has encouraged hospital and health services to focus on acute hospital services to the exclusion of community based services, which include both chronic and infectious disease preventions, and we have seen cuts all around the state in relation to these matters. We have also seen cuts in areas like Redcliffe.

Great work has also been done in child-care centres. The bill encourages parents like those who send their children to the Beehive Kindy in Pikett Street, Clontarf—which is a great kindergarten—and other child-care centres to speak up for the protection of their children against diphtheria, measles, mumps and whooping cough.

I believe that this bill is a no-brainer. It is commonsense. It is about protecting our children; it is about protecting our little ones. If the LNP, Newman's people in this parliament, care about our children, our kids, our little ones, then morally, ethically and medically all members of this House should support this bill. Otherwise, they will go down in the history of the Queensland parliament as putting party politics ahead of the health of the precious children of Queensland. The people of Queensland want this bill passed. It is based on the recommendations of the health committee, and the amendments reflect that. I commend the bill and the amendments to the House.

 **Hon. LJ SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—LNP) (Minister for Health) (7.41 pm): As usual, it is a great pity that the shadow minister for health has contaminated what should be a sensible debate and what is a reasonable proposition on her behalf by overegging the argument and going off into a whole range of other ridiculous and unrelated areas and dragging fictitious nonsense out of thin air, particularly in regards to Redcliffe.

I draw the attention of the House to circumstances in Redcliffe where, on each and every indicator, whether dental health performance, all categories of surgery or the emergency access targets, the Redcliffe Hospital is performing demonstrably and factually better than it was at the change of government in March 2013. The same is reflected across our emergency departments and all category 1 and dental surgery waiting lists in Queensland. Indeed, if you look at the circumstances in Metro North, which had a significant dental waitlist of more than two years, they have gone from around 10,000—if I remember the figures correctly off the top of my head—down to about 10 people who have been waiting longer than two years. Let us stop contaminating what should be a good and reasoned debate around a real area of decent public policy, population health and preventative health, with such fictitious nonsense.

I in no way impugn the intentions of the honourable member for Bundamba in introducing this legislation to the parliament, because I think at its very heart it is probably motivated by a real desire to do something to address the issue of vaccinations in Queensland. I agree with most of what the honourable member for Bundamba said earlier with regard to immunisation and its intent and what it has achieved, and I think much of that was embodied in the legislation which we are debating here tonight in the parliament. But there are some deficiencies in this legislation that were pointed out by the committee responsible for deliberating on it.

One of the issues was the fact that there was no ability to address conscientious objection. I notice the honourable member is now seeking to address that through an amendment to the parliament. Another issue of significant concern is if you genuinely believe that this is the way to go about it, you uniformly apply it to child-care centres; you do not say that you have an option to do it. In Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory where it has happened and more recently, as I understand, in New South Wales, it is uniformly applied, but there is a conscientious capacity that exists.

I must admit that I struggle personally with this notion of conscientious objection when it comes to vaccination, and I think many members probably would, because we are talking here about a situation of life and death for children. Anyone who believes that immunisation does not work should get in their time machine and go back to the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s in Australia when we had hundreds of children routinely dying as a consequence of whooping cough, diphtheria and a whole range of other serious diseases. Many of them died from polio or were left maimed for their entire lives. My parents grew up in an environment where their friends and acquaintances were left dead and maimed as a consequence of these terrible diseases which have now disappeared from our community. Smallpox, for example, has been eradicated worldwide, and polio has almost been eradicated. Rotary and governments around the world, working with other partners, have almost brought that disease to an end.

But we can never, ever slacken off. What we have in the community is a circumstance where there are people who can now choose not to vaccinate their children, but they have the advantage of herd immunity. They have the advantage that comes from other people who have conscientiously vaccinated their children not only to protect their children but also to protect other children. That is the simple reality of what we are dealing with. Unfortunately, there are pockets within the community which have a higher rate of people who choose not to vaccinate their children because of a rather

rubbery understanding of the facts, I would say, or a lack of desire. In this day and age, everyone can be an expert overnight by getting on the internet and googling it. Isn't it amazing that years ago we were able to proffer the proposition 'believe little or nothing of what you read and little of what you see'. But apparently if it is on the internet, it must be right. We now have more and more people deciding to educate themselves by going on the internet and who believe some of the nonsense which is on there with regard to the issue of adverse reactions and the consequences of vaccinations. The simple fact is that there is a miniscule chance that something will go wrong with a routine childhood vaccination, but there is a significant chance that, if your child is not vaccinated, they will suffer the negative consequences of developing a vaccine-preventable illness. Indeed, there have been dozens of children who have died in Queensland over the last few years as a consequence of not being vaccinated for vaccine-preventable illnesses. So there is no evidence. It is 'Bah, humbug!' But having said that, I understand that some people have a deep and abiding conscientious objection to it, and that is something that would have to be considered as a part of legislation, even though I struggle with that personally myself.


There is another thing that needs to be considered as well. In those places around Australia which have done this, there is no evidence that it has significantly made a difference. Indeed, in those states which have a higher level of entry requirement around immunisation before a child goes to school or an early childhood centre, there is no evidence that they have demonstrably on average a larger rate of immunisation than we have in Queensland. They are the absolute facts.

Indeed, if we look at the 12- to 15-month age group, in Australia the immunisation rate is 90.10 per cent. In Queensland it is 91.0 per cent. If we look at the 24- to 27-month age group, the Australian average is 92.2 per cent and the Queensland figure is 92.8 per cent. If we look at the 60- to 63-months age cohort, the Queensland figure is 91.9 per cent and the Australian figure is 91.8 per cent. This says to me that this issue is far greater than just requiring us to mandate something. If that were the case, why is it that we have a greater rate of vaccination amongst that age cohort than they do in Tasmania where it has been mandated? This does not answer all the questions. It may in time answer some of the questions. I would never exclude the option of going down this track at some stage. I would be more than happy to give the honourable member for Bundamba some recognition for attempting to be a trailblazer in the area. If we are going to do it we need legislation that goes beyond conscientious objection and that goes towards uniformity. It needs to be a part of an overall strategy to deal with immunisation. We should watch New South Wales, which has introduced this type of legislation—and it is probably the state that would be most similar to Queensland—and review its success over the next 12 months to two years.

It is also important that we undertake further engagement with primary care providers around this and that we also look at other options such as what we can do with the family tax benefits. We should hit people where it hurts financially more than we do currently. I put that on the national agenda last year when the former health minister, Tanya Plibersek, was still in that position and they said they did not want to do it. Guess what? Kevin Rudd and Tanya Plibersek actually announced it during the last election campaign as a policy.

If we want to be consistent about this, let us work out the things that are going to work; let us sit down and put the best ideas forward because this should be above politics. I am not approaching this on the basis of politics. Even before the member for Bundamba thought of this, I said to Tanya Plibersek that I am happy to go along with this as long as we base it on evidence as part of a broader package. We must know that it works and where it works. We have to gather some more evidence of that because in places where there is a greater level of compulsion and registration requirements, the immunisation rates are not demonstrably higher than they are in Queensland.

No, we should never exclude this option because that would be letting people down. However, it is wrong to say that, as a part of an approach, the exclusion of unvaccinated children would work effectively. To date it has not worked in other places. The Crèche and Kindergarten Association has raised concerns about it. A range of people have raised concerns about the burden on the sector that provides these services to families. It is a noble idea in many ways, but it requires significantly more work if it were to ever be implemented.

 **Mrs SCOTT** (Woodridge—ALP) (7.52 pm): I, too, rise tonight to speak in support of the Public Health (Exclusion of Unvaccinated Children from Child Care) Amendment Bill 2013. I want to speak on a couple of issues that I feel are particularly relevant to the objective of this bill. Firstly, being a grandmother, I have a long memory and I want to remind members of the wisdom of grandmothers in our community. However, my mind goes back to when I was a young mum and we had shifted from New South Wales to Victoria. Our youngest son, who was very young and had not yet had his

vaccination, suddenly became ill. He could not drink through a straw and his neck was stiff. We took him at night to see a friend. Within five minutes he said, 'Get him to the children's hospital. He has meningitis.' His cousins had had mumps and that led to him developing meningitis. I sat by his bedside for a number of days and nights. They did tests and they told me I was very fortunate because he had viral meningitis. However, there were two other mums in the children's hospital at that time who were not so lucky. They took children home who had suffered brain damage due to bacterial meningitis. So I am very aware of how important vaccination is.

Our child vaccination programs have been so successful that many parents today have no experience of childhood infectious diseases. My concern is that the knowledge of our grandmothers has not been sufficiently considered by mothers worried about the perceived risks of vaccination. As a parent, I remember children in my neighbourhood being very ill with measles and mumps. If honourable members have not heard an infant suffering from whooping cough I can tell them that it is something they will never forget, especially if it is a young baby. It is just dreadful.

Parents in the 1950s and 1960s were so pleased when free vaccinations became available. Parents and grandparents valued public health strategies that protected children from illnesses that had previously led to death and disability. Some of us still remember witnessing the fear of polio on TV. As a very young child, my next-door neighbour, Mrs Wiseman in Vacy Street, was confined to her bed because of polio. First one daughter cared for her for years and years and then another daughter. Every day I would go, take flowers, sit beside her and talk. I do not ever remember seeing her going out in a wheelchair. In those days they seemed to be confined to their room, and that was a tragedy. We still applaud every advance in the science of immunology and every new vaccine, such as the wonderful success here in Queensland of Professor Frazer's Gardasil vaccine for HPV and cervical cancer. We wish him well with his new trials for a vaccine to prevent genital herpes.


The second important issue that I wish to raise with regard to this bill to promote the uptake of childhood vaccination is the impact it will have in my local community. In my electorate of Woodridge and in the surrounding areas of Logan we have a vibrant, diverse community made up from many cultures right around the world. Logan City is one of the most culturally diverse cities in Queensland, with 26 per cent of its 287,500 residents born overseas and 2.8 per cent from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. There are at least 215 different nationalities and ethnic groups in my local region. We have large communities from mostly the Pacific Islands, particularly Maoris. We also have families from Tonga, Samoa and Fiji and many families from our Asian neighbours as well as families from Africa.

Our refugee health program is quite amazing. When refugees arrive in Logan they are given health checks, dental checks and immunisation. It is a very solid program. If those children had stayed in their homelands many of them would never, ever have been vaccinated and may have suffered an early death. People who come to the Logan area from developing countries welcome the opportunity to participate in health promotion activities, including our child vaccination programs. Many families share housing because of cultural tradition or economic circumstances, and plenty of houses are filled to overflowing with young children. Sometimes in our area in the case of Pacific Island families, who are not considered citizens, if the breadwinner loses their job they are not able to access any Centrelink payments and so they will move in with another family. Of course, that can allow diseases to run rife. So it is really important that we ensure local families have ready access to vaccination services.

It can be challenging to ensure all communities have access to information in their own languages about the benefits and risks of vaccination. Logan City Council does a great job in working to level the childhood immunisation rate to better the state-wide average. There is still a way to go, but the immunisation blueprint released in July 2013 has set out key strategies to provide regular, flexible and accessible immunisation services to Logan City children, families and community to promote and educate Logan residents on the benefits of immunisation and to develop and sustain effective collaboration with key members of the community. This bill is a part of a wider effort to ensure parents and child-care workers are fully informed about the importance of maintaining immunisation rates.

I want to relate to members a story about a mum who came to see me. She was about 45. She sat in my office and showed me a photo of her beautiful son. This lady's son is nonverbal. He is almost blind. He was so disabled in his early teens that she actually told me that she had to give him up to the state because she could not look after him anymore, and she sobbed and sobbed and sobbed. He is a beautiful looking boy. In the end I asked her what had happened and she told me that during pregnancy she had contracted rubella. To parents who do not want to have their children

immunised, they could be the means of having given another family a child with a huge disability. I will never, ever forget this mother. I have a photo of that young man, who probably would have been a fine athlete, a handsome young man and had a life ahead of him. He has no quality of life and that mother forever feels guilty that she gave him up. It is a huge tragedy. No-one wants to see a child or, worse, an adolescent with measles or rubella or—God forbid—a baby with whooping cough. With those thoughts, I commend the bill to the House. We will forever be ensuring that more and more families get that message.

 **Mr RUTHENBERG** (Kallangur—LNP) (8.00 pm): I commend the committee's report and our conclusions to the House. Before I turn to my prepared speech, I have to share the sentiments of the member for Woodridge. A young man in my electorate who lives in Petrie is a champion Australian swimmer. He is a world champion. He has many records, but he has one leg. Do members know why he has one leg? Because he contracted chicken pox when he was a kid. That young man, thankfully, only lost his leg. There are many children who have suffered as a consequence of communicable diseases that could have been prevented. I grew up in a country where that circumstance was real—where vaccination was not normal and where communicable diseases caused an awful lot of distress for families for lifetimes. So please understand that when I make my comments I share the member's sentiments; I just do not think that the bill that was put forward was robust enough to deal with the situation we are talking about. I will give my reasons why.

The committee could not support the bill because I think it was poorly conceived and ill-considered, especially with regard to the consequential outcome of the proposed bill. In my foreword in the report I state—

In considering the Bill, the committee's task was to consider the policy to be given effect by the Bill, and whether the Bill has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals and to the institution of Parliament.

All members of the committee strongly support the policy objective of this Bill to improve childhood immunisation rates. The committee has carefully considered the Bill and the concerns raised in submissions and evidence.

