



RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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 Phone (07) 3406 7314 Fax (07) 3210 0182

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT

Wednesday, 3 June 2015

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WEDNESDAY, 3 JUNE 2015



The Legislative Assembly met at 2.00 pm.

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

SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS

School Group Tours



Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I am informed that students from the Wellington Point State High School in the electorate of Cleveland are currently in attendance. I am informed that students from St Michael's College in the electorate of Mudgeeraba are also in attendance.

Parliamentary Precinct, Clocks



Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I note the email advice of the Clerk on 18 May 2015 regarding the clocks in the precinct and the need for repair of the master clock system that services the precinct. I wish to advise that replacement parts are currently being manufactured and—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: I have had many calls about our clocks. We expect the manufactured parts to arrive late next week. Property Services has scheduled work to restore the master system as soon as possible after the delivery of these replacement parts.

PETITIONS

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

D'Aguilar Highway, Renaming

Mrs Frecklington, from 558 petitioners, requesting the House to re-name the section of the D'Aguilar Highway, between Kevin Allery Bridge and north of the Nukku Bridge, to 'Roy Emerson Way' [[505](#), [506](#)].

The Clerk presented the following paper and e-petition, sponsored and lodged by the Clerk in accordance with Standing Orders 119(3) and (4)—

Inlander Train, Club and Sleeper Cars

1,625 petitioners, requesting the House to reinstate the Club Car and Sleeper Car on the Inlander Train service between Mount Isa and Townsville [[507](#), [508](#)].

Petitions received.

TABLED PAPERS

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS TABLED BY THE CLERK

The Clerk tabled the following statutory instruments—

Survey and Mapping Infrastructure Act 2003—

[509](#) Survey and Mapping Infrastructure (Survey Standards) Notice 2015, No. 31.

[510](#) Survey and Mapping Infrastructure (Survey Standards) Notice 2015, No. 31, explanatory notes.


MINISTERIAL PAPER TABLED BY THE CLERK

The following ministerial paper was tabled by the Clerk—

[511](#) Response from the Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines (Dr Lynham) to a Petition (2386-15) presented by Mrs Frecklington, from 1250 petitioners, requesting the House to urge the Queensland State Government to do all in its power to allow the New Acland Coal Mine Stage 3 Project to continue to provide the enormous benefits to their community.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Racing Queensland

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (2.03 pm): Yesterday, as all members would be aware, my government acted swiftly on the horrific findings of the greyhound commission of inquiry and appointed Mr Ian Hall from KPMG to act in an interim capacity at Racing Queensland. Today, I can report that just within 24 hours Mr Hall has received initial advice of a state of affairs that further justifies my government's decision to shake up the racing industry and to start with a clean slate.

In order for any organisation to prosper, it must be built on a bedrock of financial strength. It has become immediately apparent on this initial advice to Mr Hall that Racing Queensland's budget appears to be in poor health. Mr Hall has found that Racing Queensland has serious cash flow problems, which alarms me and will alarm all Queenslanders. Over the past five years, for the most part under the former LNP government, the initial advice shows that the amount of losses being carried by Racing Queensland has skyrocketed from \$2.3 million to a loss that will in all probability rise to \$11 million by the end of this financial year.


Beyond that, the situation becomes even more disastrous. The current first draft of Racing Queensland's budget for next year shows a loss of \$21 million. It appears that Racing Queensland will need to establish an overdraft of \$5 million to meet its requirements going forward from July. This situation is unacceptable and that is why Mr Hall will do all in his power to rectify it. I will also be immediately referring this financial position to the Auditor-General.

This is shocking news and it has been uncovered within just a day of Mr Hall taking the reins of this organisation. I stand by my government's decision to provide the CEO of Racing Queensland with a show cause notice and giving him five days to respond. I stand by my government's decision to abolish the boards of all racing codes in Queensland. I am determined that this important industry will go forward with a clean slate.

That is why, today, I am pleased to announce that my government has acted quickly to appoint an interim chair of the new body to oversee racing in Queensland, which will replace the abolished boards. Justice John Muir, an eminently respected figure in the legal community, a former Supreme Court judge and judge on the Court of Appeal, has agreed to take on this very important role.

My government supports the important sport of racing but, very, very clearly, the racing industry in Queensland is ready for a fresh start. Very, very clearly, the racing industry needs to start from scratch and that is precisely what my government intends.

Great Barrier Reef

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (2.06 pm): My government will go above and beyond in its efforts to strike the right balance in protecting our greatest natural asset, our Great Barrier Reef, and supporting our critical export industries. On Friday evening Queensland time, the World Heritage Committee reached a positive draft decision on the reef. It not only does not recommend that the reef be added to the list of World Heritage sites considered to be in danger; it recognises the comprehensive policy commitments made by my government and the action that we have taken so far.

The final decision on this matter will be made at the World Heritage Committee meeting in Bonn later this month. The Deputy Premier and Queensland's first ever designated Minister for the Great Barrier Reef will travel to Bonn to hear firsthand the important decision of UNESCO in relation to our reef status. This is an indication of how seriously our government takes its responsibility to protect the Great Barrier Reef.

The draft decision of the World Heritage Committee praises our government's efforts, but it also comes with expectations that we will honour the very important commitments that we have made in relation to reef protection. In that regard, we will demonstrate to the world our immovable resolve to protect the reef this week.

Today, our government will introduce new legislation into this House to simultaneously boost economic development around Queensland's four regional priority ports and help protect the Great Barrier Reef. The Sustainable Ports Development Bill, an Australian first, will boost ongoing development at our key export ports of Townsville, Abbot Point, Gladstone and Hay Point, Mackay, striking the right balance to enhance our economy while protecting the reef. This is my government

delivering its key election and Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan commitments to protect the reef by banning the sea based disposal of port related capital dredged material in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area and restricting port related capital dredging. At the same time, the bill supports economic development, investment and job creation by master planning these priority ports and their precincts.


The Queensland economy relies on our ports, particularly these four major bulk commodity ports, in and adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area. But there must be a balance between keeping our economy strong and doing everything that we can to ensure that the ports and the reef exist in harmony. Importantly, this bill enshrines public consultation in the port master planning into the future. We are the first Australian state to do this, allowing Queenslanders a say in the future sustainable development of major ports operating in and adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area.

This bill will prevent capital dredging for these priority ports in any areas of the Commonwealth or state marine parks; restrict capital dredging to the master planning areas; require master plans for all priority ports, supporting further local development and investment; and optimise efficient use of infrastructure at the four priority ports. Master planning will make the port precincts more attractive to potential developers and investors. The port master planning process allows consideration of marine and land based impacts, port and supply chain capacity and connectivity, and environmental and community values. Master planning also protects areas for future essential work that growing ports require such as corridors for roads, rail lines, gas and water pipelines and power lines. It helps make port precincts a more attractive development option by giving greater certainty to potential investors.

Our priority ports in Townsville, Abbot Point, Gladstone and Hay Point, Mackay represent trade worth \$32 billion and shifted 77 per cent of the total throughput of all Queensland ports in 2013-14. We are also honouring our election commitment to protect the Fitzroy Delta, Keppel Bay, North Curtis Island and Port Alma—Port Alma will not be included in the priority port of Gladstone.

The Sustainable Ports Development Bill 2015 is the next step in implementing the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan. The bill delivers on our commitments on port development. There are a number of other pieces of legislation and mechanisms that the government will use to meet our other reef promises. This is my government delivering for our economy and delivering for our greatest natural asset, the Great Barrier Reef. It is my government finding the right balance between our economy and our environment.

Overseas Trade Mission


 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade) (2.11 pm): The Palaszczuk government is committed to delivering jobs for Queensland. As the Minister for Trade I am focused on expanding export opportunities and driving inbound investment in Queensland. This means more jobs for Queenslanders and more opportunities for Queensland business. I can advise the House that I will be leaving Brisbane on an overseas mission on the night of 24 June and will be returning on 5 July.

As the Premier has already outlined this morning, I will be a member of the official Australian delegation and I will represent Queensland's interests at the 2015 UNESCO World Heritage Committee meeting in Bonn, Germany along with the Palaszczuk government's Minister for the Great Barrier Reef. Along with Minister Miles, I will be reinforcing this government's policies to ensure that the Great Barrier Reef is not inscribed on the World Heritage 'in danger' list, protecting the tens of thousands of jobs that are attached to the reef and the tourism jobs that go along with it. Whilst the draft report released last Friday is encouraging, it is now vital that we continue to lobby the international community to adopt the draft decision.

I will also be using this mission to promote export and investment opportunities in Singapore, London and Frankfurt. In all three cities I will be attending meetings and events involving current and potential investors to promote Queensland as an investment destination. I will also meet with Queensland businesses who have been successfully exporting their expertise to Singapore and Europe and will discuss with them opportunities for more growth in Queensland exports.

In addition, I am planning to examine some of the leading global practices in innovation and infrastructure development, including best models for partnering with the private sector. This trip is a significant opportunity to promote Queensland on the world stage, highlight our environmental credentials and learn from some of the world's best business and government organisations. I look forward to reporting back to the House on the outcomes of this overseas mission.

Queensland Economy

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (2.13 pm): I am pleased to advise the House that today marks a turnaround for the Queensland economy.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr PITT: I will wait for those opposite to settle. Under the Palaszczuk Labor government Queensland's state final demand has returned to positive growth, recording 0.1 per cent in seasonally adjusted terms in the March quarter 2015. As we all know, state final demand is a key ABS measure of domestic spending in the economy. This figure represents a quarterly rise in household consumption, dwelling investment and public final demand. This is good news for Queensland following a 0.9 per cent decline in the December quarter under the LNP and another decline of 1.7 per cent in the September quarter last year, again under the LNP.

Today's ABS figures confirm that domestic spending in the economy fell in the second half of last year, reinforcing Queensland Treasury gross state product figures—which, for the benefit of the member for Surfers Paradise and apparently also the federal Treasurer, include exports—that showed the economy contracting over the second half of last year.

While the March quarter trend figures sees a decline of 0.7 per cent, this reflects the fact that Queensland is an economy in transition. I note the federal Treasurer today, as well as the ABS in its media release, is using seasonally adjusted figures to talk up the national economy. Similarly, seasonally adjusted figures for Queensland show the state economy is turning the corner. Before Canberra's man in Clayfield comes out to criticise what the trend data means for the Queensland economy, when he was Treasurer he would cherry-pick his use of state final demand figures when it suited. When the figures were up he would put out press releases saying 'Queensland is the powerhouse state of Australia with growth in state final demand.' When the figures were down he would instead use the very measure he tried to rubbish in this place last sitting. State final demand, unlike GSP, is only a partial measure of activity. Sometimes he would use seasonally adjusted, sometimes trend, depending on what was the flavour of the day or what was in his political interests.


I have made a commitment to keep Queenslanders up to date with accurate data that provides the full picture of the state's economy. Thankfully, today's state final demand figures show that we have inherited tough economic conditions but the seasonally adjusted result shows the Queensland economy is turning a corner. The March quarter shows this improvement and particularly the strength of household consumption, proving beyond doubt that Queenslanders have confidence that the Palaszczuk government will get Queensland growing again. Household consumption grew by nearly one per cent over the March quarter, with purchases of motor vehicles, insurance and other finance and furnishings and household equipment being the main contributors.

These increases in household spending reaffirm recent retail trade data showing Queensland has the strongest growth in the nation. Consumers are spending again. Queenslanders are increasingly confident in this direction and, of course, the direction we have taken this state over the first three months of this year. The first large scale poll of Queenslanders on the economy since the election, the *Galaxy Courier-Mail* Queensland index, shows that 55 per cent of Queenslanders believe the state is headed in the right direction. The index returned a net positive reading of 20 per cent, up markedly on the last result of just one per cent when the LNP was in government.

On each measure referenced in *Queensland Business Monthly*, the Queensland economy has improved under the Palaszczuk government. Dwelling investment rose by a strong 13.8 per cent in the March quarter 2015, construction of new dwellings up 19.0 per cent and alterations and additions up 6.5 per cent—rising in the quarter. Total dwelling investment was 15.7 per cent higher over the year. These figures are supported by more attractive rental yields in Brisbane relative to Sydney and Melbourne and investor demand in medium- to high-density dwellings has grown strongly. This is great news for the real estate industry, construction workers, tradies and Queenslanders as a whole.

On a sobering note, business investment is falling from the unprecedented levels delivered by the former Labor government as three large LNG projects near completion and transition to production and exports. However, overall business investment is expected to return to a more sustainable longer term growth path from 2016-17. As Treasurer, I am determined to keep Queenslanders up to date in terms of how our economy is travelling and I am pleased to say that Queenslanders should have every right to be confident about where we are headed under the Palaszczuk Labor government.


Suicide Prevention

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (2.18 pm): Suicide is one of the most serious challenges to public health for Queenslanders. In our country suicide is one of the leading causes of death for people aged between 14 and 45. We lose more potential years of life from suicide than from any other cause of death. The member for Capalaba has been a very strong advocate in this area and last month he brought a woman named Kerrie Keepa to meet with me. Kerrie has suffered from many suicides in her family. Last year she tragically lost her son Christopher to suicide. Kerrie has become a campaigner for positive change in the way we help to prevent suicide, particularly in training for suicide prevention in emergency departments.

I promised Kerrie I would look closely at what we were doing and what we could do better. Today I can announce that we are taking action. The government will commence work immediately on a new package of suicide prevention training for emergency department staff. While existing programs are available, they are targeted at mental health clinicians and require full- or half-day attendance, which makes them difficult to access for ED staff who work variable shifts. The new training package will be shorter but highly focused, designed specifically for emergency department staff. It will be delivered more flexibly and will use a train-the-trainer model, meaning training will happen across the state. The training package will be based on the existing emergency events management mental health module, but updated with a greater emphasis on the detection and management of suicide risk. The training will be highly focused and designed to fit into routine emergency department training. Unlike existing programs, it will not need off-site attendance or take significant time out of work. I have also told the department that in working on this program we should consult closely with people who have been bereaved by suicide, such as Kerrie Keepa. The estimated cost will be \$380,000, which will be met from existing resources.


Kerrie also has some important ideas about how we can better support the families of people who are in crisis. We can help try to address this area with legislative change in the proposed new Mental Health Bill, a draft of which is currently open for public comment. These are important initiatives and I think they will make a difference, but we need to be realistic. We cannot solve suicide with emergency departments or legislation. We cannot solve suicide with hospitals and medicine. Suicide is not simply a sickness in people's minds; it is a sickness in our society. To fix the sickness in our society, we need a response from all of our society.

Children and Family Centres

 **Hon. KJ JONES** (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games) (2.21 pm): I rise to inform the House that the Palaszczuk government will provide \$5 million to ensure Queensland's 10 children and family centres keep their doors open. Children and family centres are hubs that integrate services including playgroups, immunisation clinics, kindergarten programs, financial counselling and parenting support for families. Many of those centres provide services for Indigenous families in Mackay, Cairns, Doomadgee, Ipswich, Logan, Mareeba, Mornington Island, Mount Isa, Palm Island and Rockhampton. They also provide local employment for 124 staff across Queensland, including many who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

The centres were originally funded under a joint Australian and Queensland government commitment to improve outcomes for young Indigenous children. However, the Abbott government has walked away from its contribution. This is deeply concerning given the Abbott government's own Forrest review recommended co-locating and coordinating health, nutrition and other support services within schools or community hubs. Worse than that, the federal government spent more than \$75 million to establish the 10 centres in Queensland, with the last one opening in Mackay less than one year ago. It seems like a huge waste to close down those centres, especially after the government's own Forrest review found the need for just those kinds of services. I assure all members that the Palaszczuk government is committed to supporting them and the vital work that they do. We will continue to negotiate with the federal government to ensure that they can have long-term sustainability and viability, to continue to provide those important services in local communities.

Great Barrier Reef


 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (2.23 pm): In the draft decision of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee released late Friday night, key policies of the Palaszczyk government are singled out and welcomed. These are: our goal to improve the quality of the water running into the reef by reducing run-off pollution by 80 per cent by 2025; the commitment to ban the dumping of capital dredge spoil in the whole World Heritage area; and limiting capital dredging for the development of new or expansion of existing port facilities to within the existing port limits of the four major ports.

The ALP came to office with a suite of election commitments designed to protect the Great Barrier Reef from the impact of dredging and dumping, because we accept the evidence about the damage this causes to the sensitive reef ecosystems. Capital dredging involves literally digging up the seabed. Millions of tonnes of sand, rock and clay are dug out in areas where fish, dugong and turtles feed and breed. The churn throws into the water fine sediment that can drift for over 100 kilometres, ruining the clear waters of the reef, settling over coral and seagrass beds, and blocking out the sunlight.

The answer is not to shut down activity on the reef coastline. As a maritime nation, Australian ports are our gateway to the world. The ports along the Great Barrier Reef coast are and will continue to be major import and export hubs. This is integral to the Queensland and, indeed, the Australian economy. Our plan is a sustainable one that strikes a responsible balance between preserving those gateways and the jobs that rely on them and protecting the reef and the jobs that rely on it. We will achieve this balance by banning the dumping of port related capital dredge spoil, greatly limiting the number of ports that can be built along the reef coastline and concentrating development in four major existing ports in the best locations with the best channels.

The draft WHC decision notes that our port related commitments require translation into legislation. I am pleased to report that the Sustainable Ports Bill to be introduced later today does just that. I congratulate the Minister for State Development for his forward-looking and comprehensive legislation. The introduction of this bill is a milestone in our campaign to save the Great Barrier Reef. It is a milestone the Deputy Premier and I will report on in person to the World Heritage Committee when we attend its meeting in June. I am confident it will help shore up the support of the 21 UNESCO member states to adopt the draft decision and not list the reef as 'in danger'. More importantly, though, these measures will help us ensure that we successfully reverse the decline of the reef and ensure its survival for future generations.

Skilling Queenslanders for Work


 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (2.26 pm): This government is continuing to give business the confidence it needs to invest in Queensland now by laying the foundations for the workforce of the future. We recognise that as our economy continues to grow the demand for suitably skilled workers also will rise across the state. Business can take heart that we are taking the steps vital to ensuring Queensland meets the challenge. Early in April, we announced that \$60 million would be allocated to deliver a reinstated Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative in 2015-16. We also announced that over the next four years the government would inject \$240 million in this exciting jobs focused initiative. Today, just two months later, I am pleased to announce that Skilling Queenslanders for Work is on track to deliver funding to community based organisations through its first funding round, which closes on 19 June.

One word can describe the community response to date: overwhelming. Department of Education and Training regional staff have delivered more than 22 information sessions throughout the state, addressing more than 1,400 people. The sessions were attended by community based organisations, local councils, schools, P&Cs and P&Fs, registered training organisations, government agencies and others. There have been more than 350 calls to the Training Queensland customer centre regarding Skilling Queenslanders for Work and departmental staff have also met or spoken with more than 450 organisations from regional and metropolitan areas. I am pleased to say that since we announced the new funding, the department's Skilling Queenslanders for Work information web page has been viewed more than 37,000 times.

Strong networks are once again being developed between our metropolitan and regional staff and our partners in this initiative—community based, not-for-profit organisations. Over its four-year time frame, we anticipate Skilling Queenslanders for Work will generate work for up to 32,000

disadvantaged Queenslanders who, after this essential funding had been cut by those opposite, faced the likelihood of remaining on unemployed queues for a very long time. I look forward to later this year reporting further on the success of the reinstated Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative. I encourage all members to speak with their community groups and remind them that applications close on 19 June.

Police Service, Resources

 **Hon. JR MILLER** (Bundamba—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (2.28 pm): Our police do a great job keeping the people of Queensland safe. The Palaszczuk Labor government is committed to making it easier for our front-line officers to do their important work. The Queensland Police Service is well known for its innovative approach to law enforcement and as an early adopter of new technology.

That is why I am pleased to inform the House that the Queensland Police Service's use of remotely piloted aircraft—also known as drones—will be expanded. In an Australian first, the photographic section of the Forensic Services Group will now have two operationally deployable drones to assist them at crime scenes across Queensland.


Our forensic officers go to great lengths to scour a crime scene for the tiniest bit of evidence that may make the difference in a case. These new drones will offer investigators the opportunity to record a comprehensive aerial overview of crime scenes—something they have not been able to do before. The images that these drones capture will be invaluable when it comes to presenting evidence in court. The drones will be used in the search for evidence in places that were previously inaccessible—for example, on a roof, down a cliff or over a very large distance. The drones are both vertical take-off and landing RPAs, and they are constructed of carbon fibre, with one having eight motors and the other four motors. They are very light. They are fitted with high-resolution cameras capable of capturing high-quality stills, 3D images and videos.

The use of these drones will now be business as usual within the Forensic Services Group, meaning they are now available to thoroughly search through the most challenging of crime scenes. We saw this with the drone's first deployment last month—the aftermath of the tragic house fire in Beenleigh which took the life of a little boy.

The QPS has been investigating options for the use of RPAs since 2010 and was granted formal approval from the Civil Aviation Safety Authority to operate them in December 2013. I would like to make special mention of Sergeant Clint Hanson who completed the CASA training in December last year in order to pilot the drone. I would like to congratulate Clint and his team. I also thank the QPS for their commitment to innovation and ensuring Queenslanders have a modern, professional and agile police service.

This is just one way the Palaszczuk Labor government is equipping the Queensland Police Service with the technology and resources it needs to keep Queenslanders safe.

Drought Relief Assistance Scheme

 **Hon. WS BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Sport and Racing) (2.32 pm): I rise today to inform the House of the Palaszczuk government's ongoing commitment in supporting our primary producers. As I previously informed the House, 80.35 per cent of the state is now drought declared, covering 33 local government areas and three part shires.

One of the commitments that this government gave to the people of Queensland was that we would continue to support our primary producers in drought. This government has stated on numerous occasions that existing drought relief arrangements will continue until 2018, with a review if the current wet season fails. As is evident, the wet season has failed.

On the 15th and 16th of last month I was in Longreach where I announced an increase under the Drought Relief Assistance Scheme. This support was lifted from \$30,000 to \$40,000 per annum for property owners in their third and then subsequent years of drought. Those properties have to have approved drought management plans in place. The additional funding will assist livestock


owners with the cost of transporting fodder and water supplies over increasing distances. As the emergency water rebate is part of DRAS, the increase also applies to water infrastructure eligible for the rebate.

While I was in Longreach I also had the pleasure of meeting with the incoming chair of Longreach Rotary, Mr David Phelps. Mr Phelps works very closely with primary producers in the Longreach area and is an expert on Mitchell grass. Longreach Rotary, in conjunction with the Rotary clubs of Moranbah and the Pioneer Valley, have been coordinating a project to provide donated grass to grazing families in the central west. It is impressive that to date 1,570 bales have been distributed.

Under the DRAS guidelines, charities delivering fodder to drought affected primary producers have access to 100 per cent freight subsidies up to \$30,000 each financial year. Given Rotary has reached the current limit of \$30,000 and is hoping to make further deliveries, I have approved an extension of their cap to \$150,000 for the financial year 2014-15. Rotary, as well as another organisation, Aussie Helpers, have now received an extension to \$150,000 for freight subsidies.

I would like to also acknowledge that there are four other charities—Frontier Services, Global Care, the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee and the Roman Catholic Trust Corporation for Rockhampton Diocese—that are also receiving a freight subsidy from the Queensland government for the wonderful work they are doing assisting our primary producers.

Motorcycle Safety

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (2.35 pm): As we head towards another long weekend, it is timely to remind motorists and motorbike riders of the need to take extra care on the road. The tragic loss of lives over the Easter holiday period was the worst, sadly, in 20 years. We must do all we can to turn these terrible statistics around.

So far this year we have had a spike in motorcycle fatalities, with double the number of deaths compared to the same time last year. To combat this, the Palaszczuk government has launched a motorcycle safety campaign to remind riders of the need to mind those bends. We have ads running on TV, radio, online and at cinemas, all geared towards motorbike riders who are among the most likely to be seriously injured or killed on our roads. Motorists will also see utes with billboards carrying the road safety message. These measures are backed up by an online riders guide where motorbike riders can go to brush up on their skills.


This road safety campaign was one of a number of recommendations from our Safer Roads, Safer Queensland forum held here in Parliament House in April and the steering committee that worked on it subsequently. I thank all of those participants and stakeholders for their contributions.

We are also looking at reforms to motorcycle licensing. Everything is on the table—off-road practical prelearner training and assessment, a review of the learner licence period for motorcycle rides and an evaluation of the skills riders should have as they move from restricted to unrestricted licences.

Then there is the road itself. This year we are spending more than \$8 million across Queensland on projects to improve road safety for motorbike riders. These funds will be spent on known motorcycle black spots. We are removing trees too close to the road to give better visibility. We are putting up crash protection barriers and roadside warning signs. We are installing a number of flashing signs that tell riders and drivers when they are speeding.

Road safety is everyone's responsibility. But if it is left just to governments alone it will never work. We must all work together to stem the needless loss of lives on our roads.

Tenants Advisory Service


 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algeria—ALP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Science and Innovation) (2.38 pm): I can advise the House that this government is delivering on another election commitment. Today an interim tenants advisory phone service has gone live, providing Queensland tenants with help and advice. After the last government cut funding to the previous Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service, tenants were left without an independent body to provide advice and support services in an area where disputes can be complex, confusing and intimidating.

By re-establishing this service we will be able to help thousands of Queensland tenants in both the public and private sectors navigate their way through the tenancy market to ensure that they know their rights and obligations. I want tenants to have access to help as soon as possible which is why the Department of Housing and Public Works has worked with Tenants Queensland and Enhanced Care to develop a telephone advisory service.

These organisations were chosen as they have the necessary experience, skills and existing infrastructure to become operational quickly. This service will be a temporary measure while work continues on designing a broader tenant advice service. This government has committed to reinstating an advisory service to ensure information is available to all Queensland tenants, and we will deliver it. My department is currently investigating the design and implementation of a new service that will address the broad range of tenants' needs. We will conduct an open market procurement process to secure innovative proposals on how to achieve that.

The previous government failed to understand the true value of TAASQ, who assisted nearly 70,000 clients in the 2011-12 financial year. It was a front-line regionally based program that helped many Queenslanders remain in their homes and in many circumstances helped save the government from further costs in supporting these tenants. I note Queensland tenants have felt frustrated and neglected since the previous service was cut, but I can reassure them that this new service is now up and running. If any tenants need advice, I encourage them to contact the service on 1300744263. I look forward to updating the House on further action in this important area.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, Family Services

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (2.40 pm): The Palaszczuk government is committed to making sure that Queensland's children get the best possible start in life and to support their families so this can happen. Working in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to do this is particularly important, as we are determined to reduce the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in our child protection system.