There is potential for the Bill, if passed, to result in unintended consequences. The concerns considered by the committee include that: the Bill impacts on the common law right to consent to or decline medical treatment; there is no scope in the Bill for conscientious objection to vaccination; unvaccinated children's access to early childhood education could be impeded, particularly in rural and remote areas where early childhood facilities may be limited; and childhood vaccination is a widely accepted and effective public health measure. While vaccination is supported by committee members, there are concerns that this Bill does not sufficiently respond to the need to balance competing rights and obligations about public health, consent and access to early childhood education and child care.

The opposition regularly beats the government up for not consulting before and during the development of a bill. It is a shame that it did not follow its own advice, because if it had it would have constructed this bill differently, I think. A significant majority of submissions to the committee for this inquiry opposed the bill. Some 59 of 64 submissions opposed the bill. Many, however, supported child immunisation. These submissions gave various reasons for their opinions, but all opposed the bill. There are some real problems with the bill and I want to make sure that members understand these.

Firstly, the bill does not make any link to the immunisation schedule or the recommended ages by which a child should be vaccinated. Under the bill, it appears that a child under 12 months who has not received the MMR vaccination could be considered to be an unvaccinated child as defined, even though the MMR vaccination is not recommended until a child is 12 months old. It is also unclear whether a child aged between 12 and 18 months would be considered an unvaccinated child, as full immunity from MMR is not acquired until the second vaccination at 18 months. This poor clarity would have driven confusion and different interpretations and thus different outcomes at child-care centres around Queensland. It is also problematic for a working mum and dad who want their child under 12 or 18 months old in care in that if they choose to work they would have had to find alternative arrangements as they could not have put their child in child care. This bill would have discriminated against working parents.

Secondly, the national immunisation schedule is very complex. The bill does not take into account the various immunisations that require years to complete and thus provide full protection to children of various ages. If misinterpreted by the child-care facility, the complexity of the immunisation schedule and the lack of clarity in the bill are a recipe for problems. Further, the bill does not consider that there are many ways that a child could contract a communicable disease at a child-care centre other than through children, even when they are partially protected. For example, adult cleaners, delivery drivers and parent volunteers all provide points of regular contact with a child-care facility, but the bill is silent on these possibilities.

The bill would eliminate the right of parents to make medical decisions for their children. While the committee strongly supports the objective of the bill to raise immunisation rates, we must consider competing rights and the long-term ramifications of removing rights. This bill does not give sufficient regard to this principle. The bill does not give sufficient regard to the grounds for exemption, specifically for medical and religious or even informed conscientious objection. There were some concerns raised by the Australian College of Nursing that the bill could have the opposite effect of it creating concentrations of unimmunised children in pockets, thus potentially a place for communicable diseases to take hold.


There are ethical and pragmatic considerations that this bill creates. When decisions are made to exclude children from society on the basis of decisions taken by others, we have a dilemma, as Dr Willaby and Professor Leask point out in their submission. They were concerned that children would be disadvantaged because of their parents' decision—a decision they had no part in. The bill, if implemented, could eliminate the right of a child to be educated and, frankly, would act against the government's aim to raise kindergarten attendance, as pointed out by Lica Bienholz in her submission. Also, where people live in a community that has very few child-care providers, such as a small outback community or a rural town, the bill would leave little or no alternative for families to use if that facility chose to shut them out. Members can see that there are many issues that the member for Bundamba did not consider when she submitted this bill for consideration. The bill, if implemented, would create much confusion and lacks details and, as I stated, I think was ill-conceived and probably poorly researched. I do acknowledge and support strongly efforts to raise immunisation rates in our community, having had the unfortunate experience of witnessing firsthand the results of a community that was too poor to be vaccinated. Unfortunately this bill, if implemented, would be counterintuitive to that aim.

I will end with an alternative approach to this issue offered by Professor Del Mar in his written submission. Professor Chris Del Mar is Professor of Public Health at the Centre for Research in Evidence-Based Practice at the Faculty of Health Sciences and Medicine at Bond University. Professor Del Mar is a pre-eminent and internationally respected general practice researcher. In his submission he states—

Perhaps it would be more important to address the issues that induce parents to avoid vaccination of their children. In many cases this is a downstream consequence of inadequate health literacy. Health literacy (particularly understanding the empirical pros and cons of any health or medical intervention) is poor in our society, and it means that members of the public are prey to eccentric ideas that often have no medical or scientific validity.

So perhaps it might be better to think of ways of improving health literacy instead of simply coercion.

I note that the Minister for Health is already implementing some of these recommendations with regard to communication and health literacy. I thank the research staff and the technical scrutiny staff for their professional approach yet again as the committee considered this bill in good faith. Again, I repeat that the committee strongly supports the intent of the bill but unfortunately felt that this bill simply was not the right vehicle.

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (8.09 pm): I rise tonight to make a brief contribution to this debate in support of the Public Health (Exclusion of Unvaccinated Children from Child Care) Amendment Bill 2013. The objective of this bill is to empower parents and child-care directors to protect children in their care from vaccine-preventable diseases. The Public Health (Exclusion of Unvaccinated Children from Child Care) Amendment Bill 2013 gives the person in charge of an education and care service or child-care service the option to refuse to allow children who are not age-appropriately immunised to enrol in the child-care facility or to participate in particular activities or services provided by the facility.

Many child-care centres already obtain details of a child's immunisation status prior to enrolment. However, currently in Queensland child-care centres do not have the power to refuse enrolment on the basis of immunisation status. The care of children at home and in the community is a process of negotiation about levels of risk and the maintenance of a safe environment. Better informed child-care staff, management boards and parents will make better decisions about the health and wellbeing of children in their care. As a proud and engaged father of three wonderful kids, I know this for a fact.

This bill was considered by the Health and Community Services Committee and a public hearing and public briefing were held in order to gauge community responses to the bill. A number of people made written submissions and also gave verbal evidence to the hearings and the differing views on the bill were thoroughly ventilated and explored. The shadow minister for health has taken many of the concerns into account and has circulated amendments that, sadly, appear to have not

been read by some of those opposite, but they may well provide parents who have a conscientious belief that their child should not receive a vaccination to still be able to enrol their child. However, there is a requirement for them to consult an authorised practitioner and to have a certificate stating that the practitioner has explained to the parent the benefits and risks associated with vaccination for vaccine-preventable conditions and has informed the parent of the potential. That is only right. Parents who wish to enrol their child in a child-care service without being vaccinated should at least be informed of the consequences for their child and other children in the service.


There is also capacity for a doctor to give a certificate stating that the child should have an exemption for the vaccination because of a medical contra-indication to vaccination. The amendments also recognise that parents may for a variety of reasons—and this could include illness of the child or a number of other reasons—not be quite up to date with the vaccinations for vaccine-preventable conditions that are appropriate to the child's age under the *Australian immunisation handbook*. Parents will be able to furnish the person in charge of the centre with a certificate given by an authorised practitioner stating that the child is following an approved vaccination catch-up schedule.

When it comes to childhood vaccination, I think this is a little bit like what happens in the United States where you make sure that you get voters out to vote. It is the same with kindy programs. I think plenty of parents are sometimes not aware or are unable to get the information they need to follow a vaccination program or to enrol their child in a kindergarten program. Sadly, I think there is a very small minority of people who are conscientious objectors to vaccination—and that is their choice as a parent. But in this case, I think this is about ensuring that we have the largest number of children possible vaccinated. That is why I think this bill has so much merit.

Childhood vaccination is of considerable importance in my electorate. Some of the communities in my electorate have low rates of childhood vaccination compared to that of other parts of the state and this can sometimes particularly be the case in remote Indigenous communities. That is why I want to speak briefly about the importance of vaccination for Indigenous children. As members will be aware, the health status of Indigenous Australians and their access to healthcare services is not the same as it is for other Australians. I can speak from firsthand experience. My wife is an Aboriginal Australian. My children are Indigenous. Although we provide them with the best care possible, there will be some things that they will be susceptible to that they may not otherwise have been. The gap—a health gap that we must be committed to closing—includes higher rates of infant and child mortality for Indigenous children. A significant contribution to this lower health status is lower cover with vaccination programs to provide immunity to preventable diseases including diphtheria, haemophilus influenza type B, measles, meningococcal infection, mumps, whooping cough, poliomyelitis, rubella and tetanus.

Today in Canberra the Prime Minister delivered this year's *Closing the gap* report. The report covers areas such as life expectancy, education and unemployment and aims to breach the divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by 2030. I encourage all members of this House to read and reflect on this report. The Prime Minister stated that the targets to halve the gap in child mortality within a decade and to have 95 per cent of remote children enrolled in preschool are on track. Much of the hard work to achieve those results has been done by the Indigenous controlled health sector, such as the Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service at Yarrabah, which is led by CEO Sue Andrews. I am sure that the Minister for Health would acknowledge that Gurriny is one of the leaders in community controlled health. Other services such as Mamu Health in Far North Queensland are also doing wonderful work. I certainly look forward to seeing Gurriny health transitioning to full community control, hopefully by mid-2014. There is much that other healthcare services could learn from how these Indigenous managed health services meet local community needs. I also want to commend Selwyn Button and all at QAIHC for the work that they are doing.

This bill is a further example of the priority that Labor gives to public health services that protect communities and promote good health. Although efficient hospital wards and emergency departments are important components of a well-managed health system, ignoring the basics of child vaccination, free sexual health services and effective health promotion programs will always mean that our hospitals will be overrun with preventable and expensive admissions. I am disappointed that yet again we have had a bill that may not be passed because it was not introduced by the government. I would like to see a time where any government of the day uses the committee system to add value to a bill and put forward sensible amendments that would see an important initiative like this one pass and in operation sooner rather than later. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (8.15 pm): I rise to speak against the Public Health (Exclusion of Unvaccinated Children from Child Care) Amendment Bill 2013. Ensuring that our children are adequately protected from preventable diseases through vaccination is an important duty and a responsibility that parents throughout Queensland should take very seriously. However, this duty is with the parents. I believe that there is a place for the government to encourage parents to ensure that their children are vaccinated for their own children's benefit and for the benefit of other children whose parents have not yet had the opportunity to make that choice. But that must be balanced with parental rights.

At this point, I should take the opportunity to put on the record my absolute belief that vaccination saves lives and prevents lasting health problems and is the most cost-effective way of doing so. No doubt, the member for Bundamba will attempt to brand the LNP with the title of 'vaccination deniers' or some other such ridiculous label. I note that the member for Bundamba has already attacked me personally in the *Gold Coast Sun*, claiming that my opposition to this bill is entirely political and that government members have acted arrogantly by refusing to support this bill. Political point-scoring is not what our opposition to this bill is about. It is about ensuring that when the parliament looks to legislate to raise the levels of children vaccinated in Queensland at the appropriate times in line with the national immunisation program schedule we do so in a way that takes into account parental rights and the full consideration of opposing views, no matter how poorly placed sometimes those views may be. It is also about ensuring that any such legislation is fully developed and takes into account potential unintended consequences.

We were promised proposed amendments that would address some of these issues, but I doubt that they were forthcoming. They may be and the—

Mrs Miller interjected.

Ms BATES: The shadow minister might address those issues and the shadow minister will get her chance to reply.

Mrs Miller: I will.

Ms BATES: But at the moment they are not forthcoming. Many of the concerns regarding vaccination in the community stem from a report that sought to link the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine with autism. The report has been roundly discredited and the paper's findings have been unable to be reproduced. This information is easy to find and I urge all parents who are in any doubt to investigate for themselves overwhelmingly that there are no conclusive links that have been found between autism and vaccination.

Some may argue, and have done so, that there may be unknown risks to vaccination. It is true that medicine is always discovering new information and there is still much that we do not know about the human body and how it works. But there are things that we do know and we know conclusively, and this knowledge includes the dangers of diseases that we know and how to prevent them through vaccination. Those parents who decide that they are making an informed decision when deciding not to vaccinate their children are by definition, if they are truly informed, making a decision to expose their children and the children of others to diseases that we know how to prevent. We know that diseases can kill. We know that diseases can incapacitate. Diseases can also limit a child's potential.

During the inquiry by the Health and Community Services Committee we received submissions from members of the public, many passing on anecdotal evidence about their own families—people saying, 'My kids weren't vaccinated and they are healthier than other kids I know who were.' Of course, this statement ignores the fact that these children are benefiting from the vaccination of others and that, thanks to a thorough and effective vaccination program in Australia over many years, we have stamped out the spread of many of the diseases for which we vaccinate.

However, if the actions of the few parents who refuse to vaccinate their children become more common we may well find that these advances are undone. Of course, some children who are not vaccinated will not necessarily contract diseases simply because they are not vaccinated. It is a question of risk. If there is a question of weighing up the risks, the question is between knowingly exposing our children to known and significant risks and exposing our children to unknown risks consisting purely of speculation and innuendo. There is only one responsible decision to make in regard to vaccination and that is to vaccinate. As the Health and Community Services Committee's report on this bill states, the committee believes that the parliament should consider supporting any

future bill that would encourage parents to ensure that children are appropriately vaccinated on entry to child care. However, it also states that any such legislation should include provision for medical exemption and informed conscientious objection. This must include an emphasis on immunisation education for parents.


I am sure that there are many in this House who are about my age who had young kids when there were no vaccinations for certain communicable diseases. My kids, for instance, were born 27 years ago. I used to send my kids off to people's houses whose kids had chicken pox and measles so that they actually got the diseases so that they developed antibodies for them. I did raise with the member for Bundamba in the public hearing that there are a lot of kids who are actually exposed to communicable diseases who then develop their own antibodies but may not necessarily ever have had a vaccination or have a certificate to say they were vaccinated. My concern was that if you thought your child had been susceptible and exposed to rubella or to chicken pox and would have developed their own antibodies, the only way under this legislation for those children to be admitted into a child-care centre would be for the parents to undergo expensive blood tests to see whether their children had developed these antibodies. I think that this is a concern.

Another issue that I raised during the public hearings was that there are many people who put their children in child-care centres at a very young age. Some kids in child-care centres are four weeks of age. They would not necessarily have been able to have availed themselves of a vaccination at such a young age because that is not the schedule for them. Those kids under this legislation may well be exempt from going into a child-care centre. The other issue that I discussed was that you can physically isolate a non-vaccinated child from a baby, but that is only isolating one kid from another kid; it is not isolating them from their own siblings and it is not isolating them from diseases that the child-care centre staff may have. I feel that they were very valid concerns that I raised.

I believe that, with the implementation of a comprehensive education program where the facts are laid out in a way that it is not skewed by the emotional individual pushing the anti-vaccination barrow but is uncomplicated and balanced, parents would be led overwhelmingly to one decision. Again, that decision is theirs. Parents have a right to be part of the decision surrounding their own child's health care. When a government bends the arm of the public, the public often quite rightly push back. We would undoubtedly see broad mobilisation of the anti-vaccination campaigners and potentially create a greater problem than otherwise exists today. I recalled and mentioned during the public hearings that one of my areas of training was in the paediatric unit. It was at a stage where there was a scaremongering campaign about vaccinating kids against pertussis. We had an outbreak of pertussis in little babies. I am talking about babies who had been home for only one or two weeks. They were coming into the hospital and they almost died in our arms. It was pretty awful for a student nurse to deal with. As I said, it is a decision for the parents. Fear is a powerful emotion, especially for the majority of parents who have an in-built compulsion to protect their children above all else. The anti-immunisation campaigners know it and utilise this knowledge to push their message. The anti-vaccination crusaders are in the minority—a vocal minority, but a minority nonetheless. There is little benefit to elevating them to a stage where they have an opportunity to put fear and doubt into the minds of Queensland parents through the media in response to the introduction of this legislation. We can win this battle of the hearts and minds of parents through communicating with them in a way that allows them to make their own conclusions. I have great faith in the ability of Queensland parents to make the right choice with the right information and the right guidance.

In addition, this bill effectively punishes the child for the actions of their parents. We in this place have a responsibility to not actively marginalise children from the broader community on the actions of their parents. This bill serves to do such a thing by excluding from mainstream child care children whose parents have not immunised them. This is not an outcome that we should be aiming for. Legislation such as this, which has a broad potential to have negative impacts, should be better developed than the bill we are considering today.

The New South Wales legislation includes the ability for certificates to be presented outlining previously contracted diseases that would exclude a child from acquiring immunisation against a particular disease. As discussed in the public hearing, this is not taking into account potential misdiagnosis of diseases and, with all due respect to the member for Gaven, many children who present with coryza—runny nose—can have rashes and communicable diseases which should not prevent them from child-care centres in Queensland.

 **Dr DOUGLAS** (Gaven—UAP) (8.25 pm): I obviously support the legislation. I do not understand how many members here in this chamber fairly representing their constituents can vote against it. I say so knowing that the Labor member for Bundamba introducing it has acceded to all the requests and demands made by the health committee members when they considered the bill. I am a member of that committee. I attended all the hearings. I did ask a number of questions to a number of people and I raised, I believe, most of the significant issues that certainly doctors have had great concerns about. I have read them all again in detail. I have been a GP for over 25 years. I graduated 33 years ago. I have extensive medical experience throughout the state and the nation. I am a medical superintendent. I have a variety of postgraduate degrees. I am a father of five children, one who is deceased, and a grandfather of one. I put it to all members here tonight that if you vote against this legislation you are voting against the security of your life and that of your children, your grandchildren and your constituents. Despite what the health minister has said tonight, measles and pertussis epidemics are occurring now. Certainly, the mortality statistics are not terrible throughout the nation and overseas, but they are a concern. The morbidity comes second and it is a significant multiplier of it and it is actually occurring. It is a major problem at present. For those who have not seen it, look at what happened in England when there was the measles epidemic and the people were not covered. There is mass action and chaos when the public start realising their families and themselves are at risk. Do not let it get to that stage.

In summary, what this legislation is seeking to do is to ensure that all parents with children in child care know that they must have their children vaccinated and so must all the other parents exempting themselves for the very few exceptional circumstances and they must provide reasons for that. It must be a certain type. As a result of the demands of LNP members that were reasonably made about the issues of conscientious objectors and those other amendments with regard to accommodating the 12 months, amendments have been made by the member for Bundamba and submitted with this bill. Despite those opposite having been led to believe that that has not occurred, it has occurred.

Are those opposite waiting for the polio epidemic? With epidemics such as the SARS epidemic the results are terrifying. People start reacting. The health minister will not be able to help. I have listened to the health minister's critique of the legislation as it has been put forward here tonight. He said it is a wise idea in many ways but it cannot be supported because he does not agree with the method. He does not understand what the method is. He went on and on, using a range of figures. He talked about percentage vaccination rates and the variance on a state-to-state basis and the percentage rates of a 12 to 15 months schedule. He did not even know the schedules. He is out of date. It just goes to show that when misrepresented statements are made and people believe them, you can end up with a result. I am still a primary care vaccinator and I have actively participated in those programs over the past 30 years. Furthermore, I have been involved in the divisional programs that led to the changes to raise vaccination rates to 90 per cent.

Mr Springborg interjected.

Dr DOUGLAS: We were doing this when you were sitting in here and you should have been learning about something else. You have stood up and used figures that are not correct for what the purposes are. Okay?

Mr Springborg interjected.

Dr DOUGLAS: You are not using them in the correct way. We are talking about children going into child-care centres and looking at the ages.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Berry): Order! Member for Gaven, please direct your comments through the chair.

Dr DOUGLAS: I will speak through the chair. The primary reason is that we have to get to this magical 90 per cent, we have to hold it at that 90 per cent mark and we have to achieve a 95 per cent vaccination status. If we do not get to 95 per cent, primarily at the 12-month mark, and aim for it for those children reaching the four-year mark, we will not stop the epidemics. We are trying to raise the percentage. I come to the problem with what the minister was saying. He does not understand that percentages in areas are different. We do the breakdowns of the areas. We know that in parts of the south-east corner, the percentage coverage rates in certain areas are insufficient to stop epidemics in areas of high urbanisation and high numbers of children. Clearly, those are areas—

Mr Springborg interjected.


Dr DOUGLAS: I will talk to the minister later on about those issues. Having said that, when you are talking about overall statistics you need to talk about apples and apples. We need to keep these percentage rates high. It is where the children are being born. We need to make sure that, when children enter child-care centres, we can primarily capture them at that point in time so we can get the percentage figures up and hold them up. That is what is going to save those children, our children, our constituents and ourselves, and that is how you stop what happened in the UK recently. We do not want to see that.

I listened to what was said at the health committee meeting and I read the submissions. I listened to what Chris Del Mar said. I am a friend of his. On this point he is not supported by everyone else. Clearly, most of the organisations do not support him on this issue. What he put forward was a personal view. That does not mean anything. Anyone can have a personal view, but you have to work it out on the evidence.

As I have said, we must not wait for the epidemics. This is an easy bill to support. The LNP thought police should have come up with another bill to match it. Going forward, they could have said, 'We have an even better idea: we do them conjointly, get them through and, basically, we debate them'. That is what should have happened. However, what has happened has been a whole lot of bravado. We had a whole range of ego, ignorance and lassitude reigning. Those character flaws are not sufficient to give a political solution and a practical solution to a real problem in the community.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members the noise is a little too high. I cannot quite hear what the member for Gaven is saying. Please keep it down.


Dr DOUGLAS: If you love your children and you believe that every child is everybody's responsibility, ignore whatever pressure is being placed upon you by the government and support something that will guarantee a child's life, not necessarily your own but somebody else's. Take that major step and make a more secure future for us all. If you need to consider your consciences, do it that way. Do not worry about any penalty laid upon you. This legislation is not about you; it is about everyone else and every child. It is a very simple way to address the very real problem that we as doctors and we as a community, you as parents and as members of the wider group that we call the herd—because we are talking about herd immunity—want to address. We want to achieve critical rates of vaccination to ensure community safety when children, through age or whatever, fail to complete a schedule. This is a method to achieve both the schedule in time and the percentage that we need. We need to complete these schedules. We need to use this method, because it is the easiest way of completing that gap that we are having a lot of problems with, because compliance is very difficult when trying to achieve those rates. Most children go to child care, so we can use that. If we can get to them in that way through this legislation, and do so within a set time frame, we will stop the epidemics occurring. Child care is uniquely the area where we can do it. We can capture those we want to protect and also those who are unimmunised. It is a sound, rational public health approach that equates to the standard we demand, interestingly enough, for pregnant mothers and the screening tests for Rhesus factor that we have to do. What is the difference? There is no difference at all. We demand it, hospital staff demand it and the mothers demand it. It is what they want. Do you understand? It is a norm. This should be the norm. It should not be handled any differently. The argument over children, child-care centres and vaccinations is an oxymoron. We must do this for our own safety and the safety of our children. We give the same security to pregnant women. Why can we not protect the children who are born to them?

 **Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—Ind) (8.35 pm): It is a pleasure to rise to participate in the debate on the Public Health (Exclusion of Unvaccinated Children from Child Care) Amendment Bill 2013. I congratulate the member for Bundamba for introducing into the chamber this important topic of childhood vaccination. As a result of the work of the member for Bundamba and the opposition, this matter is at the front and centre of our minds and our consideration at the moment. More importantly, it was front and centre in the consideration of one of our parliamentary committees. Committee members have spoken about their deliberations when this matter was discussed and the public hearings were held.

I am disappointed at what I expect will happen, which is that when the debate concludes there will be no chance for this matter to proceed to a committee stage so that we can have a debate on the amendments. After listening to the contributions from the member for Bundamba and others, I understand that the amendments that the member for Bundamba has already flagged were intended to address some of the concerns raised in the committee deliberations. If it was the case that there was goodwill from the government, maybe the matter could proceed to the committee stage and then we could have further discussion and debate about these very important amendments. Tonight, this is

what we have seen: a member of the opposition has introduced a private member's bill on a matter that is important to all Queenslanders, especially for the future of the many children who, at the moment, may not be in the vaccination pipeline. The bill went to a committee for investigation. Members of the public and interested parties made submissions. The committee members considered those submissions and a report was tabled in this House. All 89 members have had a chance to consider the submissions. The opposition has then responded to those submissions and the member for Bundamba has tabled a series of amendments in response to the suggestions as to how the bill could be improved for the good of the children in Queensland. I do not know: maybe there will be a response and maybe we will be able to go to a committee stage and debate those clauses.

I listened to the Minister for Health respond and put the government's position. After listening to his response, I think I know why the Premier wants to spend so much time with the Minister for Health. We will see how things unfold after the Redcliffe by-election. Personally, I believe we should do whatever we can to encourage parents to ensure that their children are vaccinated. We have heard about the rights and liberties of parents to make decisions for their children. Along with rights, liberties and the ability to make a choice is the important factor of responsibility. As a parent, if we want to choose not to vaccinate our children we have to be really aware of the responsibility that we are taking on and the dire consequences that we heard about from the member for Woodridge and the member for Kallangur. Other members have also spoken about the ramifications if parents do not have their children vaccinated. It has been a privilege to be involved in this debate. I look forward to it proceeding to a vote. Hopefully, we will see goodwill from the government and we will proceed to the committee stage for debate on the clauses.


 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (8.39 pm): I rise to speak to this legislation. It is an emotive piece of legislation. We have heard various opinions in relation to vaccination and the mandatory nature of vaccination. I certainly am a believer in vaccinating children. I have some concerns, though, about the mandatory nature and the punitive nature of legislation that says that if people do not vaccinate their children there will be preclusions in relation to their children. I understand all the logic of the preclusions.

Like many people my age, I have seen folk who have been exposed to these diseases and the long-term health impacts that that exposure has had. As a child I had whooping cough. I was only a little tacker. Mum could hold me up by the feet, so I was not too big. It was an awful experience. I can still remember it. It was terrible. I would not wish that on anybody. I think that we need to take the parents along with the argument that says, 'You need to vaccinate for these reasons. If you do not vaccinate your children these are the ramifications.'

There are people who have justified concerns about vaccination. I spent 20 years with a lady whose son was vaccinated and had a very serious reaction to the vaccination. He became significantly disabled because of it. He has passed away now. Because of her very close care he lived until he was 40. They thought he would not live to his teens. She was very caring, very supportive and very diligent. Have a discussion with her about mandatory vaccination and her experience and perspective is quite different. It may be an experience for the minority, but it is a profound experience and one that is intensely personal and intensely moving.

I believe in vaccination. I believe in vaccinations by ages. I think that it achieves a wonderful, healthy community. But to my mind we have to take the community with us so they understand the importance of vaccination and will agree with its importance and agree with the protection and wholesomeness that it provides not only for their family but also for their community and will travel with government and community organisations, kindergartens and schools and in unity support this. That may be esoteric and may be so optimistic as to be unreal, but I am concerned about how often we sit in this place and say, 'It is not happening therefore we are going to make them do it whether they like it or not. You can't ride motorbikes three in a row if you have tats. You can't do this and can't do that. Your kid can't go to school unless they are vaccinated.'

I would rather see the parents understand the importance of vaccination and go with that program, be a part of it, be a supporter of it and espouse it rather than have it forced on them, albeit the program is so important for the community and for children. The member for Gaven said if members vote against this they are voting against their children and grandchildren's lives. I have to take issue with him on that. We all love our kids and grandchildren. I do not think any of us would vote for something that was intentionally harmful, but I would like to see the community embrace the need for vaccination and to do it as a community on a positive note rather than on an obligatory note.