Last week I had the pleasure of meeting with Lizzie, Natalie and Greg, part of the dedicated leadership team of Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak, or QATSICPP. I am pleased to announce today that the Palaszczuk government is providing QATSICPP with \$2.4 million over three years to help develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led agencies to deliver front-line services for families.


The Palaszczuk government is serious about enabling more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led organisations to play a bigger role in the community sector. We need these organisations on the ground, to give local families services they can trust and turn to for help. Only together can we hope to address the causes of overrepresentation in our child protection system and help more families before they reach crisis.

In short, Queensland needs more services like Ipswich's Kummara Association. The Kummara Association has been working for a number of years on local programs to help support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and it is the first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled agency to operate one of our new Family and Child Connect services which is being set up in Ipswich. The Kummara Association will receive \$3.3 million over three years to make sure that families struggling to cope can access the help they need.

We are also providing \$7.2 million over five years for 10 specialist Indigenous practitioners across Queensland. These reform leaders will work in my department and the community sector to ensure the child protection system is more culturally appropriate and responsive to Indigenous families.

Finally, last Wednesday I helped launch my department's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Action Plan, known as *Respectfully Journey Together*. I was privileged to join with Indigenous community and departmental leaders to launch this powerful commitment to rethink our practice, embed culture into our programs and collaborate to improve the lives of Indigenous families. Through these initiatives and in partnership with the growing community sector, which includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led organisations, we are laying foundations for real and lasting change.

North Queensland, Economic Development

 **Hon. CJ O'ROURKE** (Mundingburra—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Seniors and Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland) (2.43 pm): As part of the Palaszczuk government's commitment to North Queensland, I will be holding round tables with key business leaders to identify economic development opportunities in North Queensland. This was an exciting announcement by the Premier at the Townsville community cabinet in March—the first community cabinet for this government—and a great example of our commitment to North Queensland.


The Premier and all ministers understand the importance of business development and identifying opportunities in the north. The round tables will seek to work in partnership with business to identify economic development and infrastructure priorities, and to develop strategies to increase employment. A key part of the round tables will be discussing how the region can leverage the federal government's white paper on developing Northern Australia, to create economic opportunities for North Queenslanders.

The round tables will help to shape the Palaszczuk government's economic development priorities for North Queensland. The first in a series of round tables will be held in Cairns, followed by Townsville, Mackay, Mount Isa and Brisbane, to cover Brisbane based stakeholders with key interests in the north. Each forum will involve about 15 stakeholders in a two-hour session, discussing ideas for facilitating economic development in North Queensland. I have written to key stakeholders calling for their input and involvement in these forums and I look forward to working with them. I am excited by the opportunities these forums will present for North Queensland.

This government understands that people who live and work in North Queensland are key to maximising the economic benefits for their region now and into the future. We are a government for all Queenslanders, not just the south-east corner.

REPORT

Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships Forum


 **Miss BARTON** (Broadwater—LNP) (2.45 pm): I lay upon the table of the House a report on my attendance at the third Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships Forum, which was held in Suva, Fiji, between 29 April and 1 May.

Tabled paper: Overseas Travel Report: Report on an overseas visit by the member for Broadwater, Miss Verity Barton MP, to Fiji for the 3rd Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships Forum, 29 April to 1 May 2015 [\[512\]](#).

The theme of the forum was domestic and family violence and addressing the issue in the Pacific region. The forum itself was opened by the Prime Minister of Fiji, the Hon. Rear Admiral Bainimarama. He said that real men treat women as equals and indicated that Fiji would redouble its efforts to change culture, and collectively he said that we must do everything to make women's voices heard in the region. I would encourage all members to read the report.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2014


 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (2.45 pm): I give notice that I will move—

That this House—

1. notes that:
 - the Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 was passed with amendment on 26 November 2014, and received assent on 5 December 2014, with certain provisions commencing on assent and the remaining on a day to be fixed by proclamation;
 - a proclamation on 18 December 2014 commenced certain parts of the act on 19 December 2014 and 18 February 2015;
 - this proclamation was amended by a further proclamation on 17 February 2015, largely reversing the commencement of those parts due to commence on 18 February;
2. directs the Palaszczuk government to put the necessary documentation before the Governor in Council to ensure the uncommenced parts of the act commence as soon as practicable; and
3. expresses its opinion that law passed by the parliament should be enacted and any amendment to that law only be by further amending legislation and not by the use of executive powers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Performance


 **Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.47 pm): Another day in government and another scandal for this fledgling, inexperienced Labor government. Indeed, for a government that has been in power for little over 100 days, we have seen scandal after scandal after scandal and more examples of ineptitude and a self-absorbed government, which is fixated on its own efforts to cling to power and not on jobs, prosperity and opportunity for the people of Queensland.

This government in its first 100 days gave us scandal surrounding the member for Cook, Billy Gordon, and in its second 100 days it is going to be defined by scandal surrounding the member for Pumicestone, Rick Williams. Indeed, if one goes back to what this Premier said last year in relation to the then Labor Party candidate for Lytton, Mr Cheverton, she moved against Mr Cheverton saying that in his case he did not meet the highest possible ethical standards. It begs the question: what are the highest possible ethical standards?

Whilst the Premier has given up listening to the people of Queensland, she has with cavalier disregard dismissed the concerns of the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland and other important business reports in recent weeks which indicate failing business confidence in this state and also growing concern around the control over union bosses with regard to the Labor Party in Queensland. We see a government now which is so hopelessly bogged down, and the people of Queensland are paying for the fact that they cannot get their candidate selection processes right. Because of who they are captive of, we are seeing the people of Queensland being the big losers out of that.

In the case of Mr Cheverton, the Premier last year said that she moved very quickly to ensure the highest possible standards. Today a multitude of concerns have been raised against the member for Pumicestone, Mr Williams. A multitude of people are prepared to place their names on statutory declarations and express concern. What we hear from those opposite is cavalier disregard again—giving up listening when it comes to issues of appropriate probity, ethical standards and conduct. My simple question to the Premier is that in the case of Mr Cheverton, whose sins individually were something, what is the consequence of the collective allegations which have been raised against the member for Pumicestone, Mr Williams?

Wait-Time Guarantee

 **Mr DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (2.50 pm): More than 24 hours ago I called on the Leader of the Opposition to release documents to substantiate his claim in relation to the wait-time guarantee made in a debate on this parliament on 19 May. Let us recall what he said. On that day he stated—

This program was a \$500 million program and it was properly costed; the money was there.

That is what he said. Since I called on the Leader of the Opposition to release those documents, cue the crickets again—nothing from the fixer. He has done absolutely nothing to release those documents. He has done nothing to prove the claim he made in the parliament on 19 May. Let us recall what he said. He stated—

This program was a \$500 million program and it was properly costed; the money was there.

These were not ambiguous claims made by the Leader of the Opposition. They are not open to multiple interpretations. As the Cabinet Handbook makes clear, these statements could only be made in circumstances where a fully funded, fully costed policy proposal had been submitted, considered, and determined and agreed on by the cabinet of Queensland. That is the only way you could support such a claim in this parliament. For someone who has been in this House for a quarter of a century—

A government member: How long?


Mr DICK: Twenty-five years. At least he should know that much. He likes to talk the talk when it comes to integrity and accountability. He likes to talk the talk, but today he needs to walk the walk. That is what he needs to do. Can I say to the member for Southern Downs: now is the time to come clean—

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, please direct your comments through the chair.

Mr DICK: I say to the Leader of the Opposition: come clean, tell the truth and release the cabinet documents. That is what he needs to do. If it were properly costed, maybe he could ask the member for Clayfield, the former treasurer. If Treasury had done its job properly it would have properly costed that program before \$500 million was allocated to it. I call on the former treasurer to assist the Leader of the Opposition, whose responsibility it is to release former government cabinet documents, to ensure those documents are released immediately.

It is about time the Leader of the Opposition stopped lecturing to other people about integrity and accountability. He should stop the bluster. He should stop the innuendo. He should put away the 2007 documents that he was talking about in the parliament. He was talking about documents eight years old in the parliament yesterday. Put away the 2007 documents, Leader of the Opposition, and release the 2014 documents. Put up, Leader of the Opposition, and substantiate the claims you made in the parliament.

Queensland Economy

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (2.53 pm): Isn't the Treasurer, Curtis Pitt, a classic? Two weeks ago he said we were in a recession. Today he says we are not in one anymore.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, that is enough.

Mr LANGBROEK: He really is a magician. He said we were in a recession. Today he says we are not in one anymore. He really is a magician, as he showed us last sitting week. In government the LNP was positive about the future of this state.

Mr Pitt interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. Treasurer, you will have a chance to speak later on. You have had a chance this morning. I call the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr LANGBROEK: We believe the economic foundations of our state are strong. We believe the people of Queensland are resilient and we believe there is much to look forward to in the future. The LNP left office with Queensland on a strong growth trajectory. Economic growth strengthened under the LNP, and by next year Queensland is forecast to have the fastest growing state economy in the country. Our economic growth is set to average more than four per cent annually out to 2017-18—2.5 per cent this year rising to 5.75 per cent next year.


State final demand figures released today show that our domestic economy grew by 0.1 per cent last quarter, seasonally adjusted. This is stronger than the national average, which is zero, and this is despite the huge wind-back we are seeing in private business investment as the major LNG projects on Curtis Island move from construction to production phase. The figures show that household consumption, which accounts for more than half of gross state product, grew by 0.9 per cent in the March quarter. The figures also show a 13.8 per cent increase in dwelling investment over the quarter. It is important to note the state final demand figures exclude net exports, which is hugely important to Queensland, being an exporting state.

Mr Pitt interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: My point last week was that we did not know how you came up with your magic figures, and it was obvious that you made them up. This is a good sign for economic growth more broadly and it shows there is strong growth potential in our state. The people of Queensland want the Treasurer to realise he cannot keep making irresponsible comments about the Queensland economy. His job is to support confidence, not shatter it. The people of Queensland want the government to lay a positive platform and give businesses some certainty. They want the government to boost confidence by outlining their positive plans rather than putting everything to a review.

We want the government to stop spending so much time with union bosses and start meeting with the people who actually create jobs for Queenslanders. We want them to stop paying favours to their union mates and help out small businesses by lowering payroll taxes, as we promised to do. Most importantly, we want this government to deliver on its promises—promises to pay down debt, to deliver surpluses, to target a return to the AAA credit rating, to keep public ownership of assets and to create jobs. The question is: can the Premier and Treasurer deliver what the people of Queensland need to secure a strong economy?

Mabo Day

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algerger—ALP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Science and Innovation) (2.57 pm): As all members of the House will be aware, today is Mabo Day—a day when we remember and celebrate the efforts of Eddie Koiki Mabo, a great man of the Torres Strait and a great Queenslander who fought hard for the voice of Indigenous Australians to be heard in our parliaments and in legislation affecting us.


Late last week I had the honour of delivering the 2015 Mabo lecture at James Cook University in Townsville and spending some time with Eddie Koiki Mabo's daughter Gail Mabo. It was while her father, Uncle Koiki, was working at JCU that he began the long campaign for recognition of the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of the land on which thousands of generations had inhabited. Although Uncle Koiki was not a politician, his campaign for land rights was a very political act. It was that topic—Indigenous participation in the political process—which I spoke about in the Mabo lecture.

During our last sitting in this place we supported the appointment of Joanna Lindgren to the Senate position made vacant by the resignation of an LNP Queensland senator. As was said at the time, Joanna is the great-niece of Neville Bonner and is now the first Aboriginal woman to serve as a Queensland senator. In the federal parliament she will join Labor's Nova Peris in the Senate and the Liberal Party's Ken Wyatt, who sits in the House of Representatives. In the more than 40 years since Neville Bonner became the first Indigenous Australian to sit in any parliament in Australia, there have been another 30 Indigenous Australians who have become members of parliaments across the country. As much as I would like to see even more Indigenous people in the Australian Labor Party, the fact that we are beginning to see increasing representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across political parties is healthy, but it also represents just how much there is still to be done until seeing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our parliaments is regarded as normal or expected.

In the Mabo lecture I shared my belief that political parties must take responsibility for putting Indigenous candidates into winnable seats and providing them with the support and resources to win those seats and enter parliament. I think political parties should set minimum targets for the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates that they preselect. This is not about tokenism or ticking a diversity box; this is about cut-through. It is about recognising the urgency of seeing more Indigenous people in all political parties and bringing to life the spirit of Eddie Koiki Mabo.

Political parties need to reflect the population of Queensland. We have taken that step with women; it is time that we do so with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in this state and nationally. This is not an issue that we are going to address overnight, but if the example of Uncle Eddie Koiki Mabo has shown us anything it is that the longest journey begins with the first step. Let us take that first step together and begin the conversation.

Vicious Lawless Associates Legislation

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (2.59 pm): Late in 2013 the former LNP government introduced what many have described as the strongest laws in the country dealing with criminal gangs. We are not only talking about criminal motorcycle gangs but also talking about criminal organisations, the underworld and also paedophile rings right across the state. I am pleased to advise the House today that the court has convicted the first person under the VLAD legislation, and was this person a motorcycle gang member? No. This person was a drug trafficker. The police minister and the Attorney-General stood in this place before saying, 'We're going to review these laws. We're going to have workable laws that don't just target motorcycle gang members.' Well, guess what? The first person convicted under the vicious lawless associates legislation was a drug trafficker and we are talking about some \$16 million in drugs. I feel confident that kids in Queensland can sleep tonight knowing that this man is behind bars for a long period of time.

We had all the rhetoric at the time and we had all the flip-flopping by the Labor Party. Do you remember that they supported the laws, then they opposed the laws, then they were going to review the laws, then they were going to get rid of the laws? What we have seen today is that the laws clearly work. At the time, the Labor Party said that they opposed the laws because of the mandatory sentence; they said they were against mandatory sentences, although they voted for the laws to start with. We put a protection in there that, if the offender cooperates with the police and it leads to valuable information for police enforcement, the judge can reduce the sentence and the judge retains the discretion. I can advise the House that in the case today the judge reduced the sentence from 15

years to five years because of cooperation with the police. The police sought information from this person because they could not establish the evidence so the laws are working. We have this royal commission happening at the moment for laws that the Labor Party say are not working, but clearly they are working. If the Labor Party want to know about laws that do not work, they should go back to 2009 when they introduced the Criminal Organisation Act. It was used once—and unsuccessfully used, I might add.

I will tell the House which Labor Party is using the laws that we introduced. I refer to a press release issued by the Deputy Premier of South Australia, Mr John Rau, from the Labor government in South Australia, titled 'Tough new laws to target organised crime gangs', which is dated 3 March 2015—only a month or two ago. He said—

South Australia will adopt strong ... laws targeting criminal organisations—
wait for this—

following the success of similar laws interstate.

He then said—

The new laws will also create an offence for a gang member to enter a place or event that has been banned by serious and organised crime regulations.

It gets better, because today we have had the South Australian Labor government declaring 30 outlaw gangs as criminal organisations under their new laws. That is more criminal organisations declared under the South Australian Labor government than under the LNP government. I table a copy of that and I table a copy of the press release.

Tabled paper: Media release, dated 3 March 2015, by South Australian Deputy Premier, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice Reform relating to South Australia's new laws targeting criminal organisations [\[513\]](#).

Tabled paper: Screen shot of Channel 9 News Twitter relating to South Australian government declaration of outlaw bikie gangs as criminal organisations [\[514\]](#).

The Labor Party have to get serious about organised crime in this state. We put the laws in place. I will congratulate them if they can keep the laws in place because the laws are working—so says the South Australian Labor government.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Member for Pumicestone



Mr SPRINGBORG (3.03 pm): My question without notice is to the Premier. Can the Premier advise when, as Premier, she was first told about serious allegations regarding the character and conduct of the member for Pumicestone, Rick Williams, and what actions she took when she learned about those allegations?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Today we have seen some allegations—I repeat: allegations—

Mr Bleijie: Eight pages.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, raised in the *Courier-Mail*, and I say to the Leader of the Opposition and I say to the *Courier-Mail* that if anyone has any serious evidence refer it to the police immediately—I repeat: refer it to the police immediately. I do not have any evidence. If the Leader of the Opposition has any evidence, refer it to the police today. If the *Courier-Mail* has statutory declarations from people, refer it to the police today.

We will stand up for integrity and accountability in this state—unlike those opposite. We know that for the last 100 days the opposition have been out there peddling from their dirt unit. It is no different to the LNP when they were in government for the last three years. If members want any evidence of that, every member sitting over there in opposition should go and have a look at their own review and read it in depth—hubris, arrogance, out of touch, failing to listen, trashing the institutions of this great state of ours, lack of accountability. That continues to be the cornerstone, front and centre, of this opposition—nothing has changed.

I have not seen one change from this Leader of the Opposition from when the former premier, Campbell Newman, was here. If anything, this Leader of the Opposition is worse. We hear that he is going off to Maranoa and I say to the Leader of the Opposition, 'Don't go. Stay here because you are no different to your predecessor and Queenslanders can see straight through you.'

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Premier, the question was in relation to your awareness of certain action, not in relation to other matters.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Mr Speaker, I am addressing issues of integrity and accountability and I will continue to do that in this parliament.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: They do not want to hear about it because they do not want to hear about integrity and accountability. Where is the integrity and accountability?

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

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. I call the member for Mermaid Beach.

Mr STEVENS: Mr Speaker, under standing order 118, which at the start of your Speakership you said you would be enforcing, the question was clearly in relation to the member for Pumicestone. The Premier is currently giving a diatribe on all matters other than the question that was asked.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Mermaid Beach. I call the Premier and remind the Premier about the importance of relevance to the question and not debating the question.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The question was clearly in relation to integrity, and I will continue to talk about integrity because my government will stand for integrity and accountability. I have answered the question. If anyone has any evidence at all, refer it to the police.

Mr Nicholls: Did you apply the eyeball test? Which test did you apply?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Do you want to talk, member for Clayfield? Where is the documentation of the \$70 million—

Mr Nicholls interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Clayfield, the Premier! Premier, the question is what action you have taken in relation to the allegations. The Premier has answered the question. I call the Leader of the Opposition for his second question.

Member for Pumicestone

Mr SPRINGBORG: My second question is also to the Premier. Has the Premier, as Premier, taken any actions to satisfy herself as to the veracity of the allegations which have been raised in relation to the member for Pumicestone, Mr Williams? As Premier, does she have confidence in the member for Pumicestone?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Mr Speaker, I raise with you standing order 115(b) and draw your attention to whether that question is asking for a matter of opinion. The matter of confidence has been ruled on in the past as a matter of opinion, so I ask you to rule.

Mr SPEAKER: My ruling is that the first part is permissible but the second part is out of order because it seems to ask for an opinion. The Leader of the Opposition may want to repeat the question, limiting his question to the first part.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I simply ask, because we are still waiting for answers, whether the Premier, as Premier, has taken any actions to satisfy herself as to the veracity of the allegations made against the member for Pumicestone, Mr Williams.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. Let me reiterate very clearly: if anyone has any evidence, refer it to the police. If the Leader of the Opposition has any piece of evidence, refer it to the police. If the *Courier-Mail* has statutory declarations from people relevant to allegations that they have raised, refer it to the police. The *Courier-Mail* said today that these are allegations. We stress they are only claims at this stage. I urge anyone who has any evidence whatsoever to refer the matter to the police.

Unions, Access to Ministers

Ms PEASE: My question without notice is to the Premier. Will the Premier please update Queenslanders on how many representatives from the business community have met members of the Premier's cabinet?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would like to thank the member for Lytton for her question. Yesterday it was raised here in this House that members of my cabinet had met with members from the union movement.

Mr Stevens: Seventy-one.

Ms PALASZCZUK: What was it, Ray Stevens?

Mr Stevens: The number was 71.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Seventy-one, thank you.

Mr SPEAKER: Members, please. Member for Mermaid Beach.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Mermaid Beach very much. I made it very clear that my government would meet with people, whether they were representatives of business organisations, business interests, the union movement or community representatives because, unlike those opposite, we are listening to the community. We know from the Borbidge-Sheldon report that those opposite failed to listen to Queenslanders. If honourable members do not believe me, they should read it in the report. It is there for everyone to see. I encourage every member of the opposition to take a look.

I undertook a bit of an inquiry and I found out that just on a rough estimate across my government there have been over 200 meetings with business and local government representatives—over 200. I can also—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Members!

Ms PALASZCZUK: They do not like it that we are talking to business.

Mr SPEAKER: Premier! I call the Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I will give a few examples. I have met with Townsville Enterprise, Skytrans, Biocon, Westpac, Queensland Business Forum. We actually invited business into—

An opposition member interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: These are examples. I will give some other examples. The Deputy Premier has met with Virgin, Glencore, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Stockland, South Bank Corporation, Nippon Steel, Meriton Group, just to name a few. Do we think the Treasurer should be meeting with business? Of course the Treasurer should be meeting with business. He met with the Cairns Chamber of Commerce, the Port of Townsville, Adani, QIC, Woolworths, Deloitte, Townsville Enterprise and Sun Metals.

Ms Trad: The Treasurer should be meeting with them. That is exactly the point.

Ms PALASZCZUK: This is exactly the point.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Nanango, if you have something to say, you have an opportunity to put a question this morning.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The Minister for State Development met with the Queensland Exploration Council, APPEA, Glencore, AgForce, Brisbane Airport Corporation, Rio Tinto, ASF, Queensland Business Forum. I then turn to the Leader of the Opposition's diary: QForum, QForum, QForum, QForum lunch, QForum dinner. You have to pay to see the Leader of the Opposition. Members opposite talk about integrity and accountability in government, but you have to pay to see the opposition. You get to see the government.

Member for Pumicestone

Mr LANGBROEK: My question without notice is to the Premier. Does the Premier stand by the appropriateness of the member for Pumicestone, Rick Williams, continuing to serve on a parliamentary committee as a member nominated by her delegate, the Leader of the House, when that committee is charged with overseeing police, law and order and anti-discrimination legislation and policy?

Ms PALASZCZUK: For the third time, if there is any evidence whatsoever—

Opposition members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No. If there is any evidence whatsoever, refer it to the police. I can remember the former member for Capalaba in this place was appointed by the government to serve on the PCCC committee. He made revelations on Steve Austin—do you remember those allegations? He made some allegations—

Ms Trad: Drug dealer.

Ms PALASZCZUK: As the Deputy Premier said, wasn't drug dealing involved with this? He had an interesting background and continued to serve as chair of the PCCC.

Mr SPEAKER: I understand the question relates to a member's membership of the committee. I ask you to—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am, Mr Speaker. I am highlighting the hypocrisy of those opposite, the absolute hypocrisy of those opposite. The former member for Capalaba served as the chair of the PCCC when there were allegations that were raised about him. Once again—

Ms Trad: Self-confessed.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Self-confessed. If there is any evidence, I urge the *Courier-Mail* to morally refer it to the police. I also encourage those opposite, because we know they have been out there spending as much as they can—

Mr LANGBROEK: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, the question is whether the Premier stands by the appropriateness of the appointment and she has not dealt with the answer to that question at all.

Mr SPEAKER: Premier, if you have anything further to add, do so, or I will proceed to the next question. I call the member for Logan.

Commonwealth Games, Infrastructure

Mr POWER: My question is once again to the Premier and the Minister for the Arts. Will the Premier update the House on the Commonwealth Games infrastructure investments and whether she is aware of any other infrastructure proposals on the Gold Coast?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would like to thank the member for Logan for his interest in the Commonwealth Games. My minister for the Commonwealth Games has been front and centre in ensuring that we deliver the best Commonwealth Games ever held in this state. We already know that there is \$320 million allocated to the games' infrastructure program and we announced that we are looking for more than 1,000 jobs on the Gold Coast. This is going to be a spectacular Commonwealth Games. There will be 18 world-class facilities—

Opposition members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: They do not want to hear about the Commonwealth Games.

Mr Pitt: We won them.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I point out for those new members opposite that it was actually a former Labor government that secured the Commonwealth Games and it is this Labor government that will deliver the Commonwealth Games.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, members!

Ms PALASZCZUK: I love talking about the Commonwealth Games. Obviously those opposite do not enjoy listening. The minister and I have been out there. We turned the sod at the Carrara leisure centre, and I drove past there on my way down to the Queensland Police Union conference the other week and saw the construction underway. I remember that the Leader of the Opposition also attended the Queensland Police Union conference. Perhaps we are in alignment about the Police Union in this state. It is okay to meet with the Police Union, but it is not okay to meet with other unions.

It has come to light that there is another infrastructure project on the Gold Coast—

Ms Trad: What is it?

Ms PALASZCZUK:—and that infrastructure project is one that the member for Mermaid Beach is pushing. When we want to talk about integrity and accountability in government, is it appropriate for a sitting member to actively be pursuing an interest as a businessman? We talk about integrity and accountability, but let me go on. An article in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* says 'MP seeks Labor Government cable car project backing' and 'Ray reaches for the Sky'. It is highly inappropriate for a member of this House to be advocating for a business project in their own backyard.

Mr Stevens: Not at all.

Ms PALASZCZUK: He says 'not at all'. Take it to the people and see whether or not they think it is an integrity issue as to whether he wants to be a member of parliament or a businessman.

Member for Pumicestone

Mr BLEIJIE: My question is to the Premier. I refer to the maiden speech of the member for Pumicestone, Rick Williams, where he said—

In my life I have some regrets but I am wiser for them.

and—

I only trust that the media and those who did not put their faith in me will give me a reasonable opportunity ...

I ask: with the seriousness of these regrets now public, will the Premier advise the House whether, as Premier, she has met with the member and discussed the allegations, and will she apply the same integrity test to the member for Pumicestone as she did with the member for Cook?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Kawana very much for his question. The member for Kawana talks about regrets. Well, here is a whole review attributed to his regrets—

Mr STEVENS: I rise to a point of order. Quite clearly, Mr Speaker, under standing order 118, the Premier is not answering the question at all with this other reference. Please redirect her to answer the question.

Mr SPEAKER: I call the Premier. I would ask you to make sure your answer is relevant to the question.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Mr Speaker, the member for Kawana spoke about the member for Pumicestone's maiden speech, and I draw his attention to the fact that the former member for Capalaba, when he was talking about allegations that were raised in relation to him, said—

We've got all sorts of people who have come into this parliament and that's got to be a healthy thing.

Once again for those opposite I make it very clear that if the member for Kawana has any evidence, if the Leader of the Opposition has any evidence or if the member for Mermaid Beach has any evidence other than his own cable car project, please refer it to the police. That is the right thing to do. I say once again to the *Courier-Mail*, if they have any affidavits of relevance, refer it to the police.

Mr BLEIJIE: I rise to a point of order.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, members! I will listen to the member for Kawana's point of order in silence.

Mr BLEIJIE: Before I raised the point of order I asked the Premier whether she had met with the member for Pumicestone and discussed the allegations this morning. Has she met with the member, who is sitting just there, and has she discussed these allegations this morning?

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Kawana, your preamble was part of the question. The Premier has answered the question. She has resumed her seat.

Cycling Infrastructure

Mr PYNE: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on the progress in building cycling infrastructure in Queensland and what this government is doing to improve cycle networks?

Ms TRAD: I thank the honourable member for Cairns for the question. I know that Cairns is a particularly cycle-friendly city. I have been on the Esplanade plenty of times and witnessed just how well used the Esplanade is for cyclists. Despite the very disgraceful comments by the former member for Cairns, I know that the current member for Cairns has a very avid interest in active travel in his city.

The Palaszczuk Labor government is committed to making cycling a safe and appealing method of transport in Queensland. The government has recently awarded a \$3 million pool of grant funding to local councils to help build three major bike corridors right across the state. The grants will see three priority corridors built that will offer longer, safer and continuous routes for cyclists. I am pleased to advise the House, and particularly the member for Cairns, that his former workplace, the Cairns Regional Council, was one of those councils that was successful in the grants program. Cairns Regional Council will receive something in the order of \$900,000 to upgrade the Mann Street cycle connection for 3.8 kilometres along a priority corridor that will connect the Cairns western suburbs to the CBD. The Moreton Bay Regional Council will get a \$1.3 million allocation for the Bribie Island

cycleway for a 4.5-kilometre priority corridor for cyclists between the Bribie Island Bridge and Woorim. Also, the Sunshine Coast Regional Council will get \$935,000 for the Maroochydore cycleway for a 2.2-kilometre priority corridor between Maroochydore and Alexandra Headland.

Mr Speaker, unlike the former Newman government, this government is serious in its commitment to encourage cycling. Today I can reveal to the House that in 2012 the former transport minister, currently the opposition transport spokesperson, ripped almost \$100 million out of the cycling infrastructure budget over four years. Cycle network grants to local governments were cut by \$25 million over four years, and there was a \$73 million cut in the cycle network capital program over four years. Yet another example of the Newman government's failure is the decision to cut the dedicated cycling path as part of the Richlands to Springfield transport corridor, which the then minister described as gold plating. Had the former LNP government listened more to the people of Brisbane and the people of Queensland, then perhaps they would not be confronting such stark recommendations as there are in the Borbidge-Sheldon review. It makes for exciting reading, and I really do commend the review to the member for Indooroopilly.

Commissioner Michael Byrnes

Mr WALKER: My question is to the Premier. The MacSporran report exhibited no confidence that organised crime commissioner Michael Byrnes's tenure overseeing the greyhound racing industry helped stamp out illegal and offensive practices in that industry. In view of that, and of the further serious matters that the Premier raised in the House today, is the Premier reviewing Mr Byrnes's suitability to stamp out organised crime in Queensland?

Ms PALASZCZUK: The answer is no.

Palm Island Indigenous Round Table

Mr STEWART: My question is to for the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. Will the minister advise the House of the outcomes of the Indigenous round table held last week on Palm Island?

Mr PITT: I thank the honourable member for the question. It was good to see him on Palm Island, albeit in transit, on the first day. Right off the bat I should thank the LGAQ for their willingness to partner with the state government in terms of having their Indigenous leaders forum on day one, transitioning into the Indigenous round table the next day.

As we have heard already from the Minister for Housing, today is of course a very important day. It has been 23 years since the historic landmark High Court decision which saw terra nullius overturned in this country and was a real setting of the pathway to reconciliation in this country. I am honoured to be in this parliament with not one but two Indigenous members of parliament, and that is something for this parliament to celebrate.

In answer to the member's question, the round table was a terrific opportunity for me as minister to fulfil an election commitment, because we said that we would meet with the mayors of the communities and talk to them about the issues facing them. It was very important for me, because in the previous Labor government, I was also the minister for the Indigenous partnerships portfolio, so I wanted to get a real snapshot of what had happened over the last three years and where we could do our bit as a government to support these councils and to support their communities to become stronger and to build better communities in each of their locales.

I have to say thank you to Mayor Alf Lacey of Palm Island—which of course is in the member for Townsville's electorate—for his hospitality and his leadership, along with the mayor of Lockhart River, Wayne Butcher, who did a great job chairing the round table. In many respects there were no surprises, but it was great that both Minister Enoch and Minister O'Rourke were there to join us at the round table—three ministers from the Palaszczuk government listening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities about their issues and how we can support them in building and enhancing their communities.

Of course the issues are not new, and that is part of our challenge in government and part of the challenge for all governments. We have a series of continuing issues such as education and housing. The conditions around employment are a challenge that we all face, and we take that challenge very seriously.

The issue of alcohol management plans of course came up. That is something that I am very keen to put a definitive time line around—a definitive time line to get buy-in from all of the communities. A criticism raised was that it was an open-ended process under the previous

government. We are keen to see that that process is fulfilled and that we get buy-in from all of the communities. I have tasked my department to get some real work done on a transition away from that, bearing in mind, as always, that we need to be very mindful of the vulnerable community members—women, children and older people—who can sometimes experience the wrath of alcohol fuelled violence. I am very proud to have gone to Palm Island. I thank the member for the question.

Public Servants, Privacy

Ms SIMPSON: My question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations. I refer to the ongoing Director of Public Prosecutions and Queensland Police Service investigations into the CFMEU, and I ask: under the state government's union encouragement policy, have the details of Queensland public servants been sent to an organisation currently under investigation for extortion and blackmail?

Ms Trad: You're a day late.

Mr PITT: I take the interjection from the Deputy Premier. I think the member is a day late with her question. It does not seem to be part of the series today. We have seen this relentless attack—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr PITT: They do not want to hear the answer, but I am happy to provide it to them.

What we know is that there has been a relentless attack on unions—on union organisers, on union delegates. I say again: I do not think those opposite actually know the difference between a union organiser and a union delegate. Delegates are members of the workplace—nurses, teachers—who actually go in.

Mr Cripps: Answer the question.

Mr PITT: I will get to that, member for Hinchinbrook. When he was health minister, the one-trick opposition leader had one thing he could say. It was always about trying to beat up on the previous government. He is now the leader of a one-trick opposition, which is all about trying to beat up on unions because it must test well in focus groups.

In answer to the member's question, this is something those opposite have been trying to prosecute because they have been continually talking about privacy. Let us talk about the privacy issue related to handing over information. I have to be very careful to answer this question well because there is a bill before the House. The privacy matters that those opposite are raising are absolute rubbish. The Privacy Commissioner has said that there are no concerns with anything to do with the handling of information regarding the directive or even the matter before the House.

Those opposite need to take a new tack because, clearly, they are not getting anywhere with this one. They are trying to prosecute an argument which is based on ideology and not on any reality.

Ms SIMPSON: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Under standing order 118, I ask that the minister actually answer the question and be relevant. Yes or no? Has he handed over the details?

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Maroochydore.

Mr PITT: What I know is that the member, when asking her question, decided to try to front-load the question to make allegations and accusations against a certain union. That is something she is willing to do. That is an opinion. Ultimately, when it comes to the handling of information, the question is a pretty simple one. We have actually gone and checked whether any new starters coming in to government have been handed the information—just like over the past couple of decades as this is not a new policy. We checked whether information about any new starters had been handed over to a union—no; none.

Mr Springborg: You couldn't tell us that yesterday.

Mr PITT: I wanted to keep you in suspense, Leader of the Opposition, because, quite frankly, this whole line of questioning is absolutely absurd. Those opposite have gone at it for two sitting weeks now and they are in the same place as before. They are union bashers. Of course, they have to remember: who makes up unions? Workers, and every time they attack a union they are attacking workers. We saw it with 24,000 people sacked under their government.

Health Service Contracts, Non-Government Organisations

Mr CRAWFORD: My question is to the Minister for Health. Will the minister update the House on changes to health sector service agreements between non-government organisations and the government?

Mr DICK: Of all the egregious acts of the previous Newman LNP government, one of the worst was gagging the voices of those Queenslanders and organisations opposed to their government. The Leader of the Opposition, when he was the minister for health, had inserted into agreements between Queensland Health and community organisations which received over 50 per cent of their funding from the Queensland government a clause which stated—

Where the Organisation receives 50 per cent or more of its total funding from Queensland Health and other Queensland Government agencies, the Organisation must not advocate for State or Federal legislative change.

That was not enough. It was never enough for those opposite. It was never enough for them. The clause went further and stated—

The Organisation must also not include links on their website to other organisations' websites that advocate for State or Federal legislative change.

So not only could that organisation not speak; it could not even put a link on their web page to other organisations that might have advocated for legislative change. What an outrageous attempt to silence Queenslanders!

I am proud that we as a Labor government have delivered on our election commitment to remove those gag clauses from Queensland Health contracts. I have personally signed 63 letters to organisations that had that condition in their service agreement to let them know that that clause will not be enforced and that they are free to advocate for the state and federal changes they feel are necessary to benefit both our state and federal health systems. They are free to talk. They are free to advocate. They are free to criticise us. We are not frightened to hear the voices of Queenslanders who want to participate—

Ms Palaszczuk: In democracy.

Mr DICK:—in our democracy. That is right, Premier. We are not afraid of Queenslanders who want to participate in democracy. What did the Borbidge-Sheldon report say? I refer to page 1. It is not hard to get to page 1, members opposite. It states—

Undoubtedly, the leadership of the government contributed to the election loss including—

the leadership of the government, (2) the member for Callide, (3) the member for Clayfield, (4) the Leader of the Opposition. It continues—

- the perception of arrogance arising from not listening to the people;

It is hard to speak when you are gagged. It continues—

- the alienation of key stakeholders in the decision making process;

Telling people that they cannot participate in democracy—that their voice is not heard and will not be heard by the LNP—is a pretty good way to alienate them. That is emblematic of everything that was wrong with Campbell Newman, his cabinet—most of whom are still here—and the LNP organisation. The Palaszczuk government will not suppress the voices of Queenslanders. In the health space, they will be free to say whatever they want to make sure we improve the health system in Queensland.

(Time expired)

Ministerial Correspondence

Mr Nicholls: Thank you. From a bloke who cancelled their own state conference!

Mr SPEAKER: Let me call you, member for Clayfield. I know you are excited.

Mr Nicholls: I am, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: I now call the member for Clayfield. What is your question?

Mr NICHOLLS: A lecture from the fellow who cancelled his own state conference in 2012 talking about democracy!

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Clayfield, it is not a speech; it is an opportunity for you to put a question.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Was that a question to the Minister for Health? I think he would be happy to take it!

Mr SPEAKER: No.

Mr STEVENS: That is a frivolous point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Leader of the House, there is no point of order.

Mr NICHOLLS: My question is to the Minister for State Development. Given that the minister yesterday stated in this House that he had not been in consultation with the Minister for Tourism about any valuations on Great Keppel Island, can the minister explain why his correspondence register indicates that he has been in consultation with the tourism minister? I table a copy of the overdue ministerial correspondence register of the minister.

Tabled paper: Extract of NRM—Overdue Ministerials, dated 22 May 2015 [515].

Dr LYNHAM: I thank the member for his question. I did check yesterday and, yes, there was a letter from the Minister for Tourism to me. I had not read the letter. I tracked down the letter yesterday. I certainly had not signed the brief. I had not signed the letter. The question specifically asked if I had been talking to or had been in personal contact with the Minister for Tourism, and I had not. I answered correctly.

Small Business

Ms FARMER: My question is to the Minister for Small Business. Will the minister update the House on the government's engagement with small business?

Ms JONES: I thank the member for Bulimba for the question, and it is great to be back in the House with her. I know what a strong advocate she is for small business in her electorate. She knows that over the past three years we saw small businesses doing it really tough right across Queensland. In actual fact, when I put my hand up to contest the seat of Ashgrove the first thing I did was doorknock the small businesses in my community and they told me that they had seen a significant downturn in the turnover of their businesses and they were doing it very tough.

When I was fortunate enough to be appointed the Minister for Small Business, I made it a priority to go around the state and listen to small business owners one on one and I had the privilege of meeting with small business owners right across our great state—from Charleville to Barcaldine, Mackay, Rockhampton, Yeppoon, Townsville, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Winton, Cairns and, of course, Brisbane. I have also been meeting with key stakeholders such as CCIQ and am in the process of establishing the Red Tape Reduction Council, one of our election commitments, and will also be opening nominations for the Small Business Advisory Council. What I heard loud and clear from small business across this state is that they want to see more small business representatives on the advisory council—that is, real small business owners on the council talking directly with government. Today I am very pleased to advise the House that the new council under our government will consist of a majority of small business owners so we can hear directly from them.

The debate about the economy that has been toing and froing is very interesting, because what I find most informative is that when you actually talk to businesses themselves they tell you their experiences of the LNP government in Queensland. I received an email from a small business owner who did not get a reply from the former government when he wrote to them and said—

I bought my business in May 2010. It was a great business performing and was supposed to fund my retirement ... well, until your government came into power and decided to make strong decisions to axe the jobs of 75 per cent of my clientele. Your government and its Strong Choices has destroyed the income of a perfect business. Your government has cost me over \$2 million with no compensation to me or any other business they have destroyed.

One of the key election commitments of those opposite when first elected was that they were going to lower power costs. What did another small business owner say about the former LNP government? A Longreach publican said that he was now considering cutting staff and converting to solar. He said—

We are only a small business and to get an extra \$5,000 on your power bill over a three-month period was a real Christmas present from Campbell Newman. It felt like a kick in the guts.

(Time expired)

Flinders River, Water Resources

Mr KATTER: My question without notice is to the Minister for State Development. Minister, for the last 20 years there has been much talk and many millions spent on studies for farming on the Flinders River. In this rural crisis, will the minister move immediately to release the balance of the water allocation of the Flinders River which is currently only 2.1 per cent of the flow and in a manner that will ensure smaller and larger schemes are both practically and affordably able to access this great resource?

Dr LYNHAM: I thank the member for Mount Isa for his question. I understand that this matter is of great significance to him and also to the people of Mount Isa and the people of North Queensland. I also understand the rivers in that area and the great variability in river flow. I also understand that a lot of projects want to tap in to the big summer flows, store the water and use that for agricultural production. It makes common sense. With its ready access to national and international markets via ports and airports in Townsville, Darwin and Cairns, the Flinders catchment and its ability to deliver sustainable agricultural development is a priority for the Queensland government and I know it is a priority for the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland. I am therefore pleased to inform the member for Mount Isa that the Department of Natural Resources and Mines is finalising the gulf water resource plan and the resource operations plan with a finalisation date of August 2015, so it is not far away.

The review into the Gilbert and Flinders rivers unallocated water resources have been informed by water and soil science assembled by the CSIRO and department of natural resources science and we will ensure that the provision of water for irrigated agriculture expansion will carefully consider the needs of gulf fisheries, the environment and existing water users. Some 21 submissions were received by the department after the close of submissions on 10 February 2015, which I will be considering along with the alignment of the amendments with the Queensland government's policy objectives and commitments.

The draft plans consider new irrigated agriculture development opportunities in the Flinders River catchment, and it is an ideal area. The land is flat, rivers run at their peak with great volumes and the vegetation is sparse; a lot of it is prickly acacia. Communities like Hughenden and Richmond in the Flinders catchment and the supply chain businesses in those towns will be the beneficiaries of this water release and the sustainable economic growth and job opportunities it will support. I look forward to seeing firsthand the benefits this will provide to communities around the Flinders, as I am sure the member for Mount Isa is as well, and I am happy to continue to assist the member wherever I can.

Corrective Services

Ms LINARD: My question is to the Minister for Corrective Services. Will the minister advise the House of any programs or initiatives in her department that were not delivering value for money for Queensland taxpayers over the past three years and advise what has been done to resolve any issues?

Mr Bleijie: I think Rick will buy one of those pink jumpsuits. That's what you're going to talk about, hey—pink jumpsuits?

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, members. We are all waiting to hear the minister's response. I call the minister.

Mrs MILLER: Mr Speaker, thank you very much. I noticed that the member for Kawana was pre-empting the comments that I might be able to make here today, but can I say that the member for Nudgee is very concerned about the people of Queensland getting value for money, and I agree with her because when any government commits funding it should be value for money. I note that the member opposite—the member for Kawana—was the member who cried wolf in relation—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Leader of the Opposition, you have had a go already and so have you, Deputy Premier. It is now the Minister for Corrective Services's chance.

Mrs MILLER: What happened was the member for Kawana tried to go around Queensland saying that he was tough on crime, but he was found wanting every time.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, please do not refer to the member for Kawana by using the word 'he'. I ask you to refer to him using his correct title.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you. When he was trying to be tough on crime—

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister! When the member for Kawana—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Please. I realise he has provoked you, but please.

Mrs MILLER: Thank you, Mr Speaker. What I was referring to was obviously googling 'tough on crime' and what came up was Arizona. I believe that what we had was a situation where the member for Kawana pinned on a sheriff's badge and then the member for Kawana thought that we needed to have pink jumpsuits, so off they went to Spotlight looking for pink material. But what we have is a situation here whereby we had 'Kawana couture'. We had the pink jumpsuits. We had 'Kawana couture'. Pink, I ask? I thought that this was very, very mean spirited, but then I thought, 'Maybe he took his inspiration from *Mean Girls*.' What colour is the member for Kawana wearing today? What colour is his tie? The member for Kawana is wearing pink, and of course when we look at *Mean Girls* what do we have? Wednesdays we wear pink—of course! That is not very fetch of course—not very fetch. But the member for Kawana became known as the laughing-stock of Queensland, but the people of Queensland are not laughing anymore because they are singing. I understand that the new song is called something like 'Coco Kawana' and it goes something like this—

His name was Coco,

'Coco Kawana'.

Beauty and fashion was never his passion,

Never his fashion.

Only 27 prisoners ever wore the member for Kawana's pink jumpsuits. Not even Elvis wore pink jumpsuits, for heaven's sake! Certainly, the member for Kawana will never be known as 'Jumpin' Jack Flash'; he will be known as 'Jumpin' Pink Jumpsuits'. That is what he will be known for.

Member for Pumicestone

Mr BOOTHMAN: My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier advise whether she, as the Premier, has met with the member for Pumicestone, Rick Williams, to discuss the allegations made against the member?

Ms PALASZCZUK: The Deputy Premier and I, yes, we met the member for Pumicestone and, once again, I say—

Opposition members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I meet with my members on a regular basis. Let me say again—just so they can all understand it very clearly—if anyone has any evidence, and it is a serious issue—

An opposition member interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, stop laughing; it is a serious issue. If anyone has any evidence, refer it today to the police. Refer it today. I say to the Leader of the Opposition that we know he has a dirt unit, because it has been in practice for the last three years. The member for Bundamba's personal details were tabled in this House by the former premier. The member for Stafford's health files were discussed at length in this parliament. The member for Cook's family's private details—

An opposition member interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Privacy provisions? The member wants to talk about privacy. They were circulated by the man sitting opposite, the Leader of the Opposition. They should not come in here and lecture when they do not stand by their principles. So I say to Lawrence Springborg—

Ms Simpson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Maroochydore, please.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I say to the Leader of the Opposition's dirt unit today that, if it has any evidence, refer it to the police. Do not come in here and wave the dirt around; refer it to the police. Refer it to the police because Queenslanders have read the LNP review and they do not like their style of government. The same people are still there. The same people who led the LNP government are now leading this opposition and nothing has changed. They have learned absolutely nothing.

The review report, as the Minister for Health said, states that those leaders are responsible and need to stand up and take responsibility. Who were the leaders? Campbell Newman, Jeff Seeney and Tim Nicholls, the architects of the three years of the worst government that this state has ever seen—the worst government in the history of Queensland! The abuse of the parliament was second to none. Legislation was rushed through without even going to committee. The parliamentary crime and—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, Premier.

Community Organisations

Mr RUSSO: My question is to the Minister for Communities. Will the minister please advise the House of any feedback that has been received from the communities sector since she has taken on the role of Minister for Communities?

Ms FENTIMAN: I thank the member for the question. I know that he has been busy meeting with local community groups in his electorate of Sunnybank. In the time that I have been in this role, I have met with many community organisations, small and large. Across the state I have been to neighbourhood centres, community resource centres, community recovery hubs, youth centres, respite centres, childcare centres and refuges. I have to say that I am always impressed by the dedication, passion and professionalism of the people and the staff right across the community sector.

I want to work with the sector. I want to collaborate with the sector on the best way forward to deliver services and opportunities for Queensland families. But the feedback that I get most often from the communities sector is a deep sense of relief that they are finally able to speak up and to advocate for their members and their members' interests. They are proud that they can now suggest improvements to the government and encourage better ways of assisting their clients.

We will not always like what the community sector has to tell us, but we are not afraid to hear it. That is why we acted immediately to remove gag clauses from the funding agreements that we have with hundreds of community organisations. The relief has been immense. There is absolutely no way that a government can listen to and work in partnership with the NGO sector when they have been gagged and they are too scared to speak up for fear of losing their funding. We are a government that believes that advocacy delivers better outcomes. Part of improving the lives of women experiencing domestic or family violence, or young people needing support, or people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who face additional challenges is to advocate on their behalf. It is a weak government that uses the weapon of funding agreements to silence community groups.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Nanango, you have an opportunity to ask a question if you want to.

Ms FENTIMAN: It is an arrogant government that prevents organisations from contributing ideas. It is little wonder, as we have already heard today, that the Borbidge-Sheldon election review noted that the LNP had 'alienated almost every key interest group across the state' and 'the party was without support from community groups'.

The Palaszczuk government is working with our community organisations, valuing and respecting community organisations and the great work that they do with vulnerable Queenslanders. The era of gag clauses is over.

Public Housing

Mr HART: My question is to the Minister for Housing and I ask: given the positive outcomes for public housing tenants we have witnessed on the Gold Coast, will the minister commit to the continuation of the LNP's three-strikes policy?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for the question. It was an election commitment that we would review all housing policies to ensure that there is fairness for all tenants. The three-strikes policy was part of that review. There are a number of issues around three strikes, one of which is to do with those people who are experiencing or living with mental health issues—those who are at the crisis end of the social housing system. Those at the crisis end of the social housing system find themselves in a situation where they are toppling over into crisis, toppling over into homelessness as a result of this policy. That is why, as part of the review of the fairness of all housing policies, we will see outcomes from that, once that review—

Mr Mander interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Everton, I think the minister is able to answer the question by herself.

Ms ENOCH: On that note, obviously, we are also looking at other parts of housing, one of which is—

Mr Minnikin interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Chatsworth, if you persist I will issue you a warning under standing order 253A.

Mr Pitt interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Treasurer, I do not need your assistance.

Ms ENOCH: It is an absolute priority that our social housing that is being accessed by some of the most vulnerable people in our community and the policies attached to it are the fairest that they can be. We do not want to see people toppling over into homelessness, into crisis situations because of policies that have not been thought through properly. That is why the three-strikes policy, along with many others, is currently being reviewed to ensure that that fairness is in place for all Queenslanders who are accessing our social housing system.

Legal Services, Funding

Mr MADDEN: My question is to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. Following the 22 May ministerial council meeting in Canberra, will the Attorney-General update the House on any developments in the funding of legal services?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. As I outlined at the last sitting week in this place, in the federal budget the LNP has made significant cuts to the funding of legal services. We know that Legal Aid Queensland is getting its funding cut, as well as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service. Unfortunately, that is not all. The cuts to funding are not the only challenges facing those who provide essential legal advice and assistance to disadvantaged Queenslanders right across this great state. It is of great concern that in the latest round of federal funding of community legal centres, gag clauses are proposed for our community legal centres. What this shows is this is the nature of the LNP. This is what you get with LNP governments despite, can I say, the charter letters—we have heard a bit about charter letters—of the former government where all ministers were directed early on to continue to establish effective working relationships with stakeholders and other interest groups. We saw how well that worked for the former attorney-general.

This is about gagging people. The Labor government stepped up and listened to the community groups, the doctors, the legal centres and said we know that these gag clauses are wrong. We want to give you a voice. You represent the most vulnerable in our community. If we do not give you a voice who else gets that voice? Who else deserves it? These are the people who have a right to speak up and speak up for these people who they represent so well.

Interestingly, in the report on the LNP election loss there is a finding that during the campaign, with one or two exceptions, the party was without support from community groups. Who would have thought? Who would have thought that they were without support from community groups during the election? That might be because they did everything possible to cut these groups out. They cut their funding. They stopped them from having a voice in the community. We acted in our first 100 days to step up and to remove those gag orders. The federal funding proposal is to stop lobbying of government, which means these community legal centres cannot speak to government centres. So, no lobbying of government and no public advocacy if they are getting federal funding dollars. That is an absolute disgrace.


I was very pleased to be at the ministerial council meeting Friday a week ago where other attorneys-general in other states stand with us on this issue. They want these gag clauses removed. They agree that this is appalling behaviour by any government and we ask that the Commonwealth government start listening to the community.

Mr WEIR: Mr Speaker—

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Condamine, question time has concluded for the day. You will be right for tomorrow.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION (PROTECTING FIREFIGHTERS) AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (4.02 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 for particular purposes. I table a copy of the bill and explanatory notes and I nominate the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill 2015 [\[516\]](#).

Tabled paper: Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill 2015, explanatory notes [\[517\]](#).

I present a bill for an act to amend the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 for particular purposes. The Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill follows on from our public commitment in 2014 when we signed a landmark accord with John Oliver of the United Firefighters Union of Queensland. The bill introduces deemed disease provisions for all Queensland firefighters who contract one of the 12 specified cancers, provisions that are mirrored in the Commonwealth legislation that was introduced by the federal government in 2011. If a firefighter suffers a disease that was deemed to be work related and is listed in the table in the bill and meets the specified time requirements it will be presumed that the disease was caused by that employment for the purpose of a workers compensation claim.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Kawana, one moment. Members, the member for Kawana is speaking to his bill. If you can please leave the chamber quietly.