 **Mrs MILLER** (Bundamba—ALP) (8.43 pm), in reply: In summing-up the debate tonight I place on record that this health minister seems to have absolutely no idea about the bill before the House or other matters in relation to health. On the one hand, we have doctors who want immunisation for children. They want this bill supported. Obviously this minister and LNP members are refusing to support it tonight. On the other hand, we have a situation in Queensland where doctors do not want the Work Choices contracts for public hospital doctors and yet this minister supports Work Choices contracts for doctors. Doctors do not support it and the LNP supports it. They are arrogant and out of control.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Berry): Order! Member for Bundamba, stick to the relevant bill, if you would not mind.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. They are arrogant, out of control and hopeless. I place on record some of the direct quotes I took from the minister's speech. He said that I, in my role as shadow minister for health, was overegging the argument. The minister spoke about hospital waiting lists. He spoke about the Redcliffe by-election. He said that as the shadow minister for health I was speaking 'fictitious nonsense'. He also said 'there were deficiencies in the legislation', but he obviously had not been bothered to read the amendments which have been circulated in the chamber tonight. He simply does not care about children in Queensland.

He also said that 'he struggles with conscientious objections'. Again, he is not listening to the parliamentary committee. He did not even turn up to listen to people making submissions. He then went on to talk about family health benefits. He went on and on about the very good federal Labor health minister, Tanya Plibersek. He spoke about something completely out of his control.

Tonight we have seen the Newman LNP government ignore the advice of the medical community and ignore the advice of a parliamentary committee. Tonight is a perfect opportunity for bipartisan support. Let me advise this House tonight that every time I see Dr Jeannette Young, the Chief Health Officer, on television talking about measles, mumps or rubella or anything else I will remind the people of Queensland that it was this LNP government that voted this bill down. They talk about how they supposedly support vaccination and at the first opportunity they vote down a bill on vaccination.

I would like to talk now about the contribution from my colleague Desley Scott, the member for Woodridge. Desley spoke about being a grandmother and a mother, about a neighbour who had polio—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, there is a speaker on their feet. She is reasonably close. I can only just hear her. Member for Gaven, you have to resume your seat if you wish to interject. Honourable members, please allow the member for Bundamba to complete her speech. I call the member Bundamba.

Mrs MILLER: The member for Woodridge spoke about being a grandmother and a mother, about a neighbour having polio, about meningitis, about the vaccine Gardasil. She also spoke about Logan City having 215 nationalities and about the refugee health programs and the support for vaccination programs in Logan City. She also spoke about the Logan City Council contribution to immunisation. She spoke about a tragic case of a mum who contracted rubella in pregnancy and her baby boy who had profound disabilities.

I now turn to the MP for Kallangur who does not believe that this bill is robust enough. So why not support this bill in the interim and then, member for Kallangur, come into this House and amend it yourself. It is quite clear that the member for Kallangur has not read the amendments that have been circulated in the House. It is my belief that the member for Kallangur is too lazy to read the amendments. He must have had his head in a chaff bag to not have even considered this because I said to the members of the health committee—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Bundamba that is really unparliamentary.

Mrs MILLER: Which bit?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: 'Chaff bag', 'lazy'. You really should withdraw those comments. I ask you to withdraw those comments.

Mrs MILLER: Mr Deputy Speaker, because you have asked me to withdraw it I will. But the member for Kallangur is not in his chair and so he has not had an opportunity to object.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: But, member for Bundamba, the member for Kallangur is not taking the point. I have the right to say as—

Mrs MILLER: That is okay. I have withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:—to what is unparliamentary and I believe is unparliamentary, and I accept your withdrawal. Please continue.

Mrs MILLER: Basically what I am talking about here is the fact that the chair of the health committee has not read the amendments nor has he read the explanatory notes. He also spoke about working parents. Can I just say what a load of codswallop! I have been and still am a working mother and I was working when my children were babies. I can advise this House on behalf of the literally hundreds of thousands of working mothers in Queensland who have babies that they take their children to doctors outside of hours and they also take their children to child healthcare centres and immunisation clinics of city councils and town councils around the state. May I say as well that I have had a lot of complaints about child healthcare centres being cut back or closed, particularly in the western suburbs of Brisbane.

The member for Kallangur also said that this legislation was 'ill conceived and poorly researched', that it 'wasn't rightly authored'. I think the reason he said it 'wasn't rightly authored'—those three wonderful words—is that it is a Labor bill before the parliament. Let me say to the parliament tonight that I cannot wait for Shane King to be the next member for Kallangur.

A government member: Who?

Mrs MILLER: Who? Who are you lot up there? Thirty-five of you are going to go.

The member for Mulgrave, my good friend and colleague Curtis Pitt, spoke about Far North Queensland issues in relation to Indigenous health. He spoke about the lower rates of vaccination in some Indigenous communities, and I thank him for his support of the bill.

The member for Mudgeeraba, Ros Bates, needs to come into this parliament fully prepared and she also needs to read the amendments and the explanatory notes, which have been circulated tonight. This former minister, a disgraced former minister, has no idea about the processes in the House because she did not read the amendments and she did not read the explanatory notes, which I tabled at the beginning of this debate tonight. She says that it is all about parents and it is up to parents. What rot! What absolute rot! In fact, if you took this view some parents would not send their children to school, and that is why there is legislation making parents send their children to school between certain ages. Member for Mudgeeraba, it is the same principle.

The member for Gaven, Dr Alexander Douglas, who is a member of the health committee, spoke about the measles outbreak in the United Kingdom. Dr Douglas said, 'Are you all waiting for another polio epidemic? This minister can't help you then.' They are very true words, member for Gaven. He also said, 'The minister is out of date.' He said, 'He used figures that aren't correct.' I thank the member for Gaven for supporting this bill and for speaking passionately about the amendments as well. He also spoke about the LNP thought police, that they have control over MPs. He spoke about the ego and the ignorance of LNP MPs. Well we have seen this on display tonight well and truly. The member also spoke about the love of every parent for their children and that if you love your children it is about every child, not only your own child, in this state. I thank the member for Gaven for his support.

The member for Nicklin also rose tonight in the debate and he spoke about questions of goodwill from the Newman government. Well, member for Nicklin, I do not know of any goodwill that comes from the LNP. He also said that the parliament should do everything to encourage parents to vaccinate their children.

I thank the member for Gladstone, Liz Cunningham, for saying that she believes in vaccinations by age but that it is important to take the community with us. Member for Gladstone, this is exactly what this legislation will do. It went to the parliamentary committee. We listened to all of the submissions. We listened to what the parliamentary committee had to say, and this is what is brought before the House tonight, particularly the amendments that were tabled here in the House tonight.

For the benefit of the LNP members who could not be bothered reading the amendments, including the minister, and who could not be bothered reading the explanatory notes, I think it is very important that I point out to all members of this parliament and to the people of Queensland the objectives of the amendments. The objectives of the amendments are to ensure that the amendments

address a number of policy issues raised during the committee hearing of the bill, including allowing parents to enrol their children in certain circumstances when they have made a conscientious decision that the child should not receive a vaccination.

Further, parents in those circumstances will be permitted to provide a certificate by an authorised practitioner—that is, a doctor—stating that the practitioner has explained to the parent the benefits and the risks associated with vaccination for vaccine preventable conditions and has informed the parent of the potential danger if the child does not receive the vaccination. The amendments also prescribe the particular diseases for which a child will be required to be vaccinated before enrolment. The amendments also clarify that an ‘unvaccinated child’ for the purposes of the bill is a child who has not received all age-appropriate vaccinations and provide for enrolment of a child who has not received all age-appropriate vaccinations where a parent is in compliance with a catch-up schedule for vaccination.

In conclusion, can I say that I cannot believe the arrogance, the ill-informed contribution of members of the LNP opposite, the ill-informed and arrogant contribution of the Minister for Health, particularly when we see that the medical profession is so supportive of this bill and bills that require vaccinations for children. This should be the first opportunity for this parliament to vote in a bipartisan way in support of this bill. This bill should be above politics. It is about our little ones. It is about our children. It is about the health of Queensland generally.

The interesting thing about this particular bill and the LNP’s attitude to it is that they go out in the community and hand on heart they say, ‘I support vaccination,’ yet in this parliament the lot of you will vote this bill down. Shame on the LNP government, shame on the arrogant LNP, shame on arrogant Newman and shame on this Minister for Health! I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Before we proceed, I remind the member to address members by their proper title.

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

AYES, 10:

ALP, 7—Byrne, Miller, Mulherin, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Scott, Trad.

UAP, 2—Douglas, Judge.

INDEPENDENTS, 1—Wellington.

NOES, 73:

LNP, 70—Barton, Bates, Bennett, Berry, Bleijie, Boothman, Cavallucci, Choat, Costigan, Cox, Crandon, Cripps, Crisafulli, Davies, C Davis, T Davis, Dickson, Dillaway, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Flegg, France, Frecklington, Gibson, Grant, Grimwade, Gulley, Hart, Hathaway, Hobbs, Holswich, Johnson, Kaye, Kempton, King, Krause, Langbroek, Latter, Maddern, Malone, Mander, McArdle, McVeigh, Menkens, Millard, Minnikin, Molhoek, Newman, Nicholls, Ostapovitch, Powell, Pucci, Rickuss, Ruthenberg, Seeney, Shorten, Shuttleworth, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Symes, Trout, Walker, Watts, Woodforth, Young.

KAP, 2—Hopper, Knuth.


INDEPENDENTS, 1—Cunningham.

Resolved in the negative.

MILK PRICING (FAIR MILK MARK) BILL

Resumed from 2 May 2013 (see p. 1465).

Second Reading

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (9.06 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I will be moving amendments to this bill, and I table these amendments now to provide information to honourable members.

Tabled paper: Milk Pricing (Fair Milk Mark) Bill 2013, amendments to be moved by Mr Shane Knuth [4496].

The Milk Pricing (Fair Milk Mark) Bill 2013 introduces a non-compulsory market mechanism to address the competitive imbalances created by deregulation and the unethical marketing practices of the supermarket duopoly. It will give consumers the opportunity to express their support for a domestic dairy industry, outline a program of ministerial consultation with other states’ jurisdictions to introduce similar legislative instruments and legislate an ethical market for fresh milk in the Queensland dairy supermarket supply chain.

The bill will introduce a fair milk mark for all milk that is sold in Queensland where a farmer is paid at least 8c a litre above the cost of production. The Queensland dairy industry farm gate generates some \$220 million worth of milk production each year from some of the 510 dairy enterprises. After processing, this value increases to approximately \$700 million in drinking milk and other value added dairy products. The industry, covering both dairy farming and manufacturing, directly employs more than 2,500 Queenslanders.

The Queensland dairy industry is in crisis, facing serious challenges including the impact of natural disasters, market failures caused by supermarket milk price wars, increasing cost of operation and the need to compete for resources. The Queensland drinking milk supply chain was already under significant pressure before the start of the current supermarket price wars, with regional retail prices being, on average, lower than the national average. Queensland milk production has been in decline since deregulation in 2001. In 2000 there were 1,545 dairy farmers in Queensland. In 2010 there are 610. The number has dropped to 520 and it will be likely to drop to 500 by mid-2014. Reports indicate there have been more than 80 farmers who have left the industry since the supermarket duopoly began its price war over store labelled fresh milk, with more farmers forecast to leave the industry due to unviable terms. But the great thing about this and why I am introducing this fair milk mark is that it is a non-compulsory market mechanism to give consumers the opportunity when they walk into a shop or a supermarket such as Coles or Woolworths and they see that fair milk mark to know that milk comes from Queensland. They know that milk is fresh and they also know that farmers have been paid a fair price for that milk. This is something that is not unheard of, but this is not regulation. This is not deregulation. It is not any of that. This is a market mechanism. It is a non-compulsory mechanism. When the processors have the opportunity to grasp hold of this unforced fair milk mark and pay their farmers a fair price, all the other processors will follow this.

In recent years production has fallen from 523 million litres produced in 2010 to 458 million litres produced for the 12 months to the end of July 2013. This reduction as well as the impact from natural disasters combined with lower farm gate prices caused by retail price gouging by the major supermarkets and rising costs has forced a high number of farmers out of the industry. At the same time package milk sales in Queensland have grown from 497 million litres to 551 million litres. In other words, the UHT brand has picked up. People are buying more UHT and fresh milk has fallen in price. This means that there is a shortage of fresh milk in Queensland to meet the yearly demand of Queenslanders by over a hundred megalitres, forcing milk to be imported from other states.

We cannot produce enough milk in this state ourselves and we have to import milk from southern states, yet our dairy farmers are going broke. We have lost 1,000 in the last 10 years. That is why I am bringing this fair milk mark bill to parliament—so that we can do something and lay the foundations so that the farmers are given a fair price. That is what we are here for. We are here to govern, we are here to do a job and we are here to meet the needs of those farmers and provide a fair price so they can be sustained and stay in the industry.

On 26 June 2011, Wesfarmers' own company Coles launched a national advertising campaign using the Coles generic brand milk and selling it at a discounted price of 33 per cent, reducing the price to \$1 a litre. Immediately, Woolworths dropped the price of the Woolworths brand milk to match. The price at other stores followed suit, with some stores such as Aldi cutting the price even further to \$1.99 for two litres and \$2.89 for three litres. A dollar a litre in the generic sense is an insult to farmers in terms of the capital and the labour that is required to produce that milk.