Mr BLEIJIE: And we are talking about firefighters, Mr Speaker. If a firefighter suffers a disease that was deemed to be work related and, as I said, is listed in the table in the bill and meets the specified time requirements it will be presumed that the—

Ms Jones interjected.

Mr Dick interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Speaker, I am introducing a bill in relation to firefighters with cancer. The Minister for Tourism and the Minister for Health continue their interjections. I ask that you bring order to the Minister for Health and Minister for Tourism. I was talking about firefighters with cancer.

Mr DICK: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. The fact is that the member opposite, and all those members opposite, abused firefighters consistently—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, there is no point of order. I would ask members to listen to the member for Kawana.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. As I said, if a firefighter suffers a disease that was deemed to be work related and is listed in the table in this bill and meets the specified time requirements, it will be presumed that the disease was caused by the employment for the purposes of a workers compensation claim.

There is a reason why, when surveys are undertaken with Queenslanders about the most respected professionals in our community, firefighters are always at the top of the ladder, if not on the top. That is because the community respects the hard work, the dedication and the sense of service that our permanent, part-time, auxiliary and volunteer rural firefighters have and the innate sense of selflessness that these men and women display on a daily basis protecting lives and property around the state. It is not always about fire events. In a state like Queensland, with the range of wild weather conditions we experience, from wild storms and cyclones to bushfires, floods and drought, firefighters are always there to keep us safe to the best of their ability and to rescue Queenslanders in dangerous situations.

That is why we made the commitment in 2014 that we supported the policy of presumptive legislation for firefighters and today's bill honours that strong commitment. The bill implements changes that other jurisdictions around Australia have adopted to a similar extent and it is time that we joined them in recognising the importance of this change. When someone contracts cancer we need to do what we can to support them as a community. I know that as a member of parliament but also as a son of someone who is a cancer survivor. To the extent that the person has contracted the disease in the duty of keeping our community safe from harm, we have an obligation to do what is right in helping that person through what could be one of the toughest battles in their lives. That is why these changes are so important. Rather than an onerous bureaucratic process of proving the linkage between a disease and work, provided the criteria are met this is simply going to be presumed. This is about making the process so much easier. The last thing someone needs when they are told they have cancer is to then go through a battle to make sure they can take the time for the treatment.

While I note that Queensland does not lead the nation in terms of being the first jurisdiction to introduce presumptive legislation for firefighters, I understand this bill will provide for the highest level of support in any Australian state or territory. I know that the Labor government has talked about this policy more recently, and I look forward to bipartisan support on this bill in good time.

I want to thank John Oliver and his team at the UFUQ, the team at the Queensland Auxiliary Firefighters Association and the Rural Fire Brigades Association of Queensland for continually advocating for these presumptive laws. I also want to acknowledge the former minister and member

for Bundaberg, Jack Dempsey, and his staff for the work they did and the consultation and discussions they had on the issues when we were in government. Can I also pay particular tribute to the hardworking firefighters right around Queensland, whether they be permanent, part-time, auxiliary or rural firefighters, for their service to our state.

There are differences in this legislation right around Australia. In a lot of jurisdictions the presumption is applicable to permanent firefighters. We have over 2,000 permanent firefighters and over 2,000 part-time auxiliary firefighters in the state, but we have some 15,000 active rural fire brigade members and also about 30,000 rural fire brigade members of the association. We are talking about a lot of men and women who put their lives at risk for the protection of Queensland citizens on a daily basis.

The difference with this bill compared with other bills is that this bill is nondiscriminatory. A lot of other jurisdictions that have introduced this legislation have a discriminatory clause dealing with rural fire brigades—basically volunteers—where it says that if you are a member of a volunteer fire brigade station and you contract one of the 12 specified cancers, in order to have the workers compensation claim you have to have been exposed to 175 to 200 fire incidents in a period of five years. Today we end the discrimination. This bill that I place before the House today is applicable to permanent firefighters, auxiliary firefighters and rural fire brigade members without any discrimination of the three levels.

There are situations in Queensland where auxiliary firefighters share the same office space and brigades, yet under laws proposed by the Labor Party and in other jurisdictions around Australia if an auxiliary member and a volunteer were to attend the same fire they would be under two different systems and the discrimination rests against the volunteer. Our bill is nondiscriminatory. It will apply to all firefighters. There is a new definition of 'firefighter' for the benefit of the workers compensation legislation.

I thank LNP members who have had input into this bill. It is an important bill that we took to the people in 2014 to protect our firefighters. We announced it with the firefighters union. I pay tribute to the permanent auxiliary men and women of the Rural Fire Brigades Association, who work in all of our electorates. Some time ago, Commonwealth legislation was introduced dealing with presumptive legislation. When we are talking about firefighters at the Commonwealth level, of course we are talking about the ACT firefighters or firefighters based at airports around Australia, because they fall under the federal jurisdiction. State firefighters are not covered by any of the legislation. That ends today with this LNP bill. I know that there are members of parliament from right around the state who are active members of the Rural Fire Brigades Association and today I pay tribute to them as well.

In particular I thank members of the Rural Fire Brigades Association with whom I have had conversations over the past couple of days to ensure that we introduce a bill that is nondiscriminatory, that applies to all firefighters and that gives the protection that firefighters right around the state require and deserve. If a firefighter contracts one of the 12 diseases specified under the bill, the only requirement is that they have served the period prescribed in the bill, which could be five, 10, 15 or 25 years depending on the type of cancer.

I hope this goes some way to showing that the LNP have always and will always support our firefighters in this state. The former member for Mirani, Ted Malone, conducted the Malone review, which gave volunteer firefighters the best support that a government has ever given. I congratulate Ted Malone on the review that he undertook and the reforms that will be undertaken going forward. This is an important bill for Queenslanders and it is an important bill for firefighters, both permanent auxiliary and rural fire brigade members. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (4.12 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee

Mr SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee.

Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date

Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (4.12 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That under the provisions of standing order 136 the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report to the House on the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill by 13 July 2015.



Mr HINCHLIFFE (Sandgate—ALP) (4.13 pm): I think the reporting time proposed by the member for Kawana does rough justice to the parliamentary committee system. Last night in this House, from those opposite we heard all sorts of proclamations about how they were somehow the champions of the committee system and that they were its guardians and protectors. That was in the context of a debate on reporting time frames for parliamentary portfolio committees inquiring into private members' bills, such as the one before the House, which would bring those reporting dates forward to 14 September. Members will note that the government supported those opposite, in the main, in bringing those dates forward to 14 September. That was reasonable and appropriate.

However, last night I was surprised that in the end those opposite, who had been so keen to see those matters dealt with by 14 September, voted against the proposition. They were happy to have the private members' bills dealt with in the ordinary time frame as provided for under standing orders, which would have seen the committees reporting back to the House in November. Even though they said that they were concerned about and interested in seeing those matters dealt with by 14 September, when ultimately the proposition came before the House, having been amended to allow for the vast majority of those private members' bills to be reported to the House by committees by 14 September, they voted against it.

In relation to this motion, it is proposed that the committee report to the House on this private member's bill by 13 July—that is, the next sitting of parliament. We need to make sure that these matters are considered and responded to appropriately. I think that it would be a travesty and an offence to the parliament and our commitment to the committee system to see it short stalled in this way. This has not been a matter where there has been ongoing consultation in the community. The member for Kawana has lobbed this into the chamber—

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, members! One moment, please, Leader of the House. Pause the clock. Member for Lockyer and member for Nanango, you will have an opportunity to speak after the current member finishes, if you choose.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: It is absolutely appropriate that the committee takes evidence from a range of stakeholders, including, and very importantly, firefighters and their representatives. That would be a very good thing. It is important that the committee has the best opportunity to do that. In the past that has been the appropriate process in relation to private members' bills and it would be welcomed. I would welcome it and I am sure that the member for Kawana would welcome it as well.

It would be appropriate, either in person, in writing or through a representative from the opposition, to bring to the Committee of the Legislative Assembly a proposal for a reporting date earlier than the automatic six-month process. Were that to happen, we could consider and discuss it to ensure that we come up with a proper response that accounts for the management of the portfolio committee's workload and appropriate consultation with the broader community. However, this course of action—this bluff and bluster from the member for Kawana, which is completely on trait—has been thrown into the House. I accept and understand absolutely that this is something that the House can deal with, as we did last night. However, to allow for better consideration and for the better working of the House, rather than trying to ram things through, it would be preferable to refer the matter to the Committee of the Legislative Assembly. I look forward to that happening. To allow for that proper reflective process to happen, I encourage the House to vote against the motion moved by the member for Kawana.




Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (4.18 pm): This is a fairly simple proposition. This is a rather small bill that looks to add to some provisions that are already in legislation before the House, which I will not refer to. We need not to look at what those opposite say, as the Leader of the House has just referred to in his contribution, but to look at what they do. Industrial relations legislation is before the House and I will not refer to it, but I refer to the time frame that the House was given to deal with it: three weeks.

Mr Crandon: Seventeen working days.

Mr LANGBROEK: I take the interjection from the member for Coomera; it is 17 working days or three weeks.

The member for Kawana has introduced a relatively simple private member's bill that deals with provisions that are going to be brought in for other members of the Queensland community. He has asked for the committee to report in six weeks. Mr Speaker, I note in your other role, as the member for Nicklin, that you have always expressed the importance of the appropriate use of the committee structure and have always been concerned about curtailing time limits.

It is important to note that there is a bill currently before the House which has had extremely limited time frames—the last two sitting weeks. The member for Kawana has nominated the perfectly reasonable time of six weeks. I believe this a motion that should be supported. I would implore members to support it for the sake of the firefighters whom the member is representing in his private member's bill.

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (4.20 pm): I oppose the motion. One thing that Labor members know is to look very carefully at anything the member for Kawana does. We look very carefully and behind everything the member for Kawana does. The last three years of the LNP government gave us enormous cause to pause and to look carefully at anything the member for Kawana does. If he says one thing you know that something different is happening behind the scenes. We oppose this motion.

It is stunning in its ignorance. The ignorance of the deputy opposition leader on this issue is absolutely stunning. He says it is a simple amendment to the workers compensation act. Bringing in deemed provisions for workers compensation is a very significant and substantial change to the workers compensation system in this state. It would be the first time ever, if I am not mistaken, that deemed provisions are being sought to be introduced into workers compensation legislation in this state.

Labor supports this. Labor campaigned on it. Labor rammed this issue during the election campaign. Looking behind the member for Kawana, as we always have to do—he puts on the smug face for the public but behind the scenes does something else—

An opposition member interjected.

Mr DICK: You bought the smug face of Peter Costello into the Commission of Audit. He is the man you brought in—your fixer—to fix the books so you could ram through changes and sack tens of thousands of Queenslanders.

What does the member for Kawana say? This is a bipartisan proposition. The member for Kawana might table the letters he has written to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and talk about the conversations he has had with the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services in this place. But, of course, he would not have done any of that. He has brought this bill before the House and now wants to sneak through the time frame.

As the Leader of the House has said, it does not do justice to the substantive issue. It is most appropriate that there be significant consideration of this issue by the parliamentary committee so members of the community, including perhaps affected firefighters, might be able to come before the committee and give evidence about this important change to the law.

As I said earlier, we know how those members regard firefighters. We saw the demonisation of firefighters during the Redcliffe by-election. They now profess to be the friend of firefighters.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Lockyer, you will have an opportunity to speak if you wish. Member for Nanango, you will also have an opportunity to speak.

Mr DICK: They now profess to be the friend of firefighters after demonising them through the Redcliffe by-election.

Mr LANGBROEK: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker. I seek your ruling as to the appropriateness of this contribution in terms of its relevance to the motion.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, I ask you to make your comments relevant to the motion we are debating at the moment.

Mr DICK: Firefighters need time to give evidence to the committee. They will be sceptical about the approach taken by those members opposite because of the way they were treated previously.

Mr NICHOLLS: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. The Minister for Health makes one statement in relation to the time frame and then moves immediately into debate of the substantive issue in relation to the bill. I would ask that you restrain the minister to comments in relation to the motion before the House, and that is the reporting date and not the merits of the bill, why it has been presented, who is going forward with it and all those other matters.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Clayfield. Minister, I ask you to take on board those comments.

Mr DICK: The member for Clayfield is obviously not listening to the debate because I have not raised anything about deemed workers compensation.

Mr NICHOLLS: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. On that basis, I find the member's comments offensive and I ask that he withdraw them.

Mr DICK: I withdraw absolutely anything in respect of the comments made. I will not debate the substance of the bill which is about deemed compensation. What I am debating is the time line—the time line for affected workers, including firefighters, who were treated poorly by the last LNP government to be able to be given sufficient time—


Mr NICHOLLS: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. The first part of his contribution related to the time frame and then he started debating the substantive matters behind the bill and the other issues. I would ask you to bring him back to the point and that is the debate on the time frame.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. The member for Clayfield's supposed point of order does nothing but draw to your attention that the Minister for Health was in fact addressing an issue that is fundamental to the time frame for the committee to report on this bill. That is how it sits in the context of community consultation and community engagement with people who have significant interests in the merits and issues with regard to this bill. I am not going to go into the merits and issues with regard to the contents of the bill. He was referring to how they will be affected and the opportunity for them to express their opinion and have their opinion heard by the committee.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, Leader of the House. I do not need you to participate in the debate. Minister, I bring you back to the motion we are debating and the importance of relevance.

Mr DICK: The time line put forward by those opposite is not sufficient for workers to be able to give sufficient evidence. I know they want to gag contrary voices. But, in this case, this time line is not sufficient for this legislation. It is not a simple bill. It is a substantial change to workers compensation. It will have broad effect on the workers who are affected—those firefighters whom we on this side of the House support and agitated and argued for.

The motion should be opposed. It is sought to ram through a piece of legislation without proper consideration. Of course, the government's legislation may in fact impact on what is proposed. The committee needs to be given sufficient time. The motion should not be passed by the parliament.


 **Mr RICKUSS** (Lockyer—LNP) (4.26 pm): I understand there is a lack of parliamentary skill and knowledge on that side of the House. What they do not seem to understand is how the system works. There is a total lack of understanding about the time lines and how committees work. This proposed six-week time line is quite long when we compare the time lines for some of the bills that are before the House at the moment. Seventeen days for one bill was mentioned before.

I realise the member for Ferny Grove is new to this place and a bit green, but he can actually ask for an extension if he feels that the time line is too short. I realise that the Leader of the House has not been here before under this system.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. I think you would find that the member for Lockyer should at least withdraw but possibly correct the record because he has misled the House.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr RICKUSS: The previous statements by the health minister were totally fallacious. The Narangba fires, which were in the seat of the member for Kallangur, were a disaster for firefighters. They are the blokes that we want to save. That is why this bill has been brought before the House and that is why the time line is appropriate. Six weeks is more than appropriate. I fully support the motion.

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (4.28 pm): I think in all of the debate that we have had so far on this bill, that of it that has been relevant at least, we have probably lost the point in terms of the report-back date and the point of the committees. The member for Greenslopes, not Greenslopes—

Mr Bleijie: Woodridge now.

Mr NICHOLLS: Woodridge—he has jumped around—was talking about what he thought might be motives and suspicions of the member for Kawana, of course applying his own standard. But the reality is that committees are not about the government and committees are not about the opposition. Committees are about the opportunity for members of the public to make a contribution to the debate about bills before the House. That is exactly what they were for.

The firefighters union had reached agreement on these very substantial matters with the previous LNP government. It was an open agreement, publicly displayed and announced by the then premier and the then minister. To argue that the union has no knowledge of these matters and is coming to them fresh without any knowledge is to argue that the sun does not rise in the east. That is the argument that is being put forward by those opposite on the government side.


Quite clearly, the union and their members regarded this as a matter of complete and utter significance. That is why they entered into long and fruitful negotiations that ended up in the agreement that was reached. This legislation implements that agreement. It astounds me that anyone on the government side would seek to slow down the process of appropriately protecting firefighters for doing their job and providing them with the protections that the member for Kawana's bill seeks to bring forward. Who knows when the next firefighter might succumb to the terrible disease of cancer that their work brings them into contact with? Yet those opposite seek to delay a remedy to provide them with protection on that basis. For that reason—


Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr Hinchliffe interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Lockyer and Leader of the House, you have both had an opportunity to make your contribution.

Mr NICHOLLS: Here we clearly have a piece of legislation that is worthy, a concept that is worthy and, according to those opposite in government, they say they support but they want to delay—a piece of legislation that brings to fruition many months worth of negotiations and agreement with the firefighters union that they are not unaware of, that they know the details of and such legislation has been passed in other jurisdictions throughout Australia. Yet the government is seeking to delay a report-back date. We have a competent committee. We have 17 working days. We have hardworking staff. We have a union that wants to see it happen. We have an opposition that wants to see it happen. This motion to bring the return date forward ought to be supported by the House in the interests of the firefighters.

 **Mr KRAUSE** (Beaudesert—LNP) (4.32 pm): I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Kawana. I represent the electorate of Beaudesert, as you know, Mr Speaker, and last year one of my constituents succumbed to an asbestos related disease. It was partly as a result of my representations, I believe, that the former government brought about the change in policy that is sought to be implemented through this bill. My constituent who sadly passed away did not have the benefit of presumptive legislation, and I am quite sure that he and his family who survive him would like to see the initiative in this bill implemented by this House without any further delay.

 **Mr FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (4.33 pm): As chair of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, I stand to oppose this motion. I stand to oppose the motion on this basis. Not only was the member for Beaudesert at the private meeting this morning where we discussed a number of factors, and the committee meets on a regular basis during sitting weeks; but we actually agreed—and I will not go to the length of saying that we were held at ransom but it was put to the committee to consider a private member's bill that was put forward by the member for Mansfield previously where at a previous meeting the committee had initially decided to put a stay on that particular bill only on the basis of consideration of looking at other possible amendments to that bill or even possibly looking at a subsequent bill or a similar bill related to that matter.

Mr Rickuss: You are talking about a private discussion.

Mr FURNER: I beg your pardon?

Mr SPEAKER: Through the chair please, member.


Mr FURNER: It was not a private discussion. It was recorded in the minutes and they are available on the public register. This morning in our meeting we decided to succumb to the wishes of those opposite and accept a schedule in respect of dealing with the private member's bill that has been put forward by the member for Mansfield.

In addition to that, we have government business and we dealt with that as well. On that basis, we have a government bill that has to be dealt with and considered by the committee. Therefore, we have two bills before the committee to deal with by the next sitting week or slightly after the next sitting week. So to suggest that the committee has all the time on earth to deal with this private member's bill that has been sprung on us today is a complete fallacy, Mr Speaker. I put it to you that, when these types of private member's bills are considered and tabled, more time needs to be considered in respect of the deliberations and also the consideration of unions like the United Firefighters Union, which I know quite well.

I know for a fact that there was a Commonwealth bill that was put through the Senate on this particular matter, and it might be opportunistic that the committee considers those sorts of measures as well rather than looking at a similar state bill on this particular matter. We on this side of the chamber have a strong connection with and belief in caring for the safety of our firefighters. That might not be the case on the other side. We know how much the United Firefighters Union campaigned against those opposite during the by-election in Redcliffe.

Mr Dick: And they demonised them for two days.

Mr FURNER: They called them actors. It is complete folly to come in here today and suggest that the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee has time to deal with another bill in respect of its workload. That is why I stand today to condemn this motion.

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (4.36 pm): I have introduced a bill that the police minister only a couple of weeks ago—

Mr Dick interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, please, I ask you to cease your interjecting. The member for Kawana has the call.

Mr BLEIJIE:—said that she was drafting laws. They wanted to do exactly the same thing. I think the health minister has made the point about why they want to delay protection for firefighters, and that is so they can hurry up and get their bill in so ours does not mean anything. That is the point the health minister was making. This should be a bipartisan issue where a private member's bill in a hung parliament can come before the House. In talking about the motion before the House, there is a five- to six-week period for the committee to look at this—

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Lockyer and I think it is the member for Brisbane Central, please stop your interjecting. I am trying to hear the member for Kawana.

Mr BLEIJIE: I have allowed a five- to six-week period for the committee to look at this bill. I do not think firefighters can wait any longer. They want the bill. I note in the last 30 seconds the Rural Fire Brigades Association has just released a media release to its 30,000 members across the state urging parliament to pass the bill. I am not saying that we should pass it today; I am saying that we should let parliament look at it for the next six weeks. I think that is ample time for the government to have a look at the bill and for the committee to have a look at the bill.

I note that the chair of the committee was saying just now that the committee has two bills before it and they could not possibly get to this third bill within six weeks.

Mr Langbroek: He has come from the Senate.

Mr BLEIJIE: Perhaps they could not do that in the Senate, but here the Queensland parliament works a bit faster. I remember when I was the Attorney between 2012 and 2015. I think the legal affairs committee had some 15 to 20 bills before them at any given time and they were never prevented from producing good reports, decent reports, after having fully looked at the bills—50 bills in 2½ years. I hope the crossbench members of the parliament will note the six-week time frame for this very important bill, which I acknowledge has support from both sides—both parties announced it. We were the ones who signed the accord with the firefighters union, but we have also in this bill made the protection for rural fires better. They cannot wait any longer.

As the honourable shadow infrastructure and planning minister said, how long do they have to wait? A firefighter may contract one of the 12 specified cancers in a week or two and they should have protection as soon as possible. This House has an opportunity to show the real bipartisanship

that can be achieved in a hung parliament. I ask all members, particularly the crossbenchers, to look at 13 July before we come back to the House. It is only a reporting date. It does not mean that the House debates the laws by that date. It is three months after that. The six-month period that members opposite go on about is a maximum period. The House can look at it before six months.

Mr Hinchliffe: The way to deal with it is by the Committee of the Legislative Assembly. That is the bipartisan way to do it.

Mr BLEIJIE: The Committee of the Legislative Assembly answers to this House. This is a private member's bill, and as a member of parliament I have moved a motion before the House for the House to deal with. I am saying that the committee only has to produce a report by 13 July and then the House will deal with it in the normal set of circumstances. But at least get the investigations underway and the hearings underway so firefighters can have a voice in the next six weeks. Let us not delay this until the end of the year like other bills. I have full confidence that committee members will be able to attend to this in six weeks time. I implore members of the government to support 13 July as the reporting date. I implore the crossbenchers to support the reporting date of 13 July. It is a six-week period, which is sufficient to deal with such an important matter for this hung parliament.

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

AYES, 42:

LNP, 42—Barton, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Costigan, Cramp, Crandon, Cripps, Davis, Dickson, Elmes, Emerson, Frecklington, Hart, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Mander, McArdle, McEachan, McVeigh, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, Perrett, Powell, Rickuss, Robinson, Rowan, Seeney, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Walker, Watts, Weir.

NOES, 44:


ALP, 43—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Byrne, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Donaldson, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Lauga, Linard, Lynham, Madden, Miles, Miller, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Pitt, Power, Pyne, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Stewart, Trad, Whiting, Williams.

INDEPENDENT, 1—Gordon.

Resolved in the negative.

SUSTAINABLE PORTS DEVELOPMENT BILL

Introduction

 **Hon. AJ LYNHAM** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (4.46 pm): I present a bill for an act to provide for the protection of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area through managing port related development in and adjacent to the area, and to amend this act, the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994 and the legislation mentioned in schedule 2 for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Sustainable Ports Development Bill 2015 [\[518\]](#).

Tabled paper: Sustainable Ports Development Bill 2015, explanatory notes [\[519\]](#).

I am pleased to introduce the Sustainable Ports Development Bill 2015. This is my first bill introduced to the House. The bill actions key port related Queensland government commitments under the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan. Its purpose is to protect the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area by managing port related development. Port development in and adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area will be managed sustainably.

Under this proposed legislation, the Queensland government will ban sea based disposal of any port related capital dredged material in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area. Along the Great Barrier Reef coast, port related capital dredging will be restricted to within the long-established port limits of the regional ports of Gladstone, Hay Point-Mackay, Abbot Point and Townsville. These are priority ports operating in and adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area. Where expansion is necessary within these four priority ports, the bill mandates the beneficial reuse of dredged material. If beneficial re-use is not possible, the bill mandates disposal on land only where it is environmentally safe to do so. These provisions match the government's election commitments.

Through the bill, port development will be concentrated in these four priority ports and be restricted to within long-established port limits. There will be no new Great Barrier Reef ports. We can confirm to UNESCO that we are protecting greenfield areas from the impacts of port development.

The development of port facilities will not be permitted in the state controlled Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park. The port of Rockhampton, also known as Port Alma, is not a priority port. We will protect the Fitzroy Delta, Keppel Bay and North Curtis, as we have promised. These areas will not be included in the master planning area for the Gladstone priority port.

For the first time in Queensland, the bill will legislate for long-term port master planning. Mandatory port master planning at four priority ports will ensure sustainable growth. The priority ports are key conduits for a wide range of major industries that are essential to the Queensland economy and our way of life. These ports are major economic drivers for Queensland. Sustainable development of these ports is crucial if we are to meet our commitment to grow the Queensland economy, including our regional economies, and jobs. This bill is a critical step forward to support sustainable port development and sends a strong message about the government's commitment to better manage the impacts of this development on the environment.

The bill will provide protection of the Great Barrier Reef in a highly considered way. Government led master planning will maintain the roles of experienced planning authorities. It will, however, ensure that in future development decisions reflect a coordinated approach to planning. It acknowledges the crucial relationship of ports with supply chains, with a region, with a community and, most importantly, with a sensitive ecosystem as well as a port network. It will bring together important local issues such as the regional economy and job creation, the protection of sensitive environments, and the preservation of community values through an inclusive and well-considered port vision. Port master planning will enable coordinated planning of land and marine areas by identifying port state interests. State interests may be economic, community or environmental interests which may be affected by existing uses of the port and future development of the port. A critical outcome of port master planning is a port overlay which will be a regulatory tool to implement the state's interests in a master planned area. Through the port overlay the government will ensure that port state interests will be considered in all planning decisions made in a master planned area. While planning instruments must in time reflect the requirements of the port overlay, it is essential to note that existing planning entities will retain autonomous decision-making power.

Under this bill, Queensland will lead the way on environmental protection and require planning entities to agree on stated objectives and management measures for key environmental values. Environmental and community values beyond the traditional port boundary, particularly marine areas, will be identified and managed through master planning. Master planning will ensure that the outstanding universal value of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area is an intrinsic consideration of port development, management, governance and planning at the priority ports.

The Queensland government will facilitate development to optimise the use of existing infrastructure but only where it is in line with the principles of ecologically sustainable development. Importantly, port master planning will be carried out in consultation with stakeholders and the wider community. The bill will require mandatory public consultation before port master plans are finalised. Queenslanders will have a voice in the planning process of major ports operating in and adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area.

The Sustainable Ports Development Bill 2015 is only the beginning of the Queensland government's implementation of the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan commitments. It is designed to give effect to our commitments on port development. There are a number of other pieces of legislation and mechanisms that the government will use to meet our other reef promises. This bill is an integral part of demonstrating Queensland's commitment to protecting and managing the reef. Not only will it improve port planning practices in Queensland; most importantly, it will set a new national standard in sustainable port development reflecting international best practice and the recommendation of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Hon. AJ LYNHAM (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (4.54 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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


Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee.

Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date

 **Hon. AJ LYNHAM** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (4.54 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—


That under the provisions of standing order 136 the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee report to the House on the Sustainable Ports Development Bill by 1 September 2015.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

HOLIDAYS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (4.55 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Holidays Act 1983 and the Industrial Relations Act 1999 to restore the days on which public holidays are to be observed for Labour Day and the Birthday of the Sovereign, and to amend the Adult Proof of Age Card Act 2008, the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, the Tow Truck Act 1973, the Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994, the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act 1994, the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 and the Transport Planning and Coordination Act 1994 for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Finance and Administration Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 [\[520\]](#).

Tabled paper: Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015, explanatory notes [\[521\]](#).

I present and table the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 to amend the Holidays Act 1983 and the Industrial Relations Act 1999 to restore the days on which public holidays are to be observed for Labour Day and the Queen's birthday. The bill also amends the Transport Planning and Coordination Act 1994 for the purposes of achieving operational and financial efficiencies for government and improving the customer experience in obtaining high-risk work licences issued by the Office of Fair and Safe Work Queensland.

The Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 will, commencing in 2016, return the Labour Day public holiday from the first Monday in October to its rightful place on the first Monday in May and move the Queen's Birthday public holiday from the second Monday in June to the first Monday in October. Without consultation or without taking it to an election, the former Newman LNP government shamelessly ruined over 100 years of Queensland tradition by moving the public holiday for Labour Day from May to October. Due to changes made to public holidays by the then LNP government, it has been necessary to reconsider the current arrangements in respect of these public holidays and we are confident the amendments finally get the balance of public holidays right.

In 2013, the then LNP government moved the Labour Day public holiday from the first Monday in May, where it had been observed since 1891, to the first Monday in October and moved the Queen's Birthday public holiday back to the second Monday in June. The observance of Labour Day in May gives proper recognition to the struggles and achievements of the labour movement on a date of true significance. Entitlements such as the eight-hour day, collective bargaining, fair and safe working conditions and minimum wages would not exist in modern society without the labour movement.

The Labour Day public holiday long weekend in May has also been significant for cultural and winter sport events. For example, that May long weekend has developed into a major community event surrounding the Barcaldine Labour Day March. Barcaldine was the scene for the first Labour Day procession on 1 May 1891 and commemorative events associated with each year's procession created a major tourist event that brings tourist dollars to the town. Despite protests from the Barcaldine Regional Council that moving the public holiday to October would make it too hot for the community to enjoy festivities, the former LNP government still moved the Labour Day public holiday from May to October.

In 2012, the then Labor government moved the Queen's Birthday public holiday from the second Monday in June to the first Monday in October. This move responded to preferences expressed by the Queensland community in a review of public holiday arrangements—that was after consultation. The movement of the Labour Day and Queen's Birthday public holidays as proposed by this bill also spreads public holidays across the calendar year similar to other states and territories. Western Australia, New South Wales, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory all observe a public holiday in the second half of the year around October.

The proposed amendments, however, do not affect public holidays in 2015. Making them effective from 2016 delivers certainty and stability by giving prior notice to Queenslanders, including the business community, of the changes and no extra costs from additional 2015 public holidays as part of a transition to the new arrangements.

This bill also amends various transport legislation within the portfolio of the Deputy Premier to give effect to an online application service for high-risk work licences issued by the Office of Fair and Safe Work Queensland under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011. There are approximately 260,000 high-risk work licence holders currently in Queensland and approximately 30,000 applications for high-risk work licences are made each year to authorise operators of high-risk equipment such as cranes, forklifts and the erection of scaffolding.

The proposed amendments will enable the Office of Fair and Safe Work Queensland to use digital photographs and digitised signatures that have been captured and stored by the Department of Transport and Main Roads to issue a high-risk work licence. If a worker already has a driver licence, adult proof of age card or other licence issued by the Department of Transport and Main Roads, they will be able to apply for or renew their high-risk work licence online at any time and from any location, whether in Birdsville or Brisbane, without needing to take a passport photo and attend an Australia Post outlet to lodge their application. Similarly, the bill will allow image sets used in a high-risk work licence application to be used to issue a transport licence or authority in future, such as renewal of the person's driver licence. The amendments also provide flexibility for other types of government licences to use the Department of Transport and Main Roads's bank of digital image sets in future if so desired. The bill also simplifies transport legislation by consolidating the existing provisions about digital photos and digitised signatures contained in five different transport acts into the Transport Planning and Coordination Act 1994.

This bill is the product of effective collaboration between two agencies and will improve the delivery of government services to customers across Queensland. The proposed amendments will allow existing government service delivery channels and technology to be used more effectively, removing duplication, reducing costs and improving the customer experience for a large number of workers to obtain the licences they need for work, particularly for those living in rural or regional areas.

With this bill, we are honouring the real Labour Day and ensuring that the public holiday commemorates the hard fought advancements of the labour movement and that it is held on its rightful place on our calendar, in May.

First Reading

Hon. CW PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (5.01 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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


Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to the Finance and Administration Committee

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Finance and Administration Committee.

Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (5.02 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That under the provisions of standing order 136 the Finance and Administration Committee report to the House on the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill by 10 August 2015.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.


Motion agreed to.

EXHIBITED ANIMALS BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 21 May (see p. 859), on motion of Mr Byrne—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (5.02 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Exhibited Animals Bill 2015. Queensland is in the enviable position of having a profitable animal exhibition industry that makes a significant direct contribution in the order of \$100 million annually to our economy and an equal indirect contribution to our reputation as a tourist destination. Employing 1,000 Queenslanders, our zoos, theme and wildlife parks, aquaria, mobile wildlife demonstrators, circuses and magicians bring joy and wonder to many and invaluable opportunities to learn about and interact with these brilliant and engaging animals under controlled circumstances.

As we have already heard in the House, the bill will consolidate and streamline regulation of the exhibited animals industry, which is currently spread across four acts: the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002, the Fisheries Act 1994, the Nature Conservation Act 1992 and the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001. It will also provide for exhibiting and dealing with exhibited animals while ensuring that associated animal welfare, biosecurity and safety risks are prevented or minimised. Currently, there are six overlapping and inconsistent licensing frameworks under the aforementioned legislation. They have inconsistent licensing requirements, fees and procedures which cause confusion, impose additional compliance burdens and frustrate innovation within the industry. The bill will reduce the regulatory burden on exhibitors by introducing a new regulatory and licensing framework specifically for the animal exhibition industry. A single licensing scheme under a single act will replace the six fragmented schemes currently in operation.

The keeping and exhibiting of animals involves inherent risk from the animals to their handlers, the viewing public and to the community generally. Equally, the keeping and exhibiting of animals involves potential risks to animal welfare and biosecurity. Given the nature of many of the animals contained in such exhibits, including tigers, crocodiles and my personal favourite, venomous snakes, the community has a right to expect that those involved in exhibiting or dealing with an exhibited animal will be required to take reasonable and practical steps to prevent or minimise the inherent risks associated with exhibiting and dealing with these animals.

The bill will ensure more comprehensive and consistent management of animal welfare, biosecurity and safety risks posed by the industry by imposing a general obligation on persons exhibiting and dealing with exhibited animals to prevent or minimise such risks. This obligation will apply consistently to all animal exhibits, including those that do not need a licence, and will address gaps in risk coverage without imposing unjustified licensing requirements on all exhibitors. Under the bill, animal exhibits will be licensed in response to a management plan prepared by the applicant explaining how they would minimise the relevant risks and relevant adverse effects and, in so doing, I believe will better meet community expectations for risk management. This risk based approach will be further complemented and supported by regular inspection and monitoring.

I note from the minister's introductory speech that providing for risk based licensing will allow a greater range of species to be exhibited in Queensland as long as the risks are effectively managed. Minister, I am unsure whether Patagonian mara or capybara have me personally excited, but the news that veiled chameleons that bear a strong resemblance to much loved Disney character Pascal from *Tangled*, and meerkats of the irreverent King Julien, the meerkat variety from the movie *Madagascar*, may be coming to a zoo near us will earn you serious street cred with my two young

boys. Allowing exhibitors to keep almost any animal for any type of exhibition, provided they can manage the risks, will mean opportunities for business to exhibit a greater range of species in Queensland and allow them the flexibility they need to grow their economy.


I certainly appreciate the impact and excitement that can be generated by a new exhibit. I note from the committee's report and overview of the sector that, as at August 2012, there were 135 exhibitors licensed in Queensland, providing a wide range of exhibits to cater for preferences of every kind. Some like the cute ones—and it is hard to go past the quintessential Australian koala and native marsupials. For others, it is the majestic mammals of the sea, dolphins and whales. Of course, it would be remiss of me not to mention Sea World, on our very own doorstep, which is renowned for combining the exhibition of animals with the conservation of the same through education and the rescue and rehabilitation of sick, injured or orphaned wildlife. For others, the big cats are always a significant drawcard.

For me it is saltwater crocs and hippos. Perhaps it was spending the first five years of my life in the Northern Territory or regular holidays spent with my mother's family, who hail from Cairns, that inspired my love of salties. The hippo—I am not so sure; I think it was simply love at first sight. When Melbourne Zoo some years ago exhibited a baby hippo, I was smitten. I find it hard to believe that with such adorable eyes, big round bodies and tiny ears on their big oily heads, words such as 'deadly', 'catastrophic' and 'life-ending injury' are used to describe the consequences of interactions between these animals and humans in uncontrolled environments. However, I am more than happy to trust the experts on this point and am grateful to have the opportunity that places such as Australia Zoo provide to see these animals in as natural an environment as possible to appreciate their virtues, learn about them and live to tell the tale.

To return to my original point, allowing exhibitors to keep almost any animal for any type of exhibition, provided they can manage the risks, will allow them the flexibility they need to grow the economy and attract visitors to our Queensland exhibits. Another feature of the bill is the introduction of uniform minimum exhibition requirements. Importantly, if a species cannot be kept by other Queenslanders for private recreation, then under the bill it will need to be exhibited. This will deter private collectors operating under the guise of keeping for exhibition, among other benefits, and will assist in containing the demand for animals that could trigger illegal take from the wild. Growing up, my father bred local parrots and exotic parrots from India, Burma and Afghanistan. He had a deep respect for sustainable breeding and respect for licensing and registration schemes aimed at protecting and curtailing demand for animals that could trigger illegal take from the wild, which has contributed to the listing of treasures such as the yellow-tailed black cockatoo on our threatened list. The bill will ensure that animals kept under an exhibition licence are actually exhibited, rather than being kept for private recreation.

In summary, I support the bill before the House because I believe that it achieves the desired objectives of providing for exhibiting and dealing with exhibited animals, while ensuring the relevant risks and relevant adverse effects associated with such activities are prevented or minimised. Importantly, I believe it does so while reducing the regulatory burden on exhibitors by introducing a single licensing scheme under a single act, creating new opportunities for exhibitors to exhibit a greater range of species provided the risks can be minimised.

Animal exhibitors are a popular form of cultural entertainment, but in my opinion the greater value lies in the capacity to educate, engage and foster a love of, and respect for, animals and animal conservation. I read the committee's report with interest and found the statistics contained in the report regarding Queensland's contribution to overall zoo visitation noteworthy, with Queensland accounting for five million of the 14 million visits each year to Australian zoos. With a four-year-old and an 18-month-old at home, I have no doubt that I will be making many and repeated contributions to these figures over the coming years. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (5.10 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Exhibited Animals Bill 2015. I support the objectives of this bill, which streamlines the regulatory framework for exhibiting and dealing with exhibited animals; importantly, it ensures animal welfare. That is something that this government takes very seriously, as we saw from the Premier's announcement yesterday in our response to the recent greyhound inquiry. This bill also manages biosecurity and safety risks, which is another matter that we take very seriously. Minister Byrne is to be commended for his actions in relation to the North Queensland banana industry.

For many city kids, zoos and aquaria are their first experience of non-domestic animals which can initiate a lifetime of interest in nature. The world can, and does, change fast. In my own childhood I had frequent opportunities to see and interact with animals. Visits to farms, growing up in Charters

Towers and on Magnetic Island and numerous camping trips all provided opportunities to interact with animals, both domestic such as cattle and horses, but also with native animals such as kangaroos, echidnas, goannas and birds of all kinds. I seldom recall visiting a zoo or a circus, and a trip to Sea World would have been an unthought-of of luxury, but the circuses at the Mount Gravatt showground and Sea World are the places where my own kids have experienced animals for the first time. With the passing of this bill it will be easier for exhibitors to give kids these experiences.

This bill will simplify the processes for exhibitors with many flow-on benefits. This bill replaces six licensing schemes and parts of four acts with a single licensing scheme under a single act. Simplifying the licensing system is a big win for exhibitors. There are currently several licensing systems with different application procedures, fees and conditions. Some exhibitors require numerous licences for the one show. All of this will be a thing of the past under this bill.

In addition to simplifying the licensing scheme, the length of time will be increased from two years in some cases to a standard three years, reducing application times and complexity for exhibitors. I am proud to be part of a Palaszczuk Labor government that has jobs as its No. 1 priority. This bill will clear the way for growth in an industry that already contributes over \$100 million to our economy and employs over 1,000 people. Hopefully some of these businesses will take advantage of the 25 per cent payroll rebate and employ some apprentices or trainees. Growth in this industry means more jobs, and this is our government's No. 1 priority.


This industry supports not just the businesses that exhibit animals; it supports tourism based businesses, as many tourists are drawn from overseas and domestically within Australia to the businesses that exhibit animals. Some businesses have become iconic in the world, with businesses such as Australia Zoo being a household name in Asia, Europe and the United States. There is no doubt that tourism based businesses have struggled over the past few years. Our government is serious about supporting tourism in any way that we can.

Our economy is also gaining much from locally based film production. This bill will make it easier for film production businesses to choose Queensland as a location for their job-creating projects. This bill does two important things: first, it puts animal welfare at the front and centre of importance. This government takes animal welfare seriously, as do the vast majority of people who live in the electorate of Greenslopes. I would not support this bill unless it rigorously protected animal welfare. Secondly, it ensures community safety. It will ensure that exhibitors assess and manage risks to patrons who are present when exhibiting some animals. It will also protect our environment by making sure that animals that have a high potential to become pests if released in Australia are managed in a way that will not allow this to happen. Growing up in Townsville I was very familiar with our many extra family pets: the cane toads. Sadly, I now find these pests in my Greenslopes backyard. We do not need a repeat of this situation, and this bill will make sure that this does not happen. Exhibitors will be required to have management plans in place to minimise the risk of exhibited animals escaping to become pests. This will be monitored by inspectors.

There are also more immediate risks posed to the public from exhibited animals that escape, with real danger to spectators if some animals escape. This bill requires exhibitors to have a plan in place to minimise risks, and it backs this up with regular monitoring by inspectors. Some inspections will incur a fee which will incentivise compliance, because the frequency of visits and associated costs will be directly related to the record of compliance.

I would like to thank the committee for its hard work on this bill and for streamlining the many bills into one. I would also like to thank those who took the time to contribute. This is clearly an industry that I was not familiar with, but one that has a great potential to create employment in Queensland if we get it right.

Finally, I support this bill for two further reasons: the bill streamlines regulations in a way that maintains a regulatory framework that protects the animals, the business, the community and our environment. This will clearly be beneficial for businesses in this industry. This bill has involved extensive consultation with key stakeholders. Anything involving animal welfare is, rightly, a highly contested area of policy debate; however, following through on our government's commitment to listen and consult, this bill has dealt with a complex and difficult issue in a manner that has arrived at good outcomes for animals, for exhibitors, for businesses, for the community and for the environment. I commend this bill to the House.

 **Hon. WS BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Sport and Racing) (5.18 pm), in reply: I thank the honourable members who have spoken in support of this bill. In particular, I warmly welcome what appears to be bipartisan support for the bill and for the amendments that I propose to move when it is considered in detail.

This bill is based on a bill that was introduced to the House by my predecessor, the member for Toowoomba South, the Hon. John McVeigh, in 2014; however, it incorporates improvements. In the very short period between the appointment of the ministry this year and the introduction of the bill in the first sitting week of this parliament, the Palaszczuk government reviewed all of the feedback that had been provided on the earlier bill and made some changes to it. We increased the maximum term for an interstate exhibitor's permit and special exhibition approval from six months to 12 months. We also addressed discrepancies and the many minor concerns raised by industry and made some significant changes to terminology in the bill to make it easier to follow. The bill that is before the House today is all the better for the long time it has been in development. It will streamline regulation of animal exhibits; repeal provisions regulating exhibition which are currently spread across several acts; and create a single, coherent framework for regulating the exhibited animals industry.

I thank the Agriculture and Environment Committee for its report on the bill tabled on 8 May this year. This has led to further improvements to the bill that I will propose when it is considered in detail. In particular, I acknowledge those members of the committee who spoke on 21 May in support of the bill: the member for Ipswich, who chaired the committee; the member for Burnett, the deputy chair of the committee—I thank him for acknowledging the government responses to the committee's recommendations and acknowledge his comments that the committee accepted that category C animals, that is, most exotic mammals, amphibians and reptiles, present greater risks and that the approach to managing those risks was based on internationally recognised control principles; the member for Mackay; the member for Logan; and the member for Hervey Bay. I also acknowledge the contributions today of the members for Nudgee and Greenslopes.

The government proposes to act on each of the committee's recommendations. I have already indicated that I propose to move amendments that will allow some category C species to be prescribed by regulation if there is a low risk of the species becoming established here and its establishment would pose no more than a moderate risk of adverse effects. These prescribed species would not need to be based in a fixed exhibit; nor would there be restrictions on the length of exhibit that could be counted against the minimum exhibition requirement for these species. I have also indicated that I intend to move amendments in response to the committee's report that would reduce by one-third the minimum number of hours that category C animals must be exhibited.

I wish to acknowledge the concerns raised by some honourable members of this House during the debate about the potential burden on exhibitors of preparing management plans. The concern is simply that when existing exhibitors need to replace their current licence with a licence under the bill they may have a large number of management plans to prepare, including for species that some Queenslanders keep as pets under the recreational wildlife licence. The committee gave close consideration to this issue and encouraged my department to give a proportional licensing requirement further consideration. The bill already provides for the management plan to be proportionate to the risk. Applicants only need to detail the significant risks and impacts and how these will be addressed or mitigated. Thus the management plan for, as I said, a hopping mouse might be very short while one for a tiger would be quite extensive.

The management plan provides an opportunity for an exhibitor to propose how they will manage the risks associated with their activities, rather than have the government decide this. The management plan informs and supplements the licence. It also forms many of the conditions of the licence. For these reasons, it would be very difficult for a licensing scheme under the bill to operate if some exhibitors had no management plan. Exhibition and dealing with a large number of animals kept as pets under a recreational wildlife licence would pose significant risks. These species include venomous snakes such as taipans.

I want to see the cost of developing management plans reduced as far as possible. I have asked my department to develop examples of management plans. I have also announced, in the government's response to the committee report, that my department will develop template management plans that an exhibitor can choose to adopt for commonly kept species if it suits their circumstances. I acknowledge that, despite these measures, the development of management plans will impose some costs on existing exhibitors, but I am satisfied that the one-off costs in developing management plans for their existing species will be a small proportion of the operating costs of exhibitors. Those who have to prepare the most plans will be the large exhibitors, who are in the best position to bear these costs.

I also wish to address concerns raised by honourable members, including the members for Nanango and Glass House, about the influence of animal rights groups on regulation of the industry. There are valid reasons for ensuring that consultation on regulation of the exhibited animals industry extends wider than the exhibited animals industry. Community groups, including animal welfare and animal rights groups, may be able to highlight aspects of public interest that should inform decisions so it would be wrong to exclude them from comment. However, it should be noted that successive Queensland governments have taken an animal welfare rather than an animal rights stance. The Animal Care and Protection Act, which is the principal piece of legislation regulating animal welfare in Queensland, is specifically directed at balancing a range of interests including those of people whose livelihood depends on animals. This contrasts with the animal rights position that animals should not be used or regarded as property and animal rights should be afforded the same consideration as the similar interests of humans. If concerns were raised by a community group, the minister would consider the appropriate balance between any public interests expressed by those groups and the interests of exhibitors.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the significant contribution that many exhibitors and other stakeholders have made during the development of this bill. Submissions were made to the Agriculture and Environment Committee—or the former agriculture, resources and environment committee—by a large number of individuals and organisations. I cannot mention them all here, but I want to highlight a few of them: the Zoo and Aquarium Association, Queensland branch; Dreamworld; Mr Michael O'Brien for the Cairns Tropical Zoo; Ms Kelsey Engle for Australia Zoo; RSPCA Queensland; Ms Jackie Hasling for Hands on Wildlife; the Queensland Native Fauna Advisory Group; Mr Ben Bawden for Cockatoo Chaos; Mr Steve Robinson for the Darling Downs Zoo; and, on behalf of circuses, Mr Rob Joyes for Wildlife Kingdom, Eden Bros' Good Time Circus and Janlin Circus.

I thank those many others who made submissions to the committee, provided feedback in response to the regulatory impact statement, attended workshops or provided valuable input into the development of the bill. Each and every person who has provided feedback during development of the bill should feel rightly proud of the contribution they have made, and I encourage them to play an equally active role during the development of the regulations. 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 282—



Mr BYRNE (5.28 pm): I seek leave to move amendments en bloc.

Leave granted.

Mr BYRNE: I move the following amendments—

1 Clause 31 (Meaning of *special exhibition approval*)

Page 30, line 27, 'category C'—

omit, insert—

category C2

2 Clause 34 (Meaning of *authorised animal (category B)*)

Page 32, lines 17 to 19—

omit, insert—

(x) wombat (Family Vombatidae); or

3 Clause 35 (Meaning of *authorised animal (category C)*)

Page 32, line 22—

omit, insert—

35 Meaning of *authorised animal (category C)*, *authorised animal (category C1)* and *authorised animal (category C2)*

4 Clause 35 (Meaning of *authorised animal (category C)*)

Page 32, line 23, 'An'—

omit, insert—

(1) An

5 Clause 35 (Meaning of *authorised animal (category C)*)

Page 32, after line 25—

insert—

- (2) An ***authorised animal (category C1)*** is an authorised animal (category C) of a species prescribed by regulation.
- (3) An ***authorised animal (category C2)*** is an authorised animal (category C) other than an authorised animal (category C1).
- (4) The Minister may recommend to the Governor in Council the making of a regulation under subsection (2) only if the Minister is satisfied—
- (a) the escape of animals of that species in Australia would pose no more than a low risk of the species becoming established—
- (i) for a species the Minister believes is established in Australia but outside the State and whose eradication is not technically feasible—in the State; or
- (ii) otherwise—anywhere in Australia; and
- (b) the establishment of animals of that species in Australia poses or would pose no more than a moderate risk of an adverse effect on any of the following matters (the ***relevant considerations***)—
- (i) the health, safety or wellbeing of a person;
- (ii) social amenity, the economy or the environment.
- (5) For subsection (4)(a) and (b), in assessing the extent of the risk of a species becoming established and the risk posed by the establishment of the species, the Minister—
- (a) must have regard to any relevant scientific assessment of—
- (i) the risk of animals that are prohibited matter becoming established in the State or elsewhere in Australia if they were to escape; and
- (ii) the risk of an adverse effect on the relevant considerations posed, or that would be posed, by the establishment in Australia of animals that are prohibited matter; and
- (b) must consult with relevant entities.
- (6) However, a failure to consult under subsection (5)(b) does not affect the validity of a decision under subsection (4)(a) or (b).
- (7) In this section—
- escape*** includes release.
- relevant entities*** means entities the Minister considers have an interest in—
- (a) preventing the establishment within Australia of animals that are prohibited matter; or
- (b) exhibiting animals that are prohibited matter.

6 Clause 37 (Meaning of *management plan*)

Page 33, line 33, 'risks'—

omit, insert—

significant relevant risks and relevant adverse effects

7 Clause 37 (Meaning of *management plan*)

Page 35, line 5, 'category C'—

omit, insert—

category C2

8 Clause 65 (Additional content for exhibition licence)

Page 51, line 25, 'C'—

omit, insert—

C2)

9 Clause 73 (Exhibiting authorised animal (category C))

Page 56, line 3, 'category C'—

omit, insert—

category C2

10 Clause 73 (Exhibiting authorised animal (category C))

Page 56, line 5, 'category C'—

omit, insert—

category C2

- 11 **Clause 76 (Minimum exhibition period for authorised animal (category C))**
Page 58, line 12, '75'—
omit, insert—
50
- 12 **Clause 76 (Minimum exhibition period for authorised animal (category C))**
Page 58, line 17, '900'—
omit, insert—
600
- 13 **Clause 76 (Minimum exhibition period for authorised animal (category C))**
Page 58, line 23, '75'—
omit, insert—
50
- 14 **Clause 76 (Minimum exhibition period for authorised animal (category C))**
Page 58, line 29, '450 hours averaging 75'—
omit, insert—
300 hours averaging 50
- 15 **Clause 76 (Minimum exhibition period for authorised animal (category C))**
Page 58, line 31, 'animal'—
omit, insert—
authorised animal (category C2)
- 16 **Clause 77 (Conditions of authority decided by the chief executive)**
Page 60, line 11, 'Example'—
omit, insert—
Examples
- 17 **Clause 77 (Conditions of authority decided by the chief executive)**
Page 60, after line 11—
insert—
1 An eastern grey kangaroo that is an authorised animal under an exhibition licence requires prolonged training to prepare it for filming for a television production. The licence is amended to include a condition allowing the holder to train the animal for 6 months without being required to comply with the mandatory condition under section 75.
- 18 **Clause 77 (Conditions of authority decided by the chief executive)**
Page 60, line 12, 'An'—
omit, insert—
2 An
- 19 **Clause 94 (Application to amend authority)**
Page 71, line 10, 'category C'—
omit, insert—
category C2
- 20 **Clause 131 (Definition for pt 1)**
Page 90, line 18, 'category C'—
omit, insert—
category C2
- 21 **Clause 238 (Recovery of costs of investigation)**
Page 155, line 3, 'a court convicts a person'—
omit, insert—
a person is convicted
- 22 **Clause 238 (Recovery of costs of investigation)**
Page 155, line 5, 'the court'—
omit, insert—
a court

I table the explanatory notes to my amendments.