At the time, Woolworths stated publicly that they thought the pricing of milk at \$1 per litre was unsustainable and it would eventually impact on farmers. Since then, consumers have started to call for greater transparency on milk contracts and for more information at the supermarket shelves so they know which product gives farmers a sustainable return. I will say that again. The consumers have started to call for greater transparency on milk contracts—and I will table some newspaper articles that state this—and for more information at the supermarket shelves so they know which product gives farmers a sustainable return. When consumers go into Woolworths or Coles, they see the Woolworths or Coles brand or some other strange brands but not a lot of consumers know what they are buying, what they are getting, where that milk has come from and whether the milk they are buying is keeping their farmers sustainable so they can stay in the industry.

Some might say that everything is working, that we can trust the markets and that Tony Abbott will look after us. This has been going on for over 12 or 15 years, and they did not help us back then. The dairy farmers are saying that nobody is helping them. A railway employee who worked west of

Townsville on the Mount Isa line said that we need to do something about our dairy farmers. What did the committee do? They voted this down. They said, 'Do not support it.' The Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation said, 'You've got rocks in your head.' Finally, someone is coming out and doing something. Finally, someone is supporting this industry. But the mighty LNP have said, 'Do not support this bill.' Some of the dairy farmers at the public hearing were down there crying because they are going broke, they have no money and they cannot get a return for their product.

Mr Rickuss: Don't mislead the parliament.

Mr KNUTH: Don't you mislead the parliament.

Mr Rickuss interjected.


Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Berry): Member for Lockyer, allow the member for Dalrymple to continue.

Mr KNUTH: That is why they appeared via teleconference saying, 'Support it, please. We cannot continue anymore.' What did we get? They were told, 'We can't because we have to be very careful about impacting on the bottom line of Woolworths and Coles.'

It has been estimated that the lost value to our farmers in the reduced farm gate prices has cost the farmers a combined \$50 million to \$60 million in the last 2½ years and lost opportunity milk sales of around \$70 million as milk has been brought across the border. With lower and suppressed farm gate returns combined with these disaster impacts for some dairy farmers, they will not be able to recover. I say 'not be able to recover', and of course it is true that they will not be able to recover because the evidence is there. We have just lost 80 in the last two years, with 1,000 lost in the last 10 years. Some might say that it is pie in the sky, but it is just going down, down, down, down.

During the public hearing, we heard from dairy farmers who turned over \$800,000 but who did not make a profit. The effect of an \$800,000 business leaving a small community like Malanda is devastating. This is beyond the failure of a single business; this is an issue for regional communities that depend on dairy to survive. Queensland continues to demonstrate population growth. It is clear that the market imbalances—

(Time expired)

 **Hon. JJ McVEIGH** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) (9.16 pm): At the outset, I say that, as Minister for Agriculture in Queensland, I certainly welcome any constructive discussion regarding the proud but struggling Queensland dairy industry. I also make the point that the member for Dalrymple though has suggested that this bill is necessary, that it is the panacea, that it will singlehandedly, if you like, support and save the dairy industry. Unfortunately, this bill will not achieve any of those things.

This bill's stated objectives are as follows: to provide for the setting of a fair price to be paid to dairy farmers for the production of milk, to ensure a sustainable dairy industry continues in Queensland and to establish a fair milk mark to be placed on containers of milk to indicate to Queensland consumers that a fair price has been paid to the dairy farmer. What the bill's objectives will actually provide for is government interference in the marketplace through the requirement for a benchmark retail price for milk and the introduction of unnecessary red tape and regulation.

In 2012-13, the dairy industry contributed \$245 million in gross value of production to the Queensland economy. Queensland produced 6.6 per cent of the total value of milk produced in Australia. While this contribution may seem small in gross terms, the overall contribution of the dairy industry to Queensland should certainly not be underestimated. We rely on the industry to provide the majority of our daily drinking milk in Queensland. I am certainly aware that some milk contract negotiations have resulted in processors paying farmers less for milk. While the retail price of milk was not used as a reason for these lower prices, I remain concerned most definitely as to the relationship between the ongoing discounting of milk and the profitability of Queensland's farmers and processors. I support the view that there is a lack of transparency in the retail marketing of milk and that the current dollar a litre for drinking milk campaigns, whilst benefitting consumers, are causing difficult outcomes for farmers.

Notwithstanding this, the Newman government does not interfere in commercial arrangements between private entities. The federal government recently indicated that a review of the Australian competition law is vital to make sure that the existing laws are fit for their purpose, and the competition law review needs to look at both the effect discounting is having across the supply chain now and the longer term impacts as well.

The Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee's recommendations included a point of clarification and suggested that I outline the government's plan to assist the Queensland dairy industry. I wish to inform the parliament that I am in the process of establishing a dairy industry round table to continue work on a development plan to enable further consultation with stakeholders. The plan will build on my findings from the dairy industry forum that I convened and I chaired in August 2013. In particular, the plan will reflect on the government's continuing commitment to the dairy industry.

Mr Hopper: They are laughing at you, John!

Dr McVEIGH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I accept the interjection from the member for Condamine, because I think we can hopefully benefit from his contribution to the debate here this evening. I say that with reference to that area in my part of the world which is so sadly neglected by him in relation to the Darling Downs. I note that on Friday, 31 January, the *Dalby Herald*, in its editorial on the member for Condamine, said 'Given that there have been almost as many'—

Mr HOPPER: I rise to a point of order.

Dr McVEIGH:—'dodo sightings'—

Mr HOPPER: I rise to a point of order.

Dr McVEIGH:—'as there have been public appearances'—

Mr HOPPER: I rise to a point of order.

Dr McVEIGH:—'by the party-jumping member for Condamine recently'—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Berry): Order! Minister—

Mr HOPPER: I rise to a point of order.

Dr McVEIGH:—'I think it is more than fair'—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister, take your seat.

Mr HOPPER: I rise to a point of order. Mr Deputy Speaker, this has absolutely no relevance to this bill whatsoever. Not only that, this was put to the *Dalby Herald* by the minister.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! What is your point of order? Relevance, is it?

Mr HOPPER: Relevance. There is no relevance in relation to the bill whatsoever, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Dr McVEIGH: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I will continue with my quote of the editorial from the *Dalby Harold*—

Given that there have been almost as many dodo sightings as there have been public appearances by the party-jumping member for Condamine recently, I think it is more than fair to ask him whether he intends to hang up his hat at or before the next election.

Let me return to the bill, having reflected upon what the local community—in fact, the local editor—says about the member for Condamine. I move on after having accepted his interjection, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The government acknowledges the role that industry plays in development and service provisions for the dairy industry, and this government's future activities will complement the initiatives of the dairy industry.

Queensland continues to play a key role in dairy research. My department's dairy research program provides both RD & E—research, development and extension—to improve productivity and profitability in response to increasing costs in producing milk, particularly feed and resource costs. The department, in conjunction with other government agencies, worked very closely with the Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation, QDO, through last year's floods to provide appropriate levels of assistance and responses to affected dairy farmers. Similarly, drought resistant measures are being rolled out at present.

The Australian dairy industry as a whole has an export focus. Interest in the industry in this regard is clearly evidenced by the recent intense commercial battle for ownership of Warrnambool Cheese & Butter, for example. There will be the potential for future exports of dairy products from Queensland, and we must continue to pursue that. The office of Trade and Investment Queensland is working with the industry in that regard, and in particular I note the Treasurer and member for Lockyer's recent discussions with the industry in relation to those sorts of activities.


The government is committed to continuing its support for investment in RD & E, particularly for subtropical dairy farming systems. We will continue to explore opportunities for linking those systems to South-East Asian markets to start with. We are making a priority of reducing red tape and regulation which impact on all agricultural industries, including dairy, and we will continue that effort. We are in the process of establishing a partnership program for funding in the dairy industry. Whilst the Queensland government will not interfere with commercial arrangements in the industry, we will continue to work very closely with dairy farmers in particular.

I have spoken to both milk processors, major supermarkets and, of course, dairy farmers about my concerns—as has the Premier—since this government came to power almost two years ago. As a follow-up to the forum that I convened and I chaired back in August of last year, I have met with QDO representatives Brian Tessmann, Ross McInnes and Adrian Peake just before Christmas to discuss government and industry plans for the industry. I reflect on activities with the Port Curtis dairy co-op and QDO; discussions with Coles and Woolworth's that extend back to August 2012; and investigations across the state in the Lockyer Valley, in the Scenic Rim area, right through to the Atherton area, meeting with industry all the way through.

The bill would give effect for a fair market price to be set by the government, and that milk price per litre must be at least, as suggested, 8c more than the amount the government is satisfied the cost of production for an average dairy farmer is. I note some potential for amendments suggested. The complexities in working through those sorts of calculations across a state as wide as Queensland are too difficult to fathom. The proposal is that this would be a voluntary scheme. That is a fundamental flaw. It would be hard to imagine that milk processors such as Pauls, Dairy Farmers and Norco would voluntarily develop an involvement in other brands, given their investment in their own brands.

The Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee found that milk processors do not support the proposals. We will continue to take a practical and dogged approach to the development of the dairy industry. This government has rolled up its sleeves to do that. We have done that over an extended period of time, as evidenced by my reference to meetings in this contribution tonight. The Newman government does not support the ill-conceived proposals of the Milk Pricing (Fair Milk Mark) Bill 2013, though it will continue practical discussions.

(Time expired)

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (9.27 pm): I rise to speak to the Milk Pricing (Fair Milk Mark) Bill 2013. This bill aims to give dairy farmers what every Australian worker deserves and expects: a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. These are true conservative values. I disagree with some of the points made by the honourable minister for agriculture that government intervention is not the way. They removed that with arbitration when they deregulated the industry, the purpose of which was to make the industry more competitive and deliver a cheaper milk price. It failed because it has destroyed the industry, and we are now facing the possibility of not being able to supply enough fresh milk in Queensland and having to move, as they have in parts of Europe, to drinking boxed milk. We pay more for our milk than we did before deregulation. We have destroyed the prosperity of the dairy farming industry. It is a market failure and it does not work. The national competition policy destroyed the industry and it has failed.

So while we would still consider it abhorrent, there needs to be some balance in attitudes towards these ideologies. I think it has a role to play in this industry, and I think most people in the industry would agree that they were much better off with that arbitrated price.

The price back in May 2000 under arbitration was 59c a litre. The price today is 48.5c per litre. That is devastating and they cannot compete with that. We heard that in the submissions, and I sat in on some of the public hearings. It is clear to see that the industry is in decline and in the future will vanish because the numbers just are not there for them. Only the other day I heard that another one of the major farmers in Southern Queensland has made the decision to exit the industry.

This bill aims to stop the downward spiral of Queensland's dairy industry. As I have said, this is not a solution. That is right; it is not a holistic solution, but it is the start of a solution and would offer them something. The dramatic discounting of milk started with Coles in January 2011 followed by other retailers and this inevitably forced down farm-gate milk prices. The reduction in price is clearly unsustainable. Often the criticism of these sorts of interventionist policies are that we cannot be subsidising the farmer who is going broke; we should not be using taxes to subsidise the farmer. However, the farmer, through his lack of income, has been subsidising the consumer for years. They have been taking the drop in pay. They are the ones who have been battling it out and doing it tough—all to subsidise the consumer. So I do not see where the fairness is in this.

Since the start of the milk price war more than 80 dairy farming families have exited the Queensland industry, down to 510 dairy farmers currently. This means that at the moment there is a shortage of Queensland fresh milk of some 100 megalitres per annum, forcing milk to be imported from southern states to fill the gap. One of the contributors to the public hearing said that remote areas of Queensland such as Mount Isa are not far off losing access to fresh milk because there simply will not be enough producers left in Queensland. That is a pretty scary prospect and it is something that everyone should reflect upon. We are looking at a future in Queensland where fresh milk may not be available in remote areas. That is a scary prospect and it really impacts on our quality of life. As virtually all of Queensland milk is produced as drinking milk, Queensland farmers are highly susceptible to variations in the price of drinking milk and, as such, the ongoing supermarket milk price war.


The Queensland dairy industry is at a crisis point. It is facing serious challenges including the impact of recent natural disasters, the ongoing impacts of market failures caused by the supermarket milk price wars, increasing costs of operation and the need to compete for resources. Dairy farmers are not asking for handouts of protection of their industry; they are just asking for a safety net to keep the industry viable. What is preventing them from receiving a return for their labour is a failure of the market. Because of the selfishness and duopoly of the major supermarket chains, these giants are making profits of roughly 23c in every retail dollar we spend because they are driving our milk producers into the ground with an unfair, unjust pricing model. The action of the supermarket giants is also costing our state significantly in lost production and economic benefits.

Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation conservatively estimates that, since January 2011, the milk price war has cumulatively cost Queensland dairy farmers \$50 million to \$60 million in reduced farm-gate prices and approximately \$70 million in lost opportunity milk sales. ABARE's farm survey estimates for 2012-13 indicate that average farm cash incomes for northern New South Wales and Queensland dairy farmers fell by 40 per cent from the 2011-12 numbers and that average farm business profits declined from \$14,100 to a loss of \$39,000. They are scary statistics indeed. The report also presented a drop in milk receipts of 3c per litre from 2011-12 to 2012-13 while fodder costs increased by over 13 per cent. In its *Northern Dairy Industry Regional Situation & Outlook: Update*, the QDO shows the heavy toll the industry in Queensland has experienced since Coles dropped the price of private label milk to \$1 per litre in January 2011. Both major processors in Queensland, Parmalat and Lion, have indicated the drop in price is having an impact on their businesses, with a reduction in profits flowing through to impact on farmers. It is estimated that there is consequential loss of over \$240 million in investments in fresh milk production along with 240 jobs at a farm level and more staff losing their jobs along the value chain.

A competitive and productive dairy industry contributes directly to economic growth for regional communities, the states and the nation itself. A fair marketplace will ensure dairy farmers stay in business, and secure market access will provide enormous potential for growth in the industry and the economy through greater exports. Finally, the key objectives of this milk pricing bill are to right some of those wrongs by providing for a fair price to be paid to dairy farmers for the production of milk to at least give them some hope of a sustainable dairy industry in Queensland. Introducing a fair milk mark for all milk that is sold in Queensland where the farmer is paid at least 8c per litre above the cost of production will mean that they will get a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.


Many people go to the supermarket and look at the milk shelf. There are so many different types now. They want to know which one supports their farmer. Here we are providing a low-cost way of facilitating that so they know they can support their Queensland dairy farmers and give us the ability to continue to produce fresh milk in Queensland. It is a small thing we can do for these dairy farmers and it is low cost. It is an opt-in situation. It is the essence of good government when we can find affordable solutions to help these struggling industries and keep them going in Queensland. I ask everyone here tonight to search their conscience and think about these struggling dairy farmers going broke and consider the number of suicides that occur in these areas. These people are hurting; we could feel the hurt during the submissions they made in the hearings. Here is a little ray of hope. Members are quite right; it is not a solution for them, but it is a leg up and it can help them. If the government does not like it, they can change it. They can agree with the sentiment of this and we can work with that. There needs to be some goodwill from the government in supporting this bill. We often stand here and support things that the government does. There is often goodwill and bipartisanship from the crossbenches, from the minor parties. Honourable members need to look at this bill and

search their conscience. They need to think about these dairy farmers who are going broke and think about the industry that is failing. It has been failing ever since deregulation took place. Here is something we can do to help them. I urge them to support the bill tonight. It is a good bill. It is a credit to this member, who is doing something for his electorate. It is a wonderful tribute that he has brought it to the House tonight for debate. This is a good bill to debate. It confronts those ideologies that are killing the farming industry in Queensland. We can confront it tonight. I ask members to search their conscience and I ask for their support of this bill tonight.

 **Mr COSTIGAN** (Whitsunday—LNP) (9.36 pm): I rise this evening to make a very brief contribution in the debate in relation to the Milk Pricing (Fair Milk Mark) Bill 2013. The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry made some very valid points as to why the government will not be supporting this bill, and I will try not to double up too much in that respect. I will make the point that the fair milk mark proposed in the bill is designed to be optional—that is right, optional. Put simply, the bill is ill-conceived—and this is coming from someone who can genuinely empathise with the dairy farmer and our struggling dairying industry. My great uncle, my godfather, had his own dairy farm at Eungella many years ago. Back then Eungella, just outside of my electorate, was home to perhaps 50 or so dairy farmers. Today, as my good friend and neighbouring colleague the member for Mirani would certainly know, there are just a handful left in that very special place west of Mackay, whose name means ‘land of the clouds’.

I think the member for Dalrymple possibly has his head in the clouds if he genuinely thinks that processors would put a special mark on their products should this bill receive a green light. That is because there are no provisions—none whatsoever—that would compel processors to strike a special mark on their various milk products. There are none at all. In theory, a fair milk mark could still be achieved without the need for it to be legislated. That is something that I am happy to take forward in the interests of our dairy farmers who we all know in this House are doing it tough and have been doing it tough for a long time compared to previous generations.

I look forward to working with our minister—and I know that we are in good hands with this minister, contrary to what we have heard from the member for Dalrymple—as well as with the Treasurer and the Minister for Trade in developing new markets for our industry and our dairy farmers—something the industry in New Zealand knows all about. As far as I am concerned, we need to chase that new business abroad. We, of course, also need to work with our federal colleagues in Canberra to address major competition policy issues that are impacting on our industry at the expense of the farmer. In summary, I support our dairy farmers but I cannot support this bill.

 **Dr DOUGLAS** (Gaven—UAP) (9.39 pm): Dairies, dairymen and women and their families, dairy cattle, produce merchants, retailers, transport operators and customers are all the beneficiaries of a remarkable product called milk. Tonight we are asking that the balance of those who are involved in this process be redressed in such a manner to make milk production by farmers in Queensland affordable and at least marginally profitable. If we do not at least give them some signals that as a state we understand their dilemma, then the inevitable end result may be that we end up importing all of our milk initially from southern states and possibly even in the longer term from New Zealand in total. There are probably those amongst you here tonight who believe the battle has been fought and lost in favour of primarily the two retailing majors—Coles/Wesfarmers and Woolworths—that not just dictate price but also from whom they will take their product. My former electoral boundaries were far larger in the past and there were a lot of dairy farmers in my electorate. There are none now as a result of deregulation and creeping urbanisation of rural land, both pricing out and economically excluding those so-called not-profitable dairies. We saw the emasculation of our once proud South Coast Dairy, Norco and QUF which, as many may know, was based here in Brisbane and driven by Reuben Hinze, Russ Hinze’s brother, the former long-serving MLA for South Coast. Reuben served QUF and South Coast Dairy for many years, and we actually benefitted from the visionary statements and decisions they made. If we lose product and we lose producers, we lose employment as this goes on and we lose our food security.

Tonight the minister’s argument is fundamentally that the Queensland dairy industry is extinct; it just has not realised it yet. He pointedly states that this bill proposes a fixed milk floor price. He is wrong, but I doubt he has the dignity and probably the integrity to publicly inform the QDO and all dairy men that he stated that tonight. He effectively stated that he has a laissez-faire attitude to what is going on despite what is now occurring in the rest of Australia in that there is a contested takeover

of Warrnambool by Canadian giant Saputo at unbelievable margins above price. He must recognise that this is going on. This minister talks about minimalist approaches which he knows will do nothing but lead to the continued retreat of dairy farmers from their vocations, farms, businesses and industries, and all of their families with them. The minister is supposed to adhere to his own government's four-pillars policy—of which agriculture is said to be one part, or so he says! He is seeking not just to decide—tick and flick—who it is going to be and choose the winners; he is deciding who are going to be the losers too—and clearly dairy farmers, including previously large commercial operators who were said to be successful, are in his gun sights. No attempt to shroud himself with a small bunch of sycophants who are not representative of dairy farmers collectively and the corporates who fill LNP coffers will give anyone really concerned about the future of the Queensland dairy industry any idea where his allegiances lie. I say shame on him and I put it to all members: why does he fear optional regional milk labelling? That is the request of this bill.

Tonight the member for Dalrymple both on behalf of his electorate and also the Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation is in pursuit of a non-compulsory labelling mechanism initiative. It is the best way forward to highlight to consumers where that milk has come from and who produced it—other than the cows! The labels are proposed to be placed on milk containers where they can clearly be seen by consumers when they are purchasing it so that they can see that it came from Queensland dairy farmers, and this refers to milk or milk products. I was in the National Party for a very long time and this was party policy, and the Liberals supported it and so, begrudgingly, did the Labor Party, because it knew where its bread was buttered—and butter comes from milk! This argument must be supported on many levels. Firstly, the Queensland dairy industry is reliant on the domestic fresh milk market. Secondly, in terms of the issue of food security in Australia, we must not become so blinded by free trade agreements, which have been trotted out tonight by some people who do not know what they are talking about, and we must put our nation first—just as all other nations do. We must realise that our food security is at risk. We have to remember that milk, wheat, water and meat—a protein—are basic staples that we need. We must defend the right to produce those staples, even during those times where we have to support them. The rest of the world does exactly the same thing, as it should, because it has common sense, and that is what is missing here.


Finally, we need to not lose that capacity and shut down our dependence, probably eventually to New Zealand, because we cannot recover that capacity nor knowledge in the industry, because there is a skill level involved in that, assuming those in the industry either become unemployed and retire and totally leave the land and that land becomes used for another purpose. Currently the arguments of the supermarkets are looking increasingly hollow. It is clearly obvious that selling milk below cost means that the costs are largely carried at the farm gate and they cannot continue and therefore the farmers must go out of business and supermarkets are using generic labelled milk that has originated anywhere. All we are saying with this bill is that we want to ensure that people can be told where that milk comes from so that it could be supplied from Queensland.

We have to consider what has happened in the past with regard to milk in other parts of the world. Do people realise that when Chernobyl occurred you could not drink the milk from Northern Europe for nearly six months? It had to be imported from elsewhere. Do members know what? We could become dependent on an area if, all of a sudden, for six months we could not get supply, and we need to know that we are guaranteed supply. Do not think our southern cousins will always look after us. They may not. That is not to say that market forces will not drive a solution, but they will not necessarily in staple products. That is why the Chinese are buying land in Australia, and they will continue to do so. They will not just buy it for dairy farms; they are buying it for sugar. The reality is that when you become dependent on overseas countries for your basic needs you are at their beck and call, and this bill in a simple way is saying that by using labelling, which is optional, we become less dependent and we have protection of our own market. This is a reasonable thing.

I looked at report No. 30 of the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee and could not believe that it says that it does not want to support this. What, is it proposing to address the pressing issue of securing and fostering, not just the employment of Queenslanders but the basic products they produce? Is it so hypocritical that it would transfer all of our production offshore, increase our dependencies on overseas manufacturers and make us dependent not just on that but transferring our capital and—

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Dr DOUGLAS: I will talk to the member later; I will make my comments through the chair. Honestly, the argument that you responded to the Dairyfarmers Organisation's reasonable request was poor—absolutely poor. It was not asking for a floor price; it was asking for labelling on those containers. Yes, of course the overseas owned large corporates are not going to support it. But do members know what? They will do it because look what happened when Coles and Woolies were pressed into the 'Australian Made' program. They were taking the New Zealand stuff off the shelves and putting the Australian stuff back on. Do members know why? Because the consumers would not buy the other product. If we label it with 'Queensland' on it, we will find that people will buy the product, even if they are paying more, and we should support that. All these people are asking is 8c above the report. Look what happened when Archer Daniels wanted to take over GrainCorp. Do members know why we opposed it? Because it was getting its money for nothing—zero—and because it was going to buy the monopoly provider and we were going to lose our control of a staple market that we needed to control. We have to ensure we protect the dairy industry to some extent to the same level. This is not the same as a base floor price, and those opposite know it. This is about optional provisions and not making us dependent on overseas providers, and everyone in this parliament should support it.

 **Mrs MADDERN** (Maryborough—LNP) (9.49 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Milk Pricing (Fair Milk Mark) Bill 2013. I declare that I own a few Woolies shares, but my major declaration is that my sister and brother-in-law have a dairy farm. I have been intimately involved in the vagaries of the dairy industry from the beginning of deregulation through all the changes until the current time. As much as anyone, and probably more than most, I feel for dairy farmers working in the dairy industry. The hours are long, they are for every single day and in recent years the returns have been so low that they do not provide a reasonable return on investment and, in many cases, not even a living. In many cases farmers have had to make the decision to walk away before they literally go bankrupt.

As a consequence, I have taken a great deal of interest in the bill, both at a personal level and at a committee level, to the extent that I have taken considerable time and trouble to make my own inquiries in addition to those provided by the committee process. Although I completely endorse the sentiments of the bill—that is a need to ensure that the dairy industry is once again viable and supplying fresh milk to our Queensland market—the issue is complex and for reasons I will explain I do not believe that this bill will assist the dairy farmer and may only lead to unreal expectations and disappointed hopes.

Having said that, this is an issue that this government will not walk away from. We will continue to look at all options to help support our dairy farmers and to ensure that our communities will continue to have access to fresh milk. Although technically the fresh milk market is competitive on a national basis, in Queensland the fresh milk market is flawed in that there is an increasing demand and a decreasing supply and prices are still falling. In order to fulfil Queensland's demand, milk is being shipped in from southern states with the added transport costs, yet the price to the dairy farmer in Queensland has not increased to reflect those circumstances. Although currently the price of milk in the supermarket—that is the unbranded Coles and Woolies milk—may be seen to be in the best interests of the consumer, overseas evidence indicates that in the longer term consumer choice will be limited.

Essentially, the bill proposes the introduction of a fair milk mark to be placed on bottled milk for which the dairy farmer has been paid an amount of 8c per litre over the average cost of production. The milk mark is designed to allow the consumer who wishes to support the dairy industry and keep it viable the opportunity of identifying milk that has been produced on a financially viable basis. A fair milk mark could be implemented in the same way as the Heart Foundation's tick of approval. This is a non-compulsory mark that is supported by an application by the trader to use the mark after first undergoing testing and then is subject to ongoing monitoring. Existing laws or trademarks could be used to support a voluntary fair milk mark without the need for additional legislation.


My advice from within the industry is that a fair milk mark is likely to have an effect of between one per cent and three per cent of sales. That is a very small volume of sales and is unlikely to make a significant difference to the overall viability of the dairy industry. The Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation has indicated that it does not think that a voluntary milk mark will turn around the industry and at best may help to stabilise the industry. On this evidence, it seems that a fair milk mark will be ineffective in sustaining the industry into the long term.

Evidence from small boutique processors indicates that they are able to market their milk locally into niche markets at a sustainable price and in some cases these processors are expanding to process milk from a number of farms. The boutique processors are very possessive of their defining brand and in some cases indicated that they would not be very interested in using a fair milk mark. Consumers have demonstrated that they can differentiate between products. The QDO in its written submission indicated that the use of a voluntary milk mark had already been explored but that it had not been taken up. Given that there is no compulsion being applied by this bill, it seems unlikely that a fair milk mark will work now.