Tabled paper: Exhibited Animals Bill 2015, explanatory notes to Hon. Bill Byrne's amendments [522].

Amendments agreed to.

Clauses 1 to 282, as amended, agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 3—

Mr BYRNE (5.28 pm): I seek leave to move amendments en bloc.

Leave granted.

Mr BYRNE: I move the following amendments—

23 Schedule 2 (Dictionary), definition *authorised animal (category C)*

Page 185, line 32, '35'—

omit, insert—

35(1)

24 Schedule 2 (Dictionary)

Page 185, after line 32—

insert—

authorised animal (category C1) see section 35(2).

authorised animal (category C2) see section 35(3).

25 Schedule 2 (Dictionary), definition *court*

Page 187, lines 7 and 8, from '218' to 'decision'—

omit, insert—

218 or 238

26 Schedule 2 (Dictionary), definition *serious injury or illness*

Page 195, lines 29 to 31—

omit, insert—

- (c) treatment by a doctor within 48 hours of exposure to a substance that has been transmitted from an animal, other than treatment consisting of the administration of a tetanus injection or antibiotic.

Amendments agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 3, as amended, agreed to.

Third Reading



Hon. WS BYRNE (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Sport and Racing) (5.29 pm): I move—

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

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title



Hon. WS BYRNE (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Sport and Racing) (5.30 pm): I move—

That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 27 March (see p. 234).

Second Reading



Hon. JA TRAD (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade) (5.30 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I thank the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee for its consideration and report on the bill and I thank the majority of the committee for its recommendation for the bill to be passed. After careful consideration of the submissions and the committee's report, I am pleased to table the government's response.

Tabled paper: Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee: Report No. 3—Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015, government response [\[523\]](#).

The bill delivers the government's election commitment to continue the Queensland Reconstruction Authority after 30 June 2015 in recognition of the integral work of the authority in preparing for, responding to and recovering from natural disasters. Since its inception in February 2011 after the twin disasters of the Queensland floods and Cyclone Yasi, the Queensland Reconstruction Authority has been involved in every aspect of every recovery from every natural disaster to have impacted the state. Thirty-four further natural disasters have hit Queensland between then and now. The authority is responsible for the administration of Queensland's massive \$13.5 billion combined reconstruction bill for disasters spanning from 2009 to 2015. The authority has worked in partnership with councils to repair roads from Thursday Island to Thuringowa and from Bundaberg to Bedourie. It has eased the burden of recovery from our smallest remote communities to our largest urban cities.

As we have seen from the latest cycle of cyclones and flooding to have affected our state, the Queensland Reconstruction Authority provides invaluable front-line assistance in the immediate aftermath of a disaster and then in turn assists local governments with expert advice during every stage of the rebuilding process. This support and guidance continues during damage assessment, planning, reconstruction, ensuring value for money is being achieved at every turn right through to the acquittal stage where we are able to recoup some of the expenditure from the Commonwealth. I thank the committee for supporting the continuation of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority and the authority's vital rebuilding functions for those communities affected by natural disasters.

The bill also delivers the government's promise that local government elections will be run to the same high standards of independence and efficiency as state and federal elections by returning to the Electoral Commission the power to appoint the returning officer for a local government election, thereby removing the potential for a conflict of interest on the chief executive officer mandated to be the returning officer. This government considers that, as local government chief executive officers work closely with elected mayors and councillors in carrying out their duties, a chief executive officer performing the role of returning officer presents the potential for a conflict of interest, especially where incumbents recontest an election. Returning the responsibility to the Electoral Commission for deciding who is competent and experienced to be a returning officer restores independence and impartiality to the administrative and the political limbs of local government and ensures we do not have a situation where chief executive officers with little electoral experience feel they must act as a returning officer.

This amendment also reflects the significant commitment of a returning officer in the weeks preceding an election, with the Electoral Commission requiring returning officers to be heavily focused on their electoral responsibilities. Particularly in larger communities, it may not be possible for the chief executive officer to shoulder both workloads. The bill will allow the Electoral Commission to appoint a local government chief executive officer as the returning officer but only if the Electoral Commission considers that the chief executive officer is the only person reasonably available in the community to perform the role with the necessary experience. The exception ensures that every community, including smaller communities, will have a returning officer with the necessary capabilities.

Finally, I thank the committee for supporting the proposed amendment to the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012 which will ensure that the development of a national heavy vehicle registration scheme is not rushed or implemented before it is fully ready. I am sure that all members of the House can appreciate that the development of the national heavy vehicle registration scheme is not without significant policy and system changes. It is important for both industry and government that policy issues such as the treatment of compulsory third-party insurance and the availability of registration concessions are resolved as part of the development of the scheme.

While the amendment to the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012 provides for the implementation of the national heavy vehicle registration scheme by 1 July 2018, I know that the industry is keen to see the scheme up and running as soon as possible. I want to assure the industry that my ministerial colleagues on the Transport and Infrastructure Council and I are committed to ensuring that this project is progressed as a matter of priority. The Transport and Infrastructure

Council has tasked the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and the National Transport Commission to work cooperatively to ensure that the scheme is developed and delivered in a way that delivers benefits for industry and governments without excessive cost.


In addition to the committee's recommendation for the bill to be passed, the government notes that the committee made two further recommendations. The second recommendation is to amend the bill to require the Electoral Commission of Queensland to consult with local governments with the objective of reducing the cost of conducting local government elections. It is the government's view that it is not necessary nor appropriate for an act of parliament to mandate for the Electoral Commission of Queensland to undertake consultation with local governments. The government is committed to ongoing genuine consultation with key stakeholders as a fundamental component of the government's promise to deliver to the people of Queensland an open, transparent and accountable government.

The government's commitment to engage in meaningful consultation is evidenced by the consultation being undertaken by the Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning, the Electoral Commission of Queensland, the Local Government Association of Queensland and all Queensland local governments with the objective of reducing the cost of local government elections. The Electoral Commissioner has written to all local governments asking for their suggestions on how to reduce election costs and will continue to liaise in the lead-up to the 2016 local government elections. For example, savings may be made if council owned facilities are used for polling places. The issue of cost is also a consideration I will take into account when assessing applications by local governments for postal ballots at the next election. Particularly in small communities, postal ballots can be an effective way to reduce election costs.

The government does not support the committee's third and final recommendation for consideration to be given to the Local Government Association of Queensland's suggestion to return to the first-past-the-post voting system for mayors of undivided councils. The government is satisfied that the optional preferential voting method is appropriate for the election of all mayors, irrespective of whether the local government area is divided or undivided and consistent with the method of voting for members of the Queensland parliament. Although voting for councillors in undivided local governments is first past the post and voting for mayors is optional preferential, the government believes that, given the significant powers and responsibilities of Queensland mayors, it is important that a successful mayoral candidate has the support of at least 50 per cent of the community which is ensured under optional preferential voting.

If first past the post applied to mayoral elections, a successful mayoral candidate may be elected with less than 50 per cent of the vote in elections where there are more than two candidates. For example, in the 2012 mayoral elections, successful candidates were elected with less than 50 per cent of the vote in the undivided local governments of Mackay Regional Council where there were three candidates, with the successful candidate being elected on 40.42 per cent of the vote, and Southern Downs Regional Council where there were eight candidates, with the successful candidate being elected on 34.54 per cent of the vote. The Electoral Commission of Queensland also ensures that each ballot paper has clear instructions, thereby reducing the prospect of voter confusion in undivided local governments where voting for mayor and councillors is different. Ultimately, different voting systems predominantly affect the process of counting votes and not the way a voter marks the ballot paper.

I thank those stakeholders who made submissions and appeared at the public hearings as part of the committee's examination of the bill. I appreciate the time and effort in communicating your concerns, suggestions and support of the bill. In closing, I want to thank the Electoral Commission of Queensland and the Local Government Association of Queensland for their advocacy for improvements to the local government electoral system. I also want to thank the Queensland Office of Parliamentary Counsel for its work in drafting the legislation.

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (5.40 pm): I rise to speak to the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. The LNP supports local government. It affirms its commitment to the principles of empowering local government to make decisions on local issues wherever appropriate as it is the level of government that is closest to the people. This philosophy was the reason we gave more power back to local governments while we were in office between 2012 and early 2015.

I reaffirm also the belief that part of that empowerment is the need for recognition of the role of the professional staff of local governments. Local governments strive to employ highly professional management and staff who fulfil their duties ethically and with due regard to the laws of the land. This

bill before the House will see the Labor state government removing some of those devolved powers and providing no credible reason that is evidence based for doing so. That is why we will not support Labor's changes to the Local Government Electoral Act in this bill before the House.

These changes, which remove local government chief executive officers as returning officers for local government elections, say that Labor does not trust them. These are professional officers who, under the previous laws introduced by the LNP government, were still bound to work in a way that delivered elections with integrity and accountability. To take the government's argument to its ultimate, you would have to ask, 'Do they trust the professional officers, the CEOs of local governments, with other laws to act independently of partisan influence?' To take the government's argument to its ultimate, it is ultimately a slur on the professionalism of those staff. They were bound by law to act in a way that was impartial.

There were safeguards in the legislation that was introduced by the LNP in regard to the ECQ and its continuing role of oversight of local government elections. But allowing local CEOs as local returning officers to act in those roles provided in very practical terms local knowledge and local resources to ensure that local elections were run well and cost effectively. From history, the evidence is that they did so and that, when the laws were changed by previous Labor governments to take away that ability to run elections at the local level, the costs of running those elections went up significantly. As I have said, under the LNP's laws, there were safeguards of oversight by the ECQ. By law, local government CEOs, as returning officers, had to ensure the proper conduct of the election, which meant that they had to be independent of elected officials. The ECQ could still intervene if there were any concern that that was not the case.

The move by Labor to reverse this provision is a sign that Labor state governments do not trust the local government CEOs and the professionalism that they show at the local government level. It ignores the safeguards that were in place to address any potential conflicts of interest. I would like to express my concerns that, once again, we see Labor in government removing powers and capacity from local governments—micromanaging and just making change for change's sake based upon its philosophy.

In contrast, the LNP recognises that local governments are the elected bodies that are closest to Queensland communities. We know that they are best placed to provide the most practical and appropriate local solutions to local issues. In most cases, local governments are closest to the action and they need to be empowered with the autonomy and authority to address those local issues and manage them. The LNP is committed to a genuine partnership with the 77 local governments in Queensland. That is why it will be opposing these provisions in this bill, which are aimed at stripping away more of that autonomy and capacity from local governments.

I draw upon history, though, that shows that there was no evidence that this situation had been a problem. Prior to 2008, Queensland local governments ran elections very successfully. I note that one of the defences provided by the government for stripping away this ability from local governments to run elections is that the ECQ can run elections well. No doubt, the ECQ is an independent body and in no way do I cast doubts upon its ability to run elections. But the reality is that the ECQ cannot always do that as cost-effectively as possible. Owing to the size of Queensland, there have been problems with running elections as effectively as possible. That has been quite well documented and I will come to that in a moment.

Although there were no issues of concerns raised about local government elections that warrant or justify the changes before us, what we have seen is that, when the ECQ took over the processes, for at least two local government elections it was criticised, with reports of operational failures, particularly in respect of postal votes not being issued or incorrect ballot papers being sent to electors. At the time, there were also reports of polling booths not being tallied on time and cases where ballot papers were handwritten by Electoral Commission staff. Further, the location of polling booths was often or could often be inappropriate, with limited or no consultation with local governments so as to draw on local knowledge. As I have said, Queensland is a big state and that level of local knowledge was not taken into account.

I have heard the Deputy Premier say that there will be more consultation. Obviously, consultation is vital. But there has to be more than just token consultation when there is an election about to take place; there has to be a more effective embracing of the local knowledge to address those very issues that I have just mentioned.

We saw quite a considerable increase in the cost of running those elections. In 2012 the LNP took a policy to the electorate to provide a remedy for those problems whilst still providing safeguards. The LNP enabled the chief officer of a local government to act as the returning officer, thus providing

consistency in the running of local governments in the lead-up, during and after local government elections. The ECQ still had the power to direct a CEO and approve their election plans. So there was oversight and there were provisions where a CEO did not have to act; they had the option of not acting. Also, people with party affiliations were not to act in those roles. It was recognised that local governments, where they had the capacity, should be able to choose to run elections. It is well documented that the ability of local councils to run elections was cost-effective. How can local councils running elections be cost-effective? Local returning officers, such as ECOs, can utilise office space and other resources, including other local government employees, in order to undertake those local elections.

The LNP recognised the need to empower local government. This recognition was certainly consistent with other changes that the LNP made in government, particularly in regard to some of the boundary realignments, recognising that the forced council amalgamations that were done under Labor had left a significant legacy of difficulty in regard to boundaries. The Local Government Association of Queensland certainly supported the changes that the LNP brought in in regard to CEOs being allowed to act as returning officers. In its submissions to the committee in regard to this legislation, the LGAQ stated that it is not opposing the changes that this government is making. The LGAQ is not happy with the changes, but it has asked that there be consultation to address issues such as cost. I have listened to the Deputy Premier and I understand that, although the Deputy Premier cannot direct the ECQ, consultation is to take place. However, I urge that this consultation needs to be done effectively and not just in a token way.

It is all very well to say that there are structures that are supposed to deliver integrity, but if people do not get their ballot paper, or the postal votes go missing—if those fundamental mechanisms fail the voters—then the voters are failed by the system. People have a right to be able to vote. They have a right to know that the postal votes that are supposed to come, in fact, are delivered; to know that appropriate systems have been put in place to consistently deliver the standards that we expect in our democracy.

The LNP is committed to a genuine partnership with local governments in Queensland. It is well aware of the many responsibilities of local government. So the LNP will continue to advocate wherever possible for local governments to continue to have the capacity to make decisions locally.

I mentioned costs. On this point, I draw attention to the submission from the Logan City Council, which was strongly in favour of keeping the CEO as the returning officer. In its submission, the Logan City Council stated that, on its calculations, in the past it may have been able to save about \$400,000 by running its own elections.

One of the concerns that was raised was in relation to the transparency of running elections. There is an irony when we talk about transparency in a democracy and yet some of the costs of running these elections are not transparent. I believe that certainly needs to be taken on board and that there is more transparency around what the actual costs are that local government will bear when they have a centralised provider such as the ECQ running an election. They have a right to know. It is not just about being told user pays. They are not allowed to know. They must have access to what those costs are and have the opportunity as part of any consultation to ensure that if they have a more cost-effective way of doing it they are, in fact, listened to. It must not be just token consultation. That is why there was a move to give those powers back to CEOs under appropriate circumstances. I have heard the government's explanation and we disagree on the philosophy. We also disagree on the fact that the safeguards are sufficient to deal with any potential conflicts of interest.

In relation to the other provisions in this bill, I wish to talk about the nature of the Reconstruction Authority and the extension. It is not a controversial extension. There was support from the LNP in government to the previous extension, understanding that this authority has undertaken vitally important work in our state. The disasters that Queensland has faced in the last few years across so many communities has been quite extraordinary. The rebuild has required a significant effort. Continued attention to the need for infrastructure not just to be replaced but in some cases to be upgraded to ensure it was more resilient to any potential future incident is vitally important. We support these provisions that do not just roll over the extension to another defined date but actually leave the Reconstruction Authority Act as it is in place without a sunset clause.


The work is ongoing. The evidence thus far proves that the Reconstruction Authority still has a large job to do and must be able to get on with it. It is not just about black letter law; it is about people's lives. It is important that they have ongoing support to rebuild their lives. As we have seen with overseas disasters, where there is not a system of government as in a First World country, that legacy of rebuild can go on for years. It can still go on for years in our country, but the pain is

lessened if there is the ability for governments to support communities in the rebuild to do it as cost-effectively as possible but to the appropriate standards that hopefully mean greater resilience for future events. Whether we like it or not, there will always be natural disasters. Whilst all damage cannot be stopped, we can as much as possible mitigate the damage in those areas that are most vulnerable. We support these provisions to extend the Queensland Reconstruction Authority and its important work to continue to support the rebuild in communities and certainly to ensure that people have better infrastructure for the future.

This bill also uncontroversially extends the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012. To be more accurate, this bill actually ensures that provisions that were due to commence on 1 July 2015 are, in fact, extended for commencement until 1 July 2018. I am very pleased that we have the Heavy Vehicle National Regulator in Queensland. While this body is there for the whole nation, to have it based in a state such as ours which depends so greatly upon the long haul logistics of our heavy vehicle operators is a good thing. In talking to industry I know that they have embraced the opportunity to engage in consultation in this sphere to ensure that as there is a move to these national provisions their voice is heard and there is an understanding that the logistics in different parts of our nation are different. It is important that we get these long haul logistics supported by appropriate regulation, regulation that supports people, ensures that they can effectively get product to market but that they can do so in a way that is safe and effective.

We recognise that there are still some outstanding issues in relation to these provisions, and that is the reason why the National Transport Commission has proposed a revised date of implementation for the national registration scheme. As I have said, that will push that out by three years. It is not ideal to see things extended to that extent, but we recognise that there are still issues to be resolved and we are keen to see that occur as quickly and as appropriately as possible.

In closing I wish to thank the committee members for their contributions during the deliberations on this bill. We will not be supporting the provisions put forward in respect of the Local Government Electoral Act but we will be supporting the other provisions in this act.

 **Mr PEARCE** (Mirani—ALP) (5.55 pm): In rising to speak to the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 I wish to acknowledge that this is a most important task for me and for the members of the committee. We have a valuable role to play in looking at legislation that is coming to the House and making sure that it is in its best form when it does arrive here. The committee's areas of portfolio responsibility are transport, infrastructure, local government, planning, trade, state development, natural resources and mines. The honourable members of the committee are: Mr Michael Hart, member for Burleigh and deputy chair; Glenn Butcher, member for Gladstone; Shane Knuth, member for Dalrymple; Mrs Brittany Lauga, member for Keppel; and Lachlan Millar, member for Gregory.

All members have taken up the challenge of what looks like being a very busy additional task over and above their role and responsibilities as a local member. The make-up of the committee ensures that there will be inclusive debate. We will get involved and we will all have our say. As chair of the committee, I am encouraged by the way all members are involved, asking questions and thinking about what should be the best outcome for the committee when it puts out its final report. I look forward to our committee earning the respect of the parliament and, of course, the respect of the ministers who are looking to the committee to do the hard yards to ensure that the best possible legislation is put before the parliament.

There is not a lot to the bill before the House, but I am aware that there are a number of members in this place who are wanting to make a contribution to the debate ahead of us. I will be focusing on that part of the amendment bill which provides for the CEO of a local government being permitted to act as a returning officer for an election of members who wish to serve as an elected councillor or mayor of the local government where they live. I refer to clause 3 of the bill before the House in relation to section 9 of the act. This amendment prohibits a local government chief executive officer from being the returning officer for a local government election unless there are special circumstances. There is a provision under the same clause which allows the Electoral Commission of Queensland, the ECQ, to appoint a person with experience as a returning officer for an election if there is a requirement to do so. The committee accepted that in isolated rural shires the Electoral Commission may have difficulty in identifying a person who has the knowledge and expertise to be able to act as a returning officer. Under the amendment, the ECQ may appoint a CEO as the returning officer if the commission considers that he or she is the only person with experience in conducting elections, who is reasonably available to be appointed as the returning officer and the CEO is not a member of a political party.

The bill ensures that the returning officer conducts himself or herself in a way that promotes the independence of the position of a returning officer, as the commission and the government want to ensure that the appointments, where they are necessary, are recognised by the community as being about integrity and accountability. Under section 9(5), the returning officer must comply with a direction given by the Electoral Commission for the proper conduct of the election. This subsection ensures that a CEO who is a returning officer complies with the intent of the legislation to conduct an open and transparent election. It provides for a greater emphasis on integrity of process. The level of credibility that is delivered under the amendments contained in the bill ensures that Queenslanders can have the greatest confidence in the process that provides for the election of council members and the mayor. Not only will the election of council be of the highest standard, but also it will be recognised by ratepayer voters as one that enforces a level of protection for ratepayers against foul play taking place during an election process.

I have spoken to ratepayers from across three local government areas that fall within the boundaries of the Mirani electorate. Those people are the grassroots of the Mirani electorate. I asked them whom they would prefer to have run a local election.

Debate, on motion of Mr Pearce, adjourned.

MOTION

Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2014



Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (6.01 pm): I move—

That this House—

1. notes that:
 - the Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 was passed with amendment on 26 November 2014, and received assent on 5 December 2014, with certain provisions commencing on assent and the remaining on a day to be fixed by proclamation;
 - a proclamation on 18 December 2014 commenced certain parts of the act on 19 December 2014 and 18 February 2015;
 - this proclamation was amended by a further proclamation on 17 February 2015, largely reversing the commencement of those parts due to commence on 18 February;
2. directs the Palaszczuk government to put the necessary documentation before the Governor in Council to ensure the uncommenced parts of the act commence as soon as practicable; and
3. expresses its opinion that law passed by the parliament should be enacted and any amendment to that law only be by further amending legislation and not by the use of executive powers.

It has become necessary for the LNP to move this motion for three reasons. The first reason is that Queensland needs these reforms to the Water Act. The Water Act 2000 has not been substantially updated since it was enacted. The former LNP government introduced the water reform bill to modernise the primary framework for the planning, allocation and management of water in Queensland. The amendment sought to ensure Queensland's water legislation kept pace with current water management best practice and technology and to ensure the state's water resources are used responsibly and productively while retaining certainty and security of water entitlements and balancing economic, social and environmental outcomes. The changes were designed to deliver an efficient, effective and modern water resource framework and were a significant part of the former LNP government's commitment to grow the agriculture sectors—

Ms Trad interjected.

Ms Jones interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: One moment, member for Hinchinbrook. Deputy Premier, you will have an opportunity to speak shortly. I ask the Minister for Education—

Ms Jones interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: No, Minister for Education. I call the member for Hinchinbrook.


Mr CRIPPS: It was a commitment of the former LNP government to grow the agriculture and resources sector to create economic development opportunities, particularly for rural and regional Queensland.

The second reason is that there is a pressing need for the provision establishing the water development option to be enacted to encourage investment, particularly in regional and rural Queensland and even more particularly in North Queensland, for new irrigated agriculture projects. The water development option was a provision to allow volumes of water to be granted to proponents

of new irrigated agriculture projects if and when proponents successfully completed a full environmental impact assessment process to determine the sustainability of those allocations. The lack of an available pathway for a new agriculture project in terms of water resources is a real concern given the current focus on northern development coming from the federal coalition government and the number of potential projects that could go ahead, investment that could be secured and jobs that could be created if there was some regulatory certainty. There is a real threat that, because the Palaszczuk government is so beholden to a range of extreme green groups, Queensland, and especially North Queensland, may miss out on opportunities that we have been waiting generations to take advantage of if Labor denies proponents access to the natural resources required for a project.

The third reason is that the use by the Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines of a proclamation on 17 February this year to countermand a proclamation from 18 December 2014 is an abuse of executive power and shows contempt for this parliament. Using an executive order to countermand another executive order that sought to implement the expressed will of this parliament strikes me as even more offensive to the principle of the rule of law than the use of Henry VIII clauses, that is, the amendment of primary legislation by the use of subordinate legislation. The minister and the government have absolutely no direction from this House that entitles them to utilise executive power to prevent the provisions of the water reform bill that was passed by this parliament in November last year from becoming law.

If the minister and the government do not support these provisions, they should have the intestinal fortitude to bring an amendment bill into this House and argue the merits of their alternative proposals. Instead, the minister and the government are cowering behind an executive order with no legitimacy. It is not supported by an expression of the will of this House. It is undoubtedly an abuse of executive power and a clear contempt of this parliament. If that is not enough for all members of this House to support this motion tonight, I do not know what is. Rural and regional Queensland, and particularly North Queensland, deserve an opportunity to have a go and the water development option and the changes in the water reform bill from last year offered them an opportunity to have a go, and so should all the members of this parliament.

 **Hon. AJ LYNHAM** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (6.08 pm): I rise to speak against the motion moved by the member for Hinchinbrook. This motion seeks to commence provisions of the Water and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2014, a piece of legislation that resulted from woefully inadequate consultation and was rushed through parliament in the final sitting weeks of last year. Those opposite attempted to remove the very essence of the Water Act, which is ecologically sustainable development. I am also disappointed that those opposite continue to defend the way they undertook legislative change and continue to apply a ramrod and cavalier attitude to push legislation through this House. It is becoming clear that those opposite have not learnt any lessons at all from their time in government and the way they undertook legislative change without proper consultation. They seem to believe that in the past three years all was bright and rosy in Queensland; it was anything but.

The member for Hinchinbrook still cannot comprehend how his legislation would impact Queensland's ability to use water sustainably and the potential impacts on the Great Barrier Reef. I remind those opposite that in January 2015 the Queensland Labor Party went to the Queensland people with a very clear commitment to return ecologically sustainable development principles to the Water Act and remove water development options. The election results speak for themselves. Clearly the people of Queensland had concerns about the inadequate consultation process and the erosion of environmental safeguards. As my colleague the Deputy Premier highlighted in a speech last year, real concern existed with stakeholders regarding why the LNP was so determined to push ahead with this legislation in the last sitting week of the year. That is why we are carefully reviewing this legislation with appropriate consultation, which those opposite do not know how to do.

Our concerns were reinforced by stakeholders such as the Queensland Resources Council which stated—

It is difficult to reconcile the caution of stakeholders with the pace at which reforms to the Water Act are being developed ... and that—

all waters users have been accustomed to deep and on-going consultation at a catchment level; which has simply not been possible in the time allowed for the development of this Bill.