One of the major flaws in this bill is that it fails to address the issue of how to determine the cost of production of an average dairy farmer in order to establish a fair price. It is my belief that it would be impossible to ascribe an average cost of production that would fairly reflect that cost for all dairy farmers. This LNP government has a policy of reducing red tape. It is therefore contradictory to our policy to introduce a bill that has no enforceable component and, as assessed by the technical scrutiny of legislation secretariat, is unlikely to achieve its stated outcomes.


As I said previously, I have a very great interest in the wellbeing of the dairy industry because of my family connections. Naturally, I want to do something that will help not only my family members but also every other dairy farmer. Given the complexities of this industry, the committee has recommended that as a state government we work with the federal government to change the Competition and Consumer Act to allow it to be able to react in the case of a very flawed market. The committee has further recommended that support be provided to those dairy farmers who wish to move into the local processing niche markets by providing them with technical, financial and marketing advice. That is one way in which we can ensure that local communities will still have access to fresh milk. I refer others to the speech made by the minister in which he has indicated exactly the work that he and we as a government are doing to support our dairy farmers.

As I said, this LNP government will continue to work to support our dairy farmers, but I do not believe that it is at all useful to pass a bill that increases red tape, is poorly drafted and is unlikely to achieve its stated outcomes. I do not believe that it will provide any useful support to the dairy industry and, therefore, I will not be supporting this bill.

 **Mr JUDGE** (Yeerongpilly—UAP) (9.55 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Milk Pricing (Fair Milk Mark) Bill 2013. While major retailers are driving down the price of milk to entice consumers into their shops, they are also driving farmers off their land. This bill is not about subsidising an industry; it is about informing consumers and sustaining a vital industry.

The Minister for Agriculture would know that our agricultural industry is identified as the wave of the future in terms of Queensland's and Australia's economy. From this perspective, I fail to understand how the minister, and especially members with dairy related industries in their electorates, are not in here standing up for their communities, their farmers, farmers' families and local jobs. For example, I refer to the members representing electorates on the Sunshine Coast, including the Attorney-General and member for Kawana. Perhaps he could be in here standing up for dairy farmers and supporting communities adjoining his electorate such as those in Maleny. This is not the government subsidising an industry. This is not interfering in the free market. This is about informing consumers. This is about keeping the farm gate open.

I will back our farmers. On behalf of my electorate of Yeerongpilly, I will give the Milk Pricing (Fair Milk Mark) Bill 2013 a tick of approval. I know that is what my community would want. I commend the bill to the House. I also congratulate the member for Dalrymple for introducing such an important bill.

 **Mr GIBSON** (Gympie—LNP) (9.57 pm): I rise to speak to the Milk Pricing (Fair Milk Mark) Bill 2013. I have listened very carefully to the submissions and the contributions to this debate by all members—both government and non-government. This bill has brought about a debate that has been playing out across Australia for many years. In this space it has been recognised that, with regard to our dairy farmers and the farm gate price that they get for their product, it is a very complex issue. There are many factors and whilst no-one would deny that the \$1 a litre milk price is placing incredible pressure on dairy farmers, it is simplistic to simply say that that is the sole cause of the dilemma that dairy farmers are facing. I know that in my electorate of Gympie where there are many dairy farmers a range of factors, in particular input costs, are having a great impact.

I want to thank the minister for the opportunity last year to attend a forum that he called and chaired. Two dairy farmers in my electorate came down with me to attend that forum and it was particularly valuable. Can I put on the record that it was disappointing that, from memory, the only supermarket that was represented at that forum was Costco. Neither of the major players bothered to attend that forum. I think that highlights the frustration that many have in dealing with the milk industry.

I believe that the member for Mount Isa touched on a very important point in his speech. It was a frank and honest admission that this bill is not a solution. That is exactly right. I support the member for Mount Isa in that. Unfortunately—and I am not placing words in his mouth; these are my words—this bill is not a solution; it is a gimmick.

As we heard from the member for Maryborough, there is nothing stopping any of the suppliers from putting a fair milk mark on their product. They have not done so to date. My electorate has had a long connection with the dairying industry. When I do my grocery shopping and I look in the shopping trolley in front and the shopping trolley behind unfortunately people are buying the no-name brands. People are buying the one-litre milk carton in that area.

Mr Knuth interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Watts): Order! The interjections are not being taken. I will give the call back to the member for Gympie.

Mr GIBSON: Thank you very much for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. I look in the shopping trolley in front and I look in the shopping trolley behind and people are buying the one-litre carton of milk. That is the biggest challenge we have. It is about saying to the people that there is much more to this. We appreciate that the cost of living has a huge impact on homes and that milk is a staple. They are literally voting with their feet.


Debate, on motion of Mr Gibson, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr STEVENS (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (Manager of Government Business) (10.00 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Stradbroke Island, Bushfires


 **Ms TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (10.00 pm): I rise tonight to talk on a recent occurrence off the coast of Brisbane. It has long been a fact that bushfires are part of Australia's natural history. We only need look at the current fires raging across Victoria which ignited almost five years to the date of the Black Saturday tragedy which has left a scar right through the psyche of our nation. We also need only to remember the fires which consumed North Stradbroke Island over the 2013-14 New Year period. I have been to Straddie since the fires and I have witnessed firsthand the devastation, particularly around Blue Lake. On 29 December a lightning strike at 18 Mile Swamp on the eastern side of the island ignited an inferno that scorched 58 per cent of the island. It required the evacuation of a thousand people and devastated the population and habitat for many of the island's native fauna and flora.

I would like to acknowledge and pay tribute to the exemplary work of the more than 400 urban, rural and auxiliary firefighters under the leadership of Commissioner Lee Johnson. The fact that no human life or property was lost was a little bit of luck and a lot of hard work. I also wish to acknowledge the impact on the local economy which is primarily reliant on tourism. This disaster occurred during the peak tourism period. I also wish to acknowledge and place on record the important and critical role that the traditional owners, the Quandamooka people, played in advising and working with all agencies to help the firefighting efforts. Their important contribution has been publicly acknowledged by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service.

The way forward needs a couple of elements of focus. These are questions I particularly put to the government in terms of the way forward: firstly, I wish to know whether or not the government intends to investigate or review the circumstances of this disaster to understand whether the management strategies were adequate and whether or not the response, as exemplary as it was,

could have been enhanced. The Stradbroke community needs both state and federal government support to assist in the massive task of rehabilitation and revegetation, particularly for the purpose of regenerating habitat for the local fauna and particularly the local koala population. The Stradbroke community also needs government assistance to fireproof communities and key habitat areas for the future. Finally, and most significantly, the way forward must have the Quandamooka people, through the Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation, or QYAC, leading the management and protection strategies needed to mitigate against the effects of future fire fuelled disasters.


Australia Day Achievement Awards

 **Mr YOUNG** (Keppel—LNP) (10.03 pm): On Friday, 24 January 2014, on the anniversary of the flooding event of ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald, I had the pleasure to represent the Hon. Jack Dempsey, the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, to present the Australia Day achievement awards. I have considered it an honour to represent the good people of Keppel, but I was given the highest honour to present the National Emergency Medal to Mr Colin May, the chief superintendent of the Rockhampton Fire and Rescue Service. The National Emergency Medal is approved by Her Majesty the Queen. The National Emergency Medal is awarded for sustained or significant service in the protection of lives and property. Mr Colin May received his medal for significant service in the Cyclone Yasi emergency and the Queensland floods.

It was indeed an honour to present this medal, along with 20 other medals, medallions, clasps and certificates. Of note was the Diligent and Ethical Service Medal awarded posthumously to Mr Bruce Thomasson. The medal was received by his daughter. The Australia Day awards gathered people from throughout Central Queensland, from Windorah, Jundah and Ilfracombe in the west to Finch Hatton and Sarina in the north to local fire and rescue stations and SES brigades from Rockhampton, Yeppoon, Mount Morgan and Keppel Sands. Mr Kevin Hutchinson from the Finch Hatton Rural Fire Brigade was awarded an achievement medallion for outstanding service to emergency services. The National Medal Second Class, recognising 35 years of service, was awarded to two recipients: Mr Kevin Porter SES volunteer at the Mount Morgan SES Group and Mr Gary Simple, lieutenant at the Yeppoon Fire and Rescue Station.

The 2013 Australia Day awards in Rockhampton were called off because of the flooding from ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald and we witnessed just how important our emergency services staff and volunteers are to many Queenslanders, with flooding devastating large parts of the state. I agree with the minister that our officers and volunteers are highly respected throughout emergency services sectors and the broader community.

Toowoomba, 2014 Tourism and Sporting Events

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (10.06 pm). It is a great pleasure for me to be here tonight to speak about some of the impressive tourism and sporting events that will be happening in Toowoomba in 2014. I would like to go through a few of them. The Coca-Cola Queensland PGA Championships at City Golf Club are just about to start. Soon we will have the FKG Tour of Toowoomba, which has John Osborne OAM as one of the key organisers. It is a great event for our town. We have the Toowoomba CycleFest coming up this year as well. One great event that I will have a look at that is just around the corner from me is the Yakima Sunshine MTB Series cross country and downhill mountain bike event. This is a facility that has received money both from the Get in the Game fund and also the gambling benefit fund. It will be a great event. A great facility has been built on the edge of the range. I would like to thank the Minister for Sport and the Minister for Tourism for their support of these various events. The volunteers and organisers should not go unmentioned. The department team locally and the local tourism body should also be thanked, along with the local council, sponsors and donors.


There are many other events. All of these things add to the economic vibrancy of Toowoomba and make sure our motels are filled throughout the year. We have the Queensland Senior Schools Cup for volleyball being held in town. We have the Hutchinson Builders Toowoomba International Tennis being held at the university. We have the Tuff Bullbars Professional Bullriders All Star Challenge also being hosted in town. The list goes on. Just last weekend I was at the St George Queensland Reds versus Waikato Chiefs super rugby trial. It was a great game. It was great to see

the Reds win in the great facility at the Clive Berghofer Arena. We have the Zarraffa's Coffee Oceania Road Cycling Championship, again organised by John Osborne OAM. Toowoomba is becoming a bit of a hub for cycling. We have the Titans versus the North Queensland Cowboys NRL trial coming up.

Mr Costigan interjected.

Mr WATTS: The member for Whitsunday can keep quiet because the Titans will win. We have the Queensland School Rugby Championships; the Queensland Masters Hockey Championships; the Queensland School Tennis Championships; the Queensland School Cross Country Championships for 13 to 19 year olds; the Queensland School Softball Championships; the Australian Country Hockey Championships; the Australian School Sport Golf Championships; the Australian Junior Road Cycling Championships; and the Australian School Sport Softball Championships for 12 years and under. All of these things are not possible without the support of the Queensland government ministers for tourism and sport and the local council, as well as the various sponsors. They are great events. They fill up our motels. They make sure we have economic activity. Inland cities can be great tourism destinations.

Medical Contracts


 **Mr JUDGE** (Yeerongpilly—UAP) (10.09 pm): I rise to speak on behalf of doctors within my electorate and across Queensland who are deeply concerned about the future of health care in this state. We all want our public health system to be strong, efficient and sustainable so as to deliver world-class patient care to Queenslanders, to train our future generations of doctors and to continue leading in medical research and innovation. For this reason, the Newman government needs to return to the negotiating table in good faith and offer a fair and proper contract to senior doctors.

Currently, the Newman government is holding a gun to the head of senior doctors by cutting one-third of their wage if they do not sign these unfair contracts. Valid contracts need to be fair and they need to be signed voluntarily. The currently proposed contracts fail both of those tests. Outstanding problematic issues include: proposed contracts can be unilaterally amended without the agreement of the doctor; there is grossly inadequate dispute resolution—QIRC has been removed as an independent binding arbitrator; unfair dismissal protections have been removed; there is no guarantee that conditions will not be even further eroded over time; and senior doctors are concerned that they will lose input on how they provide patient care and services to the managers and administrators.

This is a revival of Work Choices by the Newman government and it is being forced onto our senior doctors by the use of special legislation that seeks to punish them if they do not sign these contracts. Senior doctors feel that by continuing to serve the public of Queensland, they are exposed to the whims of a government that has shown nothing but contempt and disrespect for them as highly skilled and dedicated specialists who actively chose to work in the public health system.

With such drastic erosions of employment conditions, senior doctors are concerned that the public health system that they spent the last decade resuscitating and nursing back to full strength since the days of Patel and Bundaberg will simply fall apart again. It is unacceptable to the senior doctors and our communities at large. The Palmer United Party wants all Queenslanders to know that we will end the Newman government's wrecking-ball approach, repeal the Premier's archaic laws and restore the public sector's morale and productivity.

Get in the Game Program

 **Mrs SMITH** (Mount Ommaney—LNP) (10.12 pm): Tonight I rise to commend the government on a great initiative and to show how it is really working at a grassroots level in my electorate of Mount Ommaney. The initiative is the Get in the Game program, which is available through the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing. As I go around the electorate, attending sign-on days for junior sports, I find it so encouraging that there is a smorgasbord of sporting activities on offer for our children. Get in the Game is helping families to take up those opportunities.


There are enormous benefits for children who get into sport, especially team sports, at a young age. Children who get into sport can carry the benefits with them for the rest of their lives. Kids who play team sports quickly learn the value of being a member of a team. They develop the ability to work with others to achieve their goals. They learn to encourage others. They develop a wider circle

of friends with varied interests. Making a commitment to training and game schedules provides kids with structure and routine. Often this involves other members of the family as mum and dad transport the children to and from training sessions and games. Of course, this can be a source of great joy and fun for the parents as well. I hope that parents in my electorate who are currently supporting their children in this way get as much out of this as my husband and I did when our children were, and indeed still are, growing up and playing sport.