The rush to push through this legislation led to inclusions such as the LNP's water development options which undermined the very essence of the Water Act by opening the possibility of the unsustainable take of water through amendment of the water resource plan—

Mr Cripps interjected.

Dr LYNHAM:—you will never learn—without necessarily appropriate scientific rigour or consultation. The Labor Party also shared the concerns of AgForce which stated—

Unless it contains a specific and clearly delineated section dealing with the same considerations as required under a water plan consultation, including the impacts on other water users and the environment, AgForce does not view the EIS process to be equivalent consultation to that undertaken under a water plan process.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Dr LYNHAM: Just listen and learn. AgForce continue—

Greater transparency is required in the WDO application and approval process with the views of other water users more clearly taken into account.


The one thing that the LNP have managed to do with this act has been to provide commonality of concern in three of the most unlikely groups—the Queensland Resources Council, AgForce and the Environmental Defenders Office—a feat which we are not likely to see again.

Mr Cripps: Which means we probably got it right.

Dr LYNHAM: I will take that. You got it right by not consulting—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members, I would just like to inform you that we have in the gallery winners of the 2015 Young African Australian Star Awards. Welcome to parliament.

Dr LYNHAM: We are undertaking a review of this act in order to meet our election commitments and to identify potential impacts on landholders, which those opposite do not care about; farmers, which they do not care about; the environment, which they have no regard for; and the Great Barrier Reef, which they would have destroyed. Unlike those opposite, we will listen.

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (6.11 pm): I rise to support the motion before the House moved by the honourable member for Hinchinbrook, Andrew Cripps. It is essential to the future of agriculture in Queensland for us in this House to work with our regional producers and landholders to ensure that we are enablers and not stand in the way of the state's vital agriculture industry. One project alone in the Etheridge shire could create some 1,250 jobs.

The Water Act 2000 has remained basically unchanged since 2000. That is why our LNP government worked hard with all the sectors and introduced the water reform bill that importantly set a new direction for water management in Queensland.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Dr Lynham interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. The member for Hinchinbrook and Minister, I ask you to cease your discussion across the chamber.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Essentially, the new purpose of the act recognises the importance of sustaining ecosystem health, water quality and water dependent ecological processes and biological diversity associated with catchments, watercourses, lakes, springs and aquifers. The bill provided for the establishment of water development options simply to allow for investment in the future of new, irrigated agricultural projects.

While the water development option gives proponents the certainty they need to secure investors into projects to enable management of time frames, it is not a right to take water or to develop infrastructure. This does not mean weakening the scientific rigour required to meet the Water Act and the EIA requirements. Further, a comprehensive community consultation process is conducted before any action is taken to grant water authorisations or amend any existing water plan. The provisions of the bill clearly provide for science and hydrology as part of any new water allocation. This simply means that water projects can get going sooner, driving economic growth and creating jobs.

The LNP has a clear focus when it comes to the future of agriculture and we are very proud to support this vital industry. Agriculture is and will always be the backbone of the Queensland economy, but not if this current government does not understand the importance of this change and the detrimental impact it will have to Northern Queensland.


It is simple: we are enabling agricultural investors access to sustainable water to grow crops, maybe feed some cattle, most importantly, employ some people and, very importantly, improve the livelihood of our regional communities like Georgetown. It was interesting to hear in the House this

morning the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland say she is behind this. It is disappointing that she has not spoken to some of the proponents. She would then see how important it is for North Queensland.

Just a few weeks ago I visited the area around Georgetown and had the opportunity to sit down and listen to members of the Etheridge Shire Council. They acknowledged that the Etheridge Shire Council area has enormous potential when it comes to agriculture projects. All we are hearing now is that these much needed agricultural irrigation projects are on the backburner for a couple of months until they are looked into.

We are not looking into the fact that these proponents want to employ people. They want to grow crops. They want to increase development in northern Australia. I do not think it is a laughing matter at all. The uncertainty in and around North Queensland because of this new Labor government mirrors the uncertainty across the state around these projects. The changes that this House endorsed were designed to provide certainty to proponents.

This motion is simply about enabling agriculture in the north of this state—to kickstart an area that is renowned for its potential. As the member for Hinchinbrook stated, if those opposite are so against this why not bring an amendment before the House rather than just come in here to satisfy their Green mates. Let this House decide what is best for North Queensland.

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (6.16 pm): I rise to oppose the motion. My reason for opposing this motion is very simple. This motion and the laws that it would see come into effect are bad for the Great Barrier Reef. The LNP would have us believe they want to save the Great Barrier Reef. In fact, if we took their word for it they already have. Just five days after the release of the draft World Heritage Committee decision they pull this stunt. Five days after the member for Southern Downs took to Twitter calling the LNP ‘the natural guardians of the Great Barrier Reef’—

Ms Trad: He does have a sense of humour.

Dr MILES: It was on Twitter. It probably was not him. Just one day after the member for Glass House tried to claim the Labor Party’s policies for himself, the LNP asks us to proclaim a set of laws that would have disastrous consequences for the reef. Just a few weeks before UNESCO formally meets to consider whether or not to accept the draft decision, the LNP puts all that at risk with an irresponsible political ploy.

A key plank of our election policy was to not proceed with the LNP’s poorly conceived water laws. In fact, blocking the proclamation of provisions that have not commenced was one of our first acts in government. It was the first Governor in Council meeting I attended. I was proud to have played a part in preventing the environmental destruction that this act would have wreaked. In fact, I really want to thank the member for Hinchinbrook—

Mr Cripps: No, you don’t.

Dr MILES: No. I really, really do—for the chance to participate in this debate.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, members! Pause the clock. I call the minister.

Dr MILES: Obviously I did not get the chance to contribute when the bill was first debated in this place, but I am very glad to have the chance now to put on the record my opposition to this outrageous piece of environmental vandalism

Mr Cripps: Why is it outrageous?

Dr MILES: I will tell you. The LNP water laws would have led to the overallocation of water from reef catchments. It will ultimately decrease the volume of water flowing into the reef catchments and, at the same time, increase the nutrient loads flowing into the reef—

Mr Cripps: How?

Dr MILES: I will come to that—the same nutrient loads that we have pledged in the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan—the one you think is yours—to reduce by 80 per cent by 2025.

The LNP’s law introduced up-front water development options for major water infrastructure projects. A WDO was intended to provide large developers with in-principle access to water without completing any environmental assessments. The LNP did not include any criteria in their laws for the issue of these water development options.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the minister.


Dr MILES: They prioritised the water needs of large proponents over smaller users—the supposed constituency of those opposite. There was no modelling to show that this approach could be sustainable. But then of course ecologically sustainable development was one of the things they removed. Even the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority warned the LNP about the consequences of these laws. They said—

Allocation of water resources prior to the full and open assessment of the potential cumulative impacts on groundwater, surface waters and the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Property may lead to unacceptable impacts to coastal waterways and Great Barrier Reef ecosystems.

How we manage water must be based on solid science, rigorous analysis and transparent processes. We must have an eye on the future—the future impacts of what we do now and our likely future demands on watercourses and riparian areas.

In just a few weeks the international community will pass judgement on our custodianship of the reef—one of the world's living wonders. Thanks to the election of a Labor government, UNESCO is now unlikely to list the reef as in danger. This stunt by the LNP puts all that at risk—at the same time as they claim Labor's policies for their own and claim credit for the draft decision. It just shows the utter disregard they have for our environment and the Great Barrier Reef.

(Time expired)

 **Mrs SMITH** (Mount Ommaney—LNP) (6.22 pm): I am supporting the motion that my friend and colleague the member for Hinchinbrook has presented. Can I start by saying what incredible knowledge the member for Hinchinbrook has of this piece of legislation, and he needs to be commended for that and for his great work.

The Labor Party have got this wrong. They have it so wrong. The government has this wrong. What we are seeing is a government who says one thing and then does completely the opposite. We hear the chants of 'jobs, jobs, jobs', yet what we are seeing is this government putting the kybosh on that very statement of 'jobs, jobs, jobs' with its handling of the water reforms.

Ms Trad interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, members! Pause the clock. Deputy Premier, you will have an opportunity to speak shortly.

Mrs SMITH: One can only come to the conclusion that either (a) this Labor government is beholden to the Greens or (b) it has no knowledge of this project and the benefits that it brings. A statement made by the director and co-owner of a 100 per cent Aboriginal owned corporation Anthony Penrith of Gamarard stated—

In a week when the government was sprouting their achievements in after 100 days in office they have now virtually consigned to the scrapheap 400 Indigenous families. This could have been 400 families off the dole, paying taxes, providing food for their children, sending them to school, purchasing much needed supplies for their families and possibly buying into the Australian dream—a home. Today is a sad day for Indigenous Queenslanders, again being done over by the environmental movement.

If it is true that they are beholden to the Greens then they are saying, in effect, that some urban hippie knows better about what is best for the land as opposed to the landholders and the traditional owners. That is what they are saying: the urban hippies know better than the traditional landholders.

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: All right. I call the member for Mount Ommaney.

Mrs SMITH: As Mr Penrith said, 'As Indigenous people, before linking with this project we investigated the environmental and economic impacts that this project might bring.' Seriously, do you believe the Indigenous people would have any association with a project that would wreck this land? We pay our respects to the traditional owners. They have been looking after the land for 40,000 years, and I would say they have done a good job so far. I will tell you what it is like. It is a like a vegetarian coming into my butcher shop telling me they know better than I about my business because they have read an article in a magazine. That is exactly what it is like. It is just madness.

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Order, members! Please. I call the member for Mount Ommaney.


Mrs SMITH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. So it is about jobs. As I travel the state, the one thing coming through loud and clear from the Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander communities is: 'We don't need another certificate. We don't need more training. We need a job.' These communities are telling me, 'Don't continue to give us meaningless training. That is just patronising.'

Here we have an organisation that are small business owners, partners—and, yes, I have a soft spot for small business owners and husband and wife teams who are willing to invest their hard-earned money in a proposal in the hope that they can work hard and improve their lives on their terms. They are willing to have a go—400 jobs. By not supporting this motion, you are relegating a generation to a future without hope—beautiful, good looking children who you are denying of hope.

Do you know how many other projects can employ 400 Indigenous people? I will tell you who comes close—Coles employed 400 Indigenous people Australia-wide in one year. This is about one community. So, at the end of the day, I urge you to support this motion for economic participation. It does support environmental balance. It provides hope and a future for the Indigenous community. I, for one, think that it needs certainty and I fully support the motion.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, member for Hinchinbrook! We are nearly there.

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade) (6.27 pm): I thank the member for Hinchinbrook for the opportunity to get up once again and talk about the Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill that was put to this House on 25 November last year. I speak to the motion before the House and I advise those youthful, good looking people opposite that the Labor government will not be supporting this bill before the House.

Between 25 November and 18 February something happened in Queensland. What happened in Queensland? It was not a vote in this House; it was a vote of the Queensland people. It was a little election. I advise those members opposite that there is a children's book called *A Little Election* by Danny Katz. I actually got this book for my kids so that it could explain in very simple terms what happens at an election.

At an election, people put themselves before other people, the electors, and they put their policies to people and they get voted on. They get voted in or voted out. Let me tell the House that, at that election on 31 January, a number of issues were put to the Queensland people, including this government's track record on water resource allocations in this state, as well as what the Newman government had done to turn Queensland into a dumping ground for rubbish from the southern states. Let us be clear what else they did. They cancelled every single renewable energy program in Australia. What else did they do? They commenced logging in state reserves. They also extended sandmining on Stradbroke Island without the permission of the traditional owners. They shut down the energy efficient Swanbank Power Station and fired up a dormant coal-fired power station. They introduced pay-to-damage laws for development in Queensland. They removed the need for local councils to plan for sea level rise in their planning schemes.

What else did they do? They rescinded wild river declarations throughout this state. They opened up national parks to grazing. They defunded the Environmental Defenders Office. And they took steps to open up uranium mining in Queensland, after promising they would not and without any consultation with one single Queenslander. So when we went to the—

Ms Jones interjected.

Ms TRAD: Campbell Newman said on six occasions that he would not resume uranium mining in Queensland, and he did. Let me inform the House that, as the opposition member who participated in—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock please.

Mr CRIPPS: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Whilst we enjoy this trip down memory lane from the member for South Brisbane, I ask you to rule on relevance in relation to the member for South Brisbane's contribution and I ask her to come back to the motion.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Thank you, member for Hinchinbrook. I call on the Deputy Premier to remain focused on the motion before the House.

Ms TRAD: I did finish my list, so let us go to the matter before the House. The member for Mount Ommaney talked about Aboriginal jobs. Let us talk about Aboriginal consent. Let us talk about traditional owner consent in relation to the water development option. If there is traditional owner consent, I call upon the opposition to table it in this debate. I ask the opposition to table evidence that there is traditional owner consent in relation to what is happening in IFED. I ask the opposition to table it.

Secondly, in relation to the unsustainable take, this was exhaustively talked about in the committee process. As the opposition spokesperson who participated in every single parliamentary committee session in relation to this, I heard evidence from the Resources Council, I heard evidence from local environment groups and I heard evidence from hydrological experts, from water experts. All of them led to the same conclusion: that this was a bill that was rushed, that this was a bill that could not articulate why the removal of ecologically sustainable development principles was necessary. No-one could articulate in any sensible way why the removal of ecologically sustainable development principles was necessary.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority expressed significant concerns with the water development option—at a time when the international community was paying attention to Queensland laws, at a time when UNESCO had delivered its 2014 outlook report and had said that the laws passed by the Newman government were of significant concern in relation to the future of the Great Barrier Reef.

Dr Lynham interjected.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. Minister for State Development and member for Hinchinbrook, we do not need your debate.

Ms TRAD: UNESCO expressed concerns about the environmental policies that those opposite pursued in government. The QRC expressed concerns. Everyone expressed concerns about this bill and what did they do? They ignored it—just as their report found.

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

AYES, 43:

LNP, 42—Barton, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Costigan, Cramp, Crandon, Cripps, Davis, Dickson, Elmes, Emerson, Frecklington, Hart, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Mander, McArdle, McEachan, McVeigh, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, Perrett, Powell, Rickuss, Robinson, Rowan, Seeneey, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Walker, Watts, Weir.

INDEPENDENT, 1—Gordon.

NOES, 43:

ALP, 43—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Byrne, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Donaldson, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Lauga, Linard, Lynham, Madden, Miles, Miller, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Pitt, Power, Pyne, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Stewart, Trad, Whiting, Williams.

Mr SPEAKER: The numbers being equal, I cast my vote with the noes. Honourable members, I have voted against this motion because the effect of supporting this motion is to support laws that I opposed in the last parliament.

Resolved in the negative.

Sitting suspended from 6.39 pm to 7.39 pm.

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

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument



Mr EMERSON (Indooroopilly—LNP) (7.39 pm): I move—

That part 15 of the Transport Legislation (Fees) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2015, subordinate legislation No. 25 of 2015, tabled in the House on 19 May 2015, be disallowed.

Tonight members of parliament have a very clear choice to make. Do they believe that increasing the cost of vehicle registration by 2½ times CPI is fair? That is what this regulation by Labor does: it increases rego by 3.5 per cent when the latest CPI is just 1.4 per cent in Brisbane. MPs will have a chance to decide if that is a fair rise. If they think it is fair they can vote against this motion, and they can explain to motorists in their communities why they backed a rise in rego 2½ times the inflation rate. If they think that it is not fair, that it is too much and too high, they have the opportunity tonight to stop it by supporting this motion. They can say to the Premier, to the transport minister and to the main roads minister to go away and try again.

In about two hours every MP in this House will get a chance to vote and make that choice. One of the questions that needs to be asked is whether this is just the beginning of the tax slugs that Queenslanders can expect to see under the Palaszczuk government. The first Palaszczuk budget will be brought down next month, and this is the first major prebudget announcement. Let us not forget

that the Premier was the transport minister in the last Labor government and Labor's record in that area was disastrous for Queenslanders. While the Premier was transport minister, public transport fares were going up 15 per cent every year, year after year. In contrast, under the LNP transport fares were cut statewide for the first time in Queensland history last year and frozen this year. At the same time 3,000 additional weekly train and bus services were put on under the LNP during its time in office.

Labor has not revealed what it is planning in the budget for public transport fares, but this massive increase in rego is not a good omen. While public transport fares were seeing massive rises under the previous Labor government, rego was also going through the roof. Again, let us not forget who the transport minister was in that government—the Premier. In the last four years of the Labor government, rego went up 30 per cent. Those increases saw Queensland become the most expensive state in which to own and run a motor vehicle according to the RACQ. Again, the contrast with the LNP's record is very clear. Under the LNP, rego was frozen for three years for family vehicles and kept to CPI for other vehicles.

The LNP recognises the pain those massive increases under Labor were having for Queenslanders, especially for Queensland families. That is why the LNP made the commitment to freeze family car registration for three years. We knew that Queensland families were struggling. That initiative to freeze family car rego is believed to have assisted more than one million families in Queensland, but now we are seeing a return to the bad old days under Labor which treated motorists like cash cows. Labor wants to slug Queensland motorists 2½ times CPI in a shameless grab for cash.

As I mentioned, under the massive increases by the last Labor government, Queensland became the most expensive state in which to own and run a motor vehicle. Even with the three-year freeze put in place by the LNP government, Queensland is still well above the other states when it comes to rego fees. According to the RACQ, Labor's planned rego hike will see rego for a small four-cylinder car in Queensland increase to \$289—\$57 more than in New South Wales and \$174 more than the lowest state in South Australia. For a medium six-cylinder car, under Labor's massive hike it will cost \$458—\$174 more than in New South Wales and more than double in Tasmania. For a large eight-cylinder car, rego under Labor will go to \$642—\$222 more than in New South Wales and \$370 more than in Victoria.

What these figures show is that Queensland motorists are still paying for the massive rego hikes under the last four years of Labor. That is why the LNP believes that another Labor hike 2½ times the inflation rate is unfair. But not everyone believes it is unfair. The transport and main roads ministers have argued that the massive increase is both appropriate and justified. They argue that Queensland rego is not too high compared with other states. What they do is try to include the compulsory third-party component in those figures. How disingenuous, because Labor knows that CTP is dictated by the Motor Accident Insurance Commission and relates to the need to cover the cost of injuries. It is not controlled by government. What is controlled by government is rego.

Labor also argues that the 3.5 per cent increase was a forecast increase for the coming year in the LNP budget delivered a year ago, but what Labor will not tell you is that the inflation rate at the time was more than three per cent. The LNP will always look at rego increases based on the circumstances at the time of any rise, and since then the inflation rate has halved.

Government members interjected.

Mr EMERSON: It disturbs me that they are starting to question the government's own statistician. While the Queensland Government Statistician's Office was reporting headline CPI in Brisbane currently at 1.4 per cent in the year to March quarter 2015, the Labor government decided on 22 April this year to increase rego by 2½ times that inflation rate, as revealed in the Transport Legislation (Fees) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) explanatory notes tabled last week. For the sake of the transport minister, the main roads minister and the Treasurer, I table the Queensland Government Statistician's Office report for the benefit of the House which shows that inflation in March 2014 was 3.1 and is now 1.4—less than half.

Tabled paper: Extract from qgso.qld.gov.au website, dated 21 May 2015, Consumer Price Index (a): All groups, Brisbane and weighted average of eight capital cities, quarterly, March 1999 to March 2015 [524].

While the inflation rate has more than halved over the last year, Labor is determined to treat motorists like cash cows and increase rego by 2½ times the inflation rate. What did the now Treasurer say last year about fees and penalties going up higher than the inflation rate, as Labor is trying to do now? Last year when the LNP proposed increasing the penalty unit at a rate of 3.5 per cent at a time when Brisbane's headline CPI was more than three per cent, the member for Mulgrave told the

House, 'CPI is definitely a thing of the past under the LNP. We challenge the government to show Queenslanders once and for all they have no intention of increasing the penalty unit by more than the CPI by accepting the opposition's amendments.'

In consideration in detail of the relevant bill, the member for Mulgrave moved amendments that any increases to the penalty unit be linked to CPI. If the now Treasurer was so determined to link the increase in the penalty unit—the fine for people who have done the wrong thing—to CPI, why will he not do the same thing for everyday Queensland families struggling with their car registration fees? It is the height of hypocrisy by the Treasurer to argue for a CPI increase in opposition but want a cash grab at 2½ times the inflation rate when in government.


The main roads minister has also tried to justify the massive hike by claiming that without it roads will not be funded. The minister is now claiming that should the disallowance motion succeed Labor's ability to continue to roll out upgrades and other roadworks would be significantly impeded. What he is trying to do is hold Queensland to ransom. If you don't have this massive hike in rego, I will not build roads. What an outrageous thing to say. Clearly the minister is choosing to ignore that this motion does not cover the traffic improvement fee. Maybe we can excuse the minister and believe he lacks basic understanding of economics; that is, if the inflation rate falls the forecast cost of delivering roads will not be as high as well.

It should also be noted that, while the LNP froze the family car rego during our three years in office, we were also able to fund record spending on the Bruce Highway and funding for the Warrego Highway and other projects across Queensland. As this chamber knows, the only thing that this Minister for Main Roads has done during his time in office has been to put out media releases about projects that were started under the LNP, when the family car rego was frozen. Let us have a look at some of these things as claimed: construction has started on the Kin Kora intersection upgrade, Cooroy to Curra section C—all done under the freeze; safety works on Narangba Road—under the freeze; a safer Bruce Highway around Townsville—all releases from the Minister for Main Roads, projects started under the LNP when there was a freeze on family car rego. This is the minister who says that he will not be able to undertake road projects unless he gets a rego increase of 2½ times inflation.

It was particularly interesting to see the comments made by the Minister for Main Roads to the media when he was asked about the massive hike in rego and road funding. He told the media—and I quote from Channel 7 news—'There has never been a direct linkage between registration and road expenditure.' There we have it; the minister has been caught out by his own words. He claims that he will not be able to build roads if he does not get the massive rego hike, but then he says they are not linked. Once again, let's hear what he said, 'There has never been a direct linkage between registration and road expenditure.' The minister will not even promise to put the extra rego revenue into roads. So what the minister wants to do is use motorists as cash cows, but he will not even put the money into roads. He wants to blackmail Queensland motorists into backing his massive hike in rego and will not even commit to putting that extra money into roads.

The LNP believes a rego increase of 2½ times the inflation rate is unfair. I urge all MPs to stop this massive hike and back the disallowance motion tonight.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order! Before I call the Treasurer, I remind honourable members that if they wish to interject they need to be doing so from their own seat. I call the Treasurer.

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (7.51 pm): The former government had an economic plan wholly funded by asset sales—not wholly, but almost entirely. It would be disingenuous to use the word 'wholly'. I thought I should use that word up-front given that that is the same word that was used time and time again by the member for Indooroopilly. Honourable members will probably hear it from me a little bit as well. Once the asset sales are taken away, as the opposition leader did within minutes of thinking he had a sniff at the top job, their numbers come crashing down like a house of cards.

The flagrant disregard shown by those opposite for their own budget processes is truly remarkable. Let me be crystal clear about what we are discussing here. We are discussing an LNP plan to strip hundreds of millions of dollars from the roads budget, the very same roads budget that members opposite had in place just four months ago. The LNP's 2014-15 budget released in June last year by the member for Clayfield front-loaded the former treasurer's indexation policy into the forward estimates. To be specific, I suggest the member for Indooroopilly take a look at table 3.3 on

page 57 of Budget Paper No. 2. The member for Clayfield not only factored in the change to registration in his budget, but, just for good measure, he repeated it again in his midyear review released on 18 December last year, just weeks before the election.

Is the member for Indooroopilly really saying that the inflation rate had halved since the 18 December midyear review? What we know is that inflation in the midyear review went from 2.8 per cent in 2013-14 to 2.5 per cent in the MYFER. Then of course it is forecast to stay at 2.5 per cent in 2015-16. It shows how wrong their forecasts were. Again, for the benefit of the member for Indooroopilly, it is table 18 at page 25 of the midyear review—and I table that for the benefit of the House and certainly for the benefit of the member for Indooroopilly.

Tabled paper: Extract from State Budget 2014-15: Mid Year Fiscal and Economic Review, Taxation and royalty revenue and assumptions, p. 25 [525].

It is absolutely alarming that the LNP would seek to take a razor to their own roads budget. To be clear, the vast majority of all registration collected—over 81 per cent—is provided to the Department of Transport and Main Roads for the state's road program. Of course, we know that things go to the consolidated fund and then get distributed. If the LNP's plan to break their own budget commitments was to be accepted, this would cost the state over \$580 million in lost revenue over the forward estimates. Let me break it down for those opposite, who claim that they were fiscally responsible and claimed they were undertaking some kind of fiscal repair task. Now they want to cost the state over \$580 million of lost revenue over the forward estimates, which were based on their own midyear review. I will break it down for those opposite. This disallowance motion of part 15, in its entirety, would mean that the LNP was responsible for overseeing: \$51.8 million less spent on roads, infrastructure and other services for Queenslanders in 2015-16; \$111.5 million less spent in 2016-17; \$174.8 million less spent in 2017-18; and \$242.1 million less spent in 2018-19. This would result in a total of \$580 million less funding frozen out of spending on roads and infrastructure funding across Queensland. Queensland would return to the bad old days of the LNP's chronic underfunding of roads maintenance and a freeze on vital new regional roads projects.

I challenge the LNP tonight to explain to the people of Queensland what projects they would cut from their roads budget. Would they cut the \$80 million that they allocated in their budget this year for the Townsville ring road stage 4? Would they cut the \$47 million they allocated in their budget this year to continue works on the Bruce Highway across the Yeppen flood plain?

Mr Emerson: The Bruce Highway? You're the one who said it was misspending to spend money on the Bruce Highway.

Mr PITT: I will just go off on a tangent briefly because the member for Indooroopilly is still harping on about something that was in the newspaper. It was not even a direct quote, and we had a bit of a tit for tat at the estimates in 2013, from memory. It is absolutely shocking because he is being disingenuous yet again. If he wants to talk about how road funding goes under the LNP, it does not matter whether he is suggesting it is misspending, he is not even talking about spending; he is talking about cutting. That is exactly what you get from the LNP in terms of roads and roads maintenance. The member for Southern Downs apparently no longer supports the sale of assets in Queensland. He has no more magic pudding left to eat.