There are so many individual benefits that come with playing sport, as well. Children who play sport realise that there is fun in the playing, they learn to deal with disappointment but also have opportunities to celebrate success. They become better losers and, of course, more gracious winners. Research suggests that children who play sport are more likely to show initiative and have higher levels of motivation, which are key elements of the resilience we want them to have. Of course, sport gets them outside and away from computers and iPads. Child obesity is on the increase and it is so important for children to be healthy and active.

Mount Ommaney has benefitted from this program. At the moment, 20 clubs have registered for Get in the Game opportunities. They can take advantage of the benefits of this great program. The program has provided over \$200,000 worth of grants. I am proud to be a member of a government that is supporting families and clubs so that kids can be involved in this great smorgasbord of sporting opportunities.

Horizon Housing

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (10.15 pm): A little over 20 years ago, a group of women of various ages and backgrounds gathered at Lifeline, Broadbeach and planted the seed of Gold Coast Vision Housing, now Horizon Housing. They were all in need of housing and could see this need was widespread on the Gold Coast. They were not looking for handouts, but were prepared to work on a voluntary basis towards their goal. In September 1993, Gold Coast Vision Housing was incorporated. It was a housing company not just for the now, but with a vision for housing into the future on the Gold Coast. The first funding grant came in 1995 and five duplexes were purchased. Three of the original members still occupy them today.

With a change of government policy in the mid-2000s came the realisation that to grow an amalgamation with another organisation was necessary. This was an extremely brave and risky decision at the time and one that demonstrated the enduring commitment of the Gold Coast Vision Housing members. At the time, Gold Coast Vision Housing was already sharing an office and staff with a similar organisation called Gold Coast Community Housing Association. In November 2007, a unanimous vote saw those two organisations amalgamate and become Gold Coast Housing Company.

Over the coming years, members continued to work towards providing community housing and developing a housing company that was well positioned to grow affordable housing. This was aided when, in 2007, local philanthropist Maree Alexanderson generously donated the land on which the company's first affordable housing accommodation was developed. Over the coming years, the Queensland government awarded \$15 million to the company to increase the portfolio of affordable housing stock on the Gold Coast, which assisted in achieving the company's aim of providing the Gold Coast region with a wider choice of housing options. While continuing the vital business of providing community housing through various programs, from 2007 to 2009, the company also focussed on expanding the supply of affordable housing for people in housing stress, redefining the role of the Gold Coast Housing Company as both a community and affordable housing manager and developer.

By late 2010, the Gold Coast Housing Company became Horizon Housing Company to reflect its expansion and operation outside of South-East Queensland. Throughout the years, the dedicated team at Horizon Housing has continued to build on strong relationships with its various partners and supporters and great efforts have been made to develop new relationships with other community organisations, industry bodies and prospective building industry partners. From this long journey, Horizon Housing has emerged as Queensland's largest non-profit housing provider, with a staff of more than 60 and the management of more than 1,800 properties covering 17 regional councils from the Tweed through to Townsville.

In this time, Horizon Housing has been able to help over 3,000 people find safe, secure and affordable accommodation and will continue to be there to support our communities long into the future. From the end of 2007 to today, its housing portfolio has grown by more than 700 per cent, which is made up of social and affordable housing. While Horizon is still based in the heart of the Gold Coast, it has recently expanded to cover resource communities such as Roma and Miles, where market rents are on an upward trend, leading to a growing need for affordable housing for key workers. Horizon Housing is a strong and dedicated partner of the Department of Housing and Public Works—


(Time expired)

Mr MOLHOEK: I seek leave to have the remaining sentence incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

—and is committed to assist Minister Mander in delivering the recently released Housing 2020 Strategy.

Narangba Valley State School, Minimbah State School


 **Mr GRIMWADE** (Morayfield—LNP) (10.18 pm): Tonight I rise to update the parliament on some great news that has come from the Morayfield electorate in the past few weeks. I am proud to announce that Narangba Valley State School and Minimbah State School have had sets of school crossing flashing lights installed for the safety of kids travelling to and from those schools. Late last year, I announced in this place that Morayfield East State School had had school crossing flashing lights installed. Of course, that happened as the school principal, Judy Menary, and the Morayfield East Neighbourhood Watch President, Ken Bradley, and I worked in unison to establish a case to present to the minister to have those lights installed. Since then, the Narangba Valley State School principal, Sue Harris, and P&C president, Allison Clark, and the Minimbah State School principal, Sean Bennett, and P&C president, Dean James, partnered with me to engage their school communities to gauge what parents thought about having school crossing flashing lights at those schools.

We ran a bit of a local campaign where we engaged parents at the school gate. We ran a petition style campaign which parents could sign expressing their support. We later presented it to the minister to show how the community felt when it comes to the safety of kids going to school at these two schools. It was great news over the Christmas break when I was advised by the minister that these schools had been successful in receiving funding to install these school crossing flashing lights. It was with great delight that I could phone with the news the principals and the P&C presidents of those schools who had partnered with me to undertake the campaign and put the case forward for the kids of those schools. This is a really great initiative. As a father of three children, what I am proud of is ensuring the communities around my electorate are safe. In this place last night I spoke about the out-of-control Facebook parties and how they were destroying our communities.

We have done other things to make sure the kids in our communities are safe. We have cracked down on criminal gangs. We have introduced anti-hooping laws. We have the toughest sex offender laws to protect the kids of Queensland. We have new graffiti laws. As we have announced in this place a number of times, we have up to 600 new police on the beat in Queensland. That is delivering on our election commitment of having 1,300 new police on the street. In my electorate we have 50 additional police on the beat protecting our kids.

This is great news. The school crossing flashing lights will be an important addition to ensure that our kids are safe in our communities and can get to school safely. They will be able to ride their bikes to school and trust that the residents who are driving their vehicles around school zones are acting in a safe manner. It is fantastic news and I commend it to the House.

Gold Coast, Bus Services

 **Dr DOUGLAS** (Gaven—UAP) (10.21 pm): Back on 15 October last year I rose in this House to warn that a new public bus service on the Gold Coast would rob many of my constituents of the opportunity of getting home after work, that some feeder services would not exist after 3 pm, let alone for business or retail trading hours, and that there would be no weekend services in parts of my electorate.

The new services started on 20 January and, just as I had predicted, hundreds of residents living in the Clearwater Estate, which is to the west of Nerang, were left with a service that was nothing more than second rate. I had irate residents coming to my office each day. At a public meeting I called a few days later, about 80 adults and children turned up to voice their disgust with the service which robs them of any weekend travel and a service that stops midafternoon.

A committee of residents was formed and a petition started. Services should operate until 8 pm or 9 pm. That is what should happen and had been happening, but is not happening now. The new services make it almost impossible for some students attending school outside of Nerang to get home after school—we are in a semirural electorate—particularly if they participate in extracurricular activities, which many children do.

People living in Boonooroo Park, Pappas Way and Highland Park—communities within the electorate, but not necessarily interlinked as they are in Brisbane—no longer have evening services out of Pacific Fair, one of the major shopping centres on the Gold Coast. The last service leaves at 5.27 pm. Heaven forbid if you are a tourist. It is too early for those who want to get home after work or after Thursday night shopping.


A major concern was conflicting information distributed by TransLink. According to TransLink, one day there were no longer bus services at Railway Parade for the YMCA housing complex. Then days later there was a service. That was after I had criticised the minister for it. His people had been telling people there was no bus service anymore. The complex manager came to see me as a matter of urgency after residents had been told by TransLink the bus stop was gone. Minister Emerson then made a statement and said it was not gone. Then TransLink said it was back again. All the information they distributed was wrong.

A new service to the Gold Coast University Hospital and Griffith University, route 739, serving Nerang, Carrara, Emerald Lakes, Highland Park and Ashmore, runs week days only with the last service at 5.35 pm. What about all the people going to afternoon lectures? There are 20,000 people at the university and probably a third of them come from my area.

Probably the biggest outcry came from some of the 700-plus residents of Earle Haven Retirement Village who were robbed of a direct bus service to Southport outside of their village entrance. They have to walk a kilometre to the bus stop. They originally lost their bus service all together. Then they said, 'We will give you one to the railway station where you can sit for an hour and wait and hope you can get a bus after that.' Most of these people cannot do this.

These bus services are irrational and unfair. People in my electorate of Gaven and the people of the Gold Coast deserve a lot better. We are paying for it and we should be getting it.

Alcohol Fuelled Violence

 **Mr HOLSWICH** (Pine Rivers—LNP) (10.24 pm): Drug and alcohol fuelled violence is a scourge on our society. Individuals who are drunk or high believe the appropriate way to deal with conflict is through excessive violence or, worse, those who attack others without provocation are ruining lives and spoiling legitimate entertainment options for the vast majority of law-abiding, decent Queensland citizens.

In responding to this issue that has ruined too many lives, I am pleased our government launched a period of consultation so that we could explore all sides of the argument and come up with an appropriate response that will deal with offenders, make our pubs, clubs, entertainment venues and communities safer whilst not penalising the vast majority of Queenslanders who do the right thing. It was not the time for a knee-jerk reaction as some jumped into, without any consideration of the consequences.

Over the past few weeks I have gone to the Pine Rivers community seeking their input on how we should respond to alcohol fuelled violence. I launched an online survey asking for opinions on various issues. I surveyed patrons at Eatons Hill Hotel—one of the largest entertainment venues in Queensland and located in my electorate. Those who follow me on social media had their say. I took feedback at my regular mobile offices.

After collating the feedback of 841 respondents, last night I met with Premier Newman and we discussed the views of the Pine Rivers community on this serious issue. The survey results indicated that people were split on whether pubs and clubs should close earlier, although, unsurprisingly, 18- to 25-year-olds were overwhelmingly against this idea. Over 90 per cent of respondents were in favour of tougher laws and penalties for antisocial behaviour and alcohol fuelled violence. Over 85 per cent of respondents would support extra policing in pubs and clubs.


I will have more to say on this issue once our government announces our response. But I want to assure Pine Rivers residents that they have been heard and the Premier and cabinet are now considering their input.

In closing I would like to share one piece of feedback I received in recent weeks that I think sums up this debate. It was—

Our own son was punched in a club at the beginning of last year. He was not drunk. He was with friends. He was punched by one man. When our son landed on the floor, the man who threw the punch continued to punch him whilst his friends were kicking him. Our son's friends tried to help but the attackers were very large men who the friends could not stop. The manager of the club intervened and our son was fortunate to have only suffered major bruising and a broken tooth. The police were called but the attackers had left. As the club was so dark, the cameras did not pick up any evidence or photos of the men. This violence must be stopped. It is very possible that we could have lost our son.

Madam Speaker, doing nothing is not an option.

Neumann, Mr M, OAM

 **Mr CHOAT** (Ipswich West—LNP) (10.27 pm): It is with tremendous pride that I rise here this evening to talk about yet another great champion from my great community of Ipswich West. Recently my wife, Nicky, and I attended a wonderful thanksgiving dinner for a most excellent member of my community, Mr Merv Neumann OAM. This dinner was hosted by the Leichhardt Baptist Church, which is ably led by Pastor Robert Howells. The reason for the dinner taking place was to commemorate Merv's great dedication and work for the Baptist Church through his work as parish secretary for an amazing 57 years. Way back when Elvis was in his prime, Merv started as the parish secretary of the Ipswich Baptist Church and was later key to the establishment of the Leichhardt Baptist Church. After serving as Ipswich Baptist Church secretary for 13 years, Merv became the inaugural Leichhardt Baptist Church secretary where he served until his recent retirement for another 44 years.

The Leichhardt Baptist Church community is filled with so many wonderful people and it was great to enjoy the dinner with them to celebrate Merv's achievements. I was privileged to be asked to speak at the dinner, along with Councillor Charlie Pisasale and our federal member for Blair and other distinguished guests. Of course it was wonderful to share the evening with Merv's dedicated wife, Rose, and his three daughters and their families. That day I thought about how best to describe Merv and so I went to the New Testament to reflect. I turned to my favourite—Matthew 5:7, the Sermon on a Mount where Christ gave us the Beatitudes. I reflected on the night that I laughed to myself when I came across the reflection on the meek because meek Merv is not. Still he is very well described through any number of those great words.

There is so much more to Merv than his selfless work for God and the church. He is one of the most community-minded men I have ever met. He was instrumental in the establishment of Colthup Home, Ipswich, which provides great care for people who need it most. Merv made this happen and worked for 40 years at Colthup before his retirement some years back—again more of the Beatitudes demonstrated through Merv's compassion and care for others.

Merv was also behind the establishment of our great Leichhardt One Mile Community Centre, which is truly a hub for that community, and there have been some fantastic programs and work done there for a long time. More recently I had the pleasure to officially open the Leichhardt One Mile Men's Shed with Merv, who was the key driver of the project. In 1993 he was recognised with an Order of Australia Medal, has been Ipswich's Citizen of the Year and this year was nominated for the Ipswich Senior Citizen of the Year. My community is so thankful for Merv and people like him, and it gives me absolute tremendous pride to stand and recognise him here tonight in this place.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.30 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Barton, Bates, Bennett, Berry, Bleijie, Boothman, Byrne, Cavallucci, Choat, Costigan, Cox, Crandon, Cripps, Crisafulli, Cunningham, Davies, C Davis, T Davis, 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, Rickuss, Robinson, Ruthenberg, Scott, Seeney, Shorten, Shuttleworth, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Symes, Trad, Trout, Walker, Watts, Wellington, Woodforth, Young