It is time for the LNP to come clean. Would they cut? What would they cut? As honourable members will hear from a range of government members tonight, disallowing part 15 of the Transport Legislation (Fees) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2015 will have a range of other serious impacts, particularly on national arrangements for heavy vehicle registrations. But the most significant impact of this stunt disallowance motion, a motion which sees the LNP arguing against themselves and their own budget—and that was done not just once, but twice; in the original budget last year and the midyear review—would be on the ability for the Queensland government to provide the roads funding that Queenslanders rightfully deserve and have budgeted for. Yesterday we saw the shadow Treasurer get the payroll tax rebate very wrong, confusing monthly figures with total figures. He confused \$600 per month with over \$7,000 per year. Previously we have seen him criticise his own government's midyear review thinking that it was Labor's document. He is clearly not getting any help from the member for Clayfield, who obviously wants to be the shadow Treasurer at the expense of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I guess he will have to get in line because we will have to see what happens with the member for Everton and whether the opposition leader decides to go to Maranoa. There is plenty on the books over there and we are certainly paying close attention.

The member for Clayfield's magic pudding of asset sales was a cruel hoax. They have no credibility on economic matters. They want to further undermine the budget by 'having another go' at their election costings and trying to rewrite their own history. They have no credibility on this area

whatsoever, and now they want to shoot more holes in sources of funding for roads infrastructure across Queensland. They will happily starve projects of funding if it means scoring a cheap political point, as they are trying to do now. The former LNP government tried every trick in the book to worm its way out of funding for vital infrastructure. They have got form here.

So let's go through some of their sordid history. Those opposite were particularly good at wriggling out of jointly funded infrastructure projects such as roads and other key transport infrastructure. In 2013 the LNP government rejected over \$700 million in funding from the federal Labor government for Cross River Rail. They were holding out for more money, yet when the Abbott government was subsequently elected, predictably all of the money for public transport was taken off the table, and this happened under the former transport minister's watch. This came as no surprise to anyone except the member for Clayfield and the member for Indooroopilly. So Queensland ended up with nothing. Even when they did manage to come up with an agreement with the federal government, they still managed to muck it up.


In relation to the Ipswich Motorway, Darra to Rocklea section, the former LNP government backed out of a written national partnership agreement mere months after signing it in October of last year. The LNP government signed on the dotted line to a commitment of \$279 million and then pulled out without explanation. In fact, just last week the Secretary of the federal Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, Mr Mike Mrdak, described this situation as such—

It is unusual. We generally find that, while there is a lot of negotiation, once the National Partnership Agreement is signed, with funding, we generally get on with the business of progressing the project. I am not aware of any other projects that are being held up in this way.

It is little wonder that the Prime Minister gave up on the Newman LNP government, not visiting Queensland once during the campaign. Their promises are not worth the paper they are written on. I have seen firsthand that you cannot take the member for Indooroopilly at his word. The member tried to verbal comments that I have made in the past to cover up his own lack of commitment to the Bruce Highway, and I touched on that earlier. I have corrected the record before on this matter and I am happy to do so again. The former LNP government talked a big game on the Bruce Highway in particular, but we found that they were wanting when it came to the crunch.

This disallowance motion tonight is another populist pledge from an opposition bereft of any real economic strategy who wants to grandstand about policies they did not themselves take to the election. Of course they jettisoned their asset sales plan two days after the election because the member for Southern Downs thought that he could get the top job. Sadly for him, it is another missed opportunity and we are going to be the ones who are talking to Queenslanders about that missed opportunity for the next couple of years.

They budgeted themselves the current policy settings for registration, and now they have dropped their own budget just like they dropped their former treasurer. What a sham; how disingenuous! We went to the election and said that we would be adopting the revenue policy settings of the previous government, looking at what was in the forward estimates and carrying that through—which is what we have done. For all the squawking that the member for Indooroopilly is doing, quite frankly he is shooting himself in the foot. He is having a go at the member for Clayfield; he is having a go at the former treasurer who prepared the document that was not only in the budget, but was then in the midyear review. This is absolutely disingenuous. This is a stunt motion from the 'hairdo from Indooroopilly', and we certainly know that when it comes to this there is form. We have given consideration beyond the forward estimates to looking at long run CPI. We are committed to that, but we are committed to making sure that we do not see any changes to the revenue policy settings here in Queensland because we are up-front with Queenslanders, unlike the LNP.

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (8.01 pm): The poor old Treasurer had to stretch that out to get to the end of the 10 minutes, didn't he? I have said it before and I will say it again: it is clear that this inexperienced government and this clumsy Treasurer are having a disastrous impact on Queensland. Tonight we are trying to save Queenslanders from the rapacious clutches of the member for Mulgrave and his budget blowout. He is the shining light of the insatiable big-spending Labor government, but the trouble is that he has to fund his voracious appetite for bloated bureaucracy and jobs for union mates. But for whom does the bell toll, Madam Deputy Speaker? It is the Queensland taxpayer, that's who.

Queensland's working families, already worried sick about job security and the prospect of an economic downturn thanks to the profligate spending of this Labor government, are now facing another hit to their budget bottom line. Every year he wants a Queensland family with a four-cylinder car to fork out \$290 to register it plus, of course, the compulsory third party and traffic improvement

levy. We have every reason to expect that he will look at upping that as well. Was the avaricious Treasurer happy to settle for CPI? No. We have already heard the member for Indooroopilly incessantly going on about what the inflation rate was, and of course it is 2½ times the rate. The Treasurer could not tell us. He looks at the statistics about state final demand and tells us that we were in recession a couple of weeks ago; today the recession is supposedly gone thanks to his great work. He really is a miracle worker! If there were thousands in here, I am sure he could turn loaves and fishes into something for them.

We know that Labor cannot manage the state's finances. Let us have a quick recap on tax and charge increases under Labor. When the member for Inala was the transport minister, car rego went up by 30 per cent over four years; public transport fares increased 15 per cent not once, not twice, but every year under Labor. There is a document that my colleague the former treasurer has given me that the member for Mulgrave put on his own website some time ago and members will remember this: myth busters.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: It is an attack that I am happy to bring back again, because he bragged in this paper when he said—

Already we have:

- raised land tax and stamp duty at the top end
- increased taxes on casinos and introduced new liquor licensing fees ...
- increased coal royalties
- increased motor vehicle stamp duty and we have recently introduced a rise to car registration.


That is a direct quote from the member for Mulgrave during the 53rd Parliament when Labor were in power, so that is what Queenslanders can look forward to: not just increased rego, the subject of this disallowance motion, but they were proud of the fact that they raised taxes because for Labor it is all about spending other people's money.

Let us contrast that with the cost of living under the LNP. We committed to saving average Queensland families \$330 every year and, unlike those opposite, we put money back in their wallets. We froze the standard electricity tariff—excluding the cost of carbon—saving around \$120 for an average household. We froze car rego fees for more than 2.5 million family vehicles, something that the former minister for transport committed to in the 2012 campaign, and we delivered. We reinstated the principal place of residence concessional rate for stamp duty, providing savings of up to \$7,175 when buying a home. We delivered a rebate of \$80 per connection for households supplied by the SEQ bulk water grid. We halved public transport fare increases and rewarded regular commuters with free travel after nine journeys. Last year the former minister for transport, the member for Indooroopilly—who is here tonight and has moved this disallowance motion—cut fares for commuters and froze them at that level for 2015. That had never been done before. When the member for Buderim was the minister responsible, we gave \$150 vouchers to help children and young people join a sport or recreation club. We gazetted amended electricity prices after the carbon tax was abolished, with an average family saving about \$170 per year, and we provided an electricity rebate for pensioners and seniors. That is right, Madam Deputy Speaker: there was money coming into Queensland's households instead of haemorrhaging out to pay for Labor's profligacy.

Then we doubled the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme which had not changed since about 1989. I know that the members for Whitsunday and Gregory are here, and they were certainly appreciative of that. We did that in the 54th Parliament, and we did that so patients could get access to the best medical care no matter where they were.

Ms Leahy interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: It was over 20 years, I say to the member for Gregory, since that had been increased and we doubled it. As I said yesterday, the clock is ticking. We have six weeks until the budget is handed down—six weeks for the Treasurer to show his hand on how is he going to drive down debt without raising taxes and charges. But we are going to give him a helping hand with this one: stop him before he gets a chance to slug Queenslanders for driving. Limit car registration increases to CPI because that is fair. We want the Treasurer to keep the cost of living down so that Queenslanders continue to enjoy living in this great state.

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (8.07 pm): I rise to speak against the disallowance motion of part 15 of the Transport Legislation (Fees) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2015. I am surprised that the opposition have moved to disallow part 15, which relates to the increase in registration fees. The

reason that I am surprised is that the LNP's 2014-15 budget included a 3.5 per cent increase in registration fees in their forward estimates for 2015-16. This disallowance motion is hypocritical given that the opposition had themselves budgeted for a 3.5 per cent increase.

If the LNP disallowance is successful, then the current registration rates will remain in place. The 2012 rate would remain for passenger cars and light commercial vehicles registered for private purpose use across all vehicle categories and the 2014-15 rate would remain in place for all other vehicle categories. If this disallowance motion is passed, it will result in a shortfall in 2015-16 of \$51.8 million. If this freeze continues it will lead to a shortfall of \$580.3 million over four years. This shortfall could have a direct impact on my own electorate of Lytton, putting the \$90,000 contribution towards the construction of a cycleway on Wynnum Road from Lindum to Cameron Parade, which is scheduled to commence in July 2015, at risk.

Approaching the July 2015 budget, the Palaszczuk government has committed to stop the LNP cuts to government services. We are committed to investing in our transport infrastructure for regional jobs and safety. I remind members again that the LNP's own budget documents built in increases from 1 July 2015. Therefore, I question why the opposition would move to disallow something they themselves were committed to.

Queensland is not the most expensive state for registration fees. Compared to other states' current pricing structure, Queensland registration fees would still be the third cheapest in Australia for four-cylinder cars used for private purposes, and for six-cylinder or eight-cylinder cars used for private purposes, Queensland would remain the sixth cheapest registration in the country.

The Palaszczuk government will be introducing a new payment option for car, motorcycle, trailer and vessel registration. Previously customers only had the choice of paying every six months or every 12 months. We will introduce the option of a three-monthly payment. This scheme will be available for cars, motorcycles and trailers, giving motorists the option of an all-in-one direct debit package.

As part of the introduction of the new payment scheme, we are also reducing the surcharge for six-monthly registration fees from 1 July 2015. If motorists choose to pay their rego every six months they will save \$9.50 on their bill, with the surcharge dropping from \$34.70 annually to \$25.20. This means that the surcharge will drop from its current rate of \$17.35 to \$12.60 on a six-month direct debit, and the three-month direct debit surcharge will be \$6.30. These new payment plans offer families the option to manage their household budgets.

I am proud to be part of the Palaszczuk government—proud of our commitment to workers and families and proud to be part of a government that is about creating jobs and returning services to our communities. In just over three months the Palaszczuk government has introduced new laws restoring transparency to political donations, established landmark new measures to protect our Great Barrier Reef and reintroduced Skilling Queenslanders for Work, an initiative that creates thousands of jobs for Queenslanders.

This disallowance motion is mischievous and hypocritical and would leave a huge hole in the budget. Under the previous LNP government, the forward estimates reflected a 3.5 per cent increase in fees and charges—

Opposition members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order! Members!

Ms PEASE: The previous government put a three-year freeze on registration fees for family vehicles. This was introduced on 1 July 2012 and applied to all passenger cars and light commercial vehicles registered for private, personal use. However, the previous government did not make any commitment during the 2015 election campaign to extend this freeze.

Mr Costigan interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Whitsunday, I am struggling to hear the member for Lytton. She deserves the opportunity to be heard. If you wish to make a contribution to the debate you can do so later.


Ms PEASE: The registration freeze will cease after 30 June 2015 following a decision of government to apply the indexation policy amount of 3.5 per cent. Under the previous LNP government, the forward estimates also reflected a 3.5 per cent increase in fees and charges post 30 June 2015.

We all know the LNP's record on cost-of-living expenses for Queenslanders. The Palaszczuk government, however, looks after vulnerable Queenslanders who are doing it tough. Under the previous LNP government, power bills went through the roof—a whopping \$440 increase on the average bill. Queensland's electricity prices went from well below the national average to well above it. This disallowance motion is hypocritical and, if passed, would create a shortfall that would have a huge impact on the budget.

On 1 July our government will introduce our new payment scheme. We have achieved in the first three months of government something the LNP could not achieve in three years. This new scheme offers families the opportunity to manage their budget and save, and it makes sense to roll registration into family budget planning with the added incentive of reducing surcharges. This is part of the Palaszczuk government's commitment to improving services to all Queenslanders.

The LNP's own budget documents show that they built in the increases from 1 July 2015. The rego freeze was only intended to be for three years and the LNP had no plan to continue it. I remind members again that this was supported by the previous government. They did not make a commitment during the 2015 election campaign to extend that freeze. They included the increase in their forward estimates. We all know the record of the LNP on cost-of-living expenses for Queenslanders. Importantly, we have introduced new payment schemes including the option for customers to pay every three months.

As I have said before, I am proud to be part of the Palaszczuk government, I am proud of our commitment to our workers and to families, I am proud to be the elected representative of Lytton, representing the good people of Wynnum, Manly, Lota and Hemmant, and I am proud to be part of a government that is about creating jobs and returning services to our communities. I urge the House to vote against the motion to disallow part 15 of the Transport Legislation (Fees) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2015.

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (8.15 pm): I think they are sniffing their petrol fumes. The excitement is going to their heads! What I hear is almost a frivolity about the fact that Labor will raise car registration fees in this state yet again—way above the inflation rate. One thing about Labor does not change: they have no hesitation in putting their hands into the pockets of everyday taxpayers. This is an unjustified hike in the cost of car registration. This is way beyond the inflation rate. There is no justification. It is gouging motorists' finances. I will vote against Labor's outrageous hike to the cost of car rego. It is 2½ times CPI.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Grace): Order! Member for Lockyer. There is too much conversation between everyone. Can we quieten down a little bit tonight. Settle down.

Ms SIMPSON: I have heard nothing from the Labor government that justifies this. It is way beyond the current CPI rate, which we now know is at 1.4 per cent. This is an increase of 3.5 per cent. I am voting against it because it is unfair and it is wrong. It is whacking those who can least afford it.


All I hear from Labor members opposite is justification rather than a real reason. People in this state are about to experience things going back to the way they were before Labor lost in 2012. Last time Labor were in government, Queensland became the most expensive place in Australia in which to register a family car. They have learned nothing. Car registration went up by 30 per cent over four years. Labor's hikes made Queensland the most expensive place for people to register their cars. Now they are back in power but they have learned nothing. All we have heard are excuses. They have learned nothing. They still think motorists should pay way above the inflation rate for registering a car.

In contrast, the LNP recognised that there was a problem with the cost of registering a family car, and we committed to and delivered a freeze on family car registration for the term we were in government. We also kept building roads. What is Labor saying today? 'If you vote for this disallowance motion we will have to cut back on roads.' That did not happen under us, so why should it happen if increases are limited to the rate of CPI? We have not even seen a roads infrastructure plan from this government, but already they are promising to blackmail people. Their promise is to blackmail people if we do not allow increases to car registration way above the inflation rate. It is not justified.

Where was the mention of this hike during the last election campaign? The Premier was silent with regard to this increase. This is a new increase way and above CPI and this government was secretive about that fact. The CPI rates are out. The official statistics are not a forward estimate but are current and should be what guides the actual registration increase. However, that is not what this

government has done. You see, we are voting on a Labor regulation here today. This is going to be owned by the Labor government because it has the current CPI rates and it should be fully informed as to what is a fair increase. But, no, it has chosen to revert to type—to go back to the way it was when it was last in government and not tell people about this outrageous hike ahead of the election and then when it got on the treasury benches gouge back those very real dollars from Queensland motorists.

As we have also heard, the cost of public transport under the Labor government went up outrageously and was due to go up 15 per cent per year under Labor. However, it was the LNP government that sought to cut those increases and to ensure that there was fairness. In fact, there was even an improvement in that there was a reduction in costs on a number of public transport routes. Our way of doing business is to try to be more efficient and effective in order to deliver more services but be up-front with people with respect to their hard-earned dollars. It is disappointing that Labor has reverted to type and I will vote against this outrageous hike way and above CPI that this Labor government is putting into this regulation. Members opposite in the Labor Party have the opportunity right here and right now in 2015 to make a choice about whether they are going to stand up for the motorists of Queensland or go above the CPI in this regard and put an unnecessary burden over and above what would be appreciated or in fact understood by the public.


 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (8.21 pm): Madam Deputy Speaker, I urge you to take note of the clock. On this Wednesday, 3 June, we note the date, the time and the place. This is the moment when the economic credibility of the alternative LNP government was trashed. This is where those opposite surrendered any pretence that Queenslanders should have another look at the economic credibility of the people who went to the last election with the Strong Choices asset sales. I rise with regret that this is the last vestige of economic credibility that the LNP hoped to hold on to after the economic disaster that was the last Newman-Springborg-Nicholls government. The very revenue that this last government had promised the people of Queensland is to be trashed, throwing it away without any semblance that the LNP could put forward an economic plan that Queenslanders could have confidence in. In this case we see that the Liberal National Party went to the last election with a failed economic plan to sell off \$34 billion of Queensland's assets, but it has now junked that. This act of economic vandalism of its own budget is indeed only matched by the vandalism of the assets of Queensland that the LNP took to the last election. It went to the election pretending to have a plan for growth, but now we have found out that under the last two quarters of Nicholls's failed directorship of the Queensland economy we saw Nicholls's negative quarters of growth. We know that its pretence to grow the economy was junked too.

Every member of this parliament feels keenly that we want to provide the services and infrastructure that the people of this state need, especially the road funding that Queenslanders rely on. We on this side are keenly aware of the costs that Queenslanders face with their household budgets. We must balance these two. That is our challenge in this place. However, if we are to cynically attack any measure that raises revenue needed to provide essential services, then we would fail the very Queenslanders who entrusted us to be here. The public is more and more cynical about the role of those who seek to represent them and this disallowance motion would further feed into the cynicism that Queenslanders feel about politicians, especially the LNP members opposite who are so cynically seeking to mislead the public through this disallowance motion. I say with a heavy heart that this is exactly the cynical game playing and misleading sort of leadership highlighted in the recent report of former premier Rob Borbidge and former treasurer Joan Sheldon. In a scathing report, they made it clear that these types of misleading stunts have to end. We have heard in this place that the LNP made it clear through its budget and its campaign that it had no other intention and had not budgeted for anything else but this same increase. The hypocrisy of this action is simply breathtaking and flies in the face of the report that those opposite commissioned about themselves. However, the report has only been out a short time and perhaps the members of the LNP have not had enough time to internalise their behaviour in the direction of this report.

I represent the growing suburbs of the western part of Logan taking in the Wembley Road overpass, the Logan Motorway, the Mount Lindesay Highway, Camp Cable Road, Teviot Road, Chambers Flat Road, Cusack Lane, Browns Plains Road and Waterford Mount Tambourine Road. They are the backbone of a network shared by council and state that are vital for Logan residents to get to work, shopping, sport and to visit friends. Already I have had the opportunity to sit down with the roads minister to talk about their needs, the challenges and the opportunities to improve those roads. Many who travel on the Mount Lindesay Highway would know that in the last term of the Labor government there was an extensive investment in the Mount Lindesay Highway building overpasses at Crowson Lane and Chambers Flat Road where they intersect with the Mount Lindesay Highway

and the overpass at Stoney Camp Road and Granger Road. They are major investments that will stand the test of time. They are built to be ready to take more lanes under them. That is forward thinking for future needs—a lasting Labor investment.

However, the investment under the LNP sadly dwindled to less than one-tenth of the investment committed. I have had to fight hard to get these roads back on the agenda that had been deprioritised by the LNP. Already I have worked with the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and he is undertaking a review of the entire length of the Mount Lindesay Highway to assess the safety and needs of the road. I am sorry to say, Minister, that I will continue to be at your door to remind you of Logan's needs. However, the residents of Logan know that if the economic wreckers and hypocrites take their vandalism to the elements of the budget that were part of their budget, then we destroy all of that good work. Logan locals do not want to see forward budgets and investments torn up and thrown away. They need vital investment in our roads and they need this government to be committed to improving the quality and safety of our roads. The opposition's legacy of letting down Queenslanders on the costs of living leaves us little confidence in terms of what those opposite say here. Queenslanders do not forget the record 22 per cent increases in electricity bills those opposite delivered in just one year—a whopping \$440 increase on the average bill. They do not forget. They do not forget that just months ago the LNP reinforced that it would have made this same change. It was in the LNP budget. It was in the midyear economic review. It was part of the LNP government at the election and it would have been part of an LNP government. The hypocrisy is breathtaking. I am less angry than simply disappointed that we do not have a more responsible, measured opposition. I can do nothing but urge MPs present to support this measure as presented by both parties at the election, at the budget and at the midyear economic review and to reject the member for Indooroopilly's discredited disallowance motion.

 **Mr COSTIGAN** (Whitsunday—LNP) (8.28 pm): Tonight I rise to support this disallowance motion in relation to the motor vehicle registration price hike that Queensland motorists can ill afford. In my role as shadow assistant minister to the opposition leader for North Queensland I have visited many communities north of the Tropic of Capricorn in recent months—Rockhampton, Yeppoon, Nebo, Bowen, the Burdekin, Townsville, Cairns, Mareeba and Port Douglas to name just a few, as well as communities in my own electorate around Mackay and the Whitsundays. I have no doubt that all of those communities would expect me to stand up here tonight in this place for them and say no to Labor's 3.5 per cent price hike for car rego for mum and dad motorists in this state. That is 2½ times the rate of inflation and in stark contrast, as we have already heard from members on this side of the House tonight, to what the former LNP government did when we were in office, delivering a freeze on car registration in our quest to combat the rising cost of living.

For the record, I understand around one million motorists benefited from that LNP policy. It is a policy that I am proud of and one that I am sure every other member on this side of the chamber is still fiercely proud of. Unlike South-East Queensland where, as we all know, there are plenty of buses, trains and ferries, the provincial cities in the regions along the coast are devoid of such public transport. There are some buses, but that is about it—no commuter trains and not many ferries either, unless people are perhaps spotting the whales, the dugongs and the dolphins while they cross the Whitsunday Passage.

Put simply, the good folk of Central Queensland, North Queensland, Far North Queensland—in fact, more broadly the good people of rural and regional Queensland—will not cop this greedy, over-the-top price hike on registration from a tax-happy, wasteful Labor government that has form. And guess what? I will not cop it, either. We all remember those price hikes in registration under Labor in the past. We have heard it already tonight in this debate: in fact, 30 per cent over the last four years Labor was in office. We all remember who the transport minister was then. Yes, it was the now Premier of Queensland. Those old price hikes have her DNA all over them.

If the LNP loses this most important fight tonight, Labor will again have Queensland well and truly on the way to being the most expensive place to have car registration in the Commonwealth. That is not the Queensland that I remember when I started my working life at the top of the Whitsundays 26 years ago. At that time, Queensland was the low-tax state in the nation. It worries me that, sadly, people have become immune to these ridiculous price hikes. This is a rip-off.

A few years ago the then Labor government said nothing about ripping away the fuel subsidy that was enjoyed by Queenslanders for so many years. Labor went to an election and said nothing and then went bang after getting back in. And guess what? Labor is back to its old tricks. Out of the blue, once more, it is gouging the mum-and-dad motorists of this state. Sadly, the further you get away from this city the bigger the impact is felt, especially for the little bloke. That is a disgrace.


If this grab for cash materialises, from Weipa to Windorah, from Collinsville to Camooweal, blue-collar workers in this state will unite and push this Labor government at the next available opportunity. Tonight, I call on the Labor members for Barron River, Cairns, Townsville, Thuringowa, Mackay, Keppel and others, especially those representing the regions, to show some ticker, to show some courage, and stand up for their electorates and say no to this, because their constituents will not cop it one iota. They do not want it and they cannot afford it in these difficult times, especially those people in the regions, especially those in our drought stricken areas in the west of Queensland, which I saw firsthand only late last year.

As for the members of the cabinet, specifically the members for Rockhampton and Mundingburra, how can they go along with this prebudget bloodsucking of the humble Queensland motorist?

Mr Byrne interjected.

Mr COSTIGAN: I hear the member for Rockhampton interjecting. He must be terrified about losing that ministerial leather and all the perks that go with it.

Finally, I have a message for the Treasurer and the member for Mulgrave, who clearly has sold out the people of his native Far North Queensland. As we heard earlier, he once thought that spending money on the Bruce Highway was a complete waste of money. Now, he is robbing the motorists of Queensland. In the words of Derryn Hinch, shame, shame, shame!

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (8.33 pm): I rise to oppose the disallowance motion moved by the member for Indooroopilly. Make no mistake: the previous LNP government had no intention of freezing registration. The members opposite can grandstand all they like, like the member for Whitsunday, who just said that he is interested in having ferries in his area. I am not sure where they would run from—the Gooseponds or maybe along the Prossie River? What a waste of money. The bottom line is that the previous LNP government planned to end the freeze. The LNP's own 2014-15 budget confirms that. It had the same 3.5 per cent increase in registration fees.

Mr Costigan interjected.

Mrs GILBERT: I take that interjection. All that yelling that he did was exciting. The increase was included in the LNP's forward estimates, not just once but twice. It is the height of hypocrisy for the members opposite to stand up in this House tonight and pretend otherwise. They are the great pretenders. They say one thing and they do another. They have form. They looked workers in the eye and they said that their jobs would be safe. Then they went ahead and sacked 24,000 workers. That was a disgraceful, sad chapter in Queensland's history. They left behind a legacy of broken promises to Queenslanders. They planned to cut jobs and services and concessions for Queenslanders doing it tough. They planned to sell vital public assets and they planned a 3.5 per cent increase in registration fees. They have learned nothing from the mistakes of the past; they are the same old LNP members.


Although it is necessary to index all fees and charges, the Palaszczuk government will continue to look after those vulnerable Queenslanders who are doing it tough. We all know the LNP's record on cost-of-living expenses. Under the previous LNP government, electricity prices went through the roof. Queenslanders were hit hard with a 43 per cent increase in their electricity bills—on average, a \$440 increase over three years. We all know the real impact that that increase in the cost of electricity had on households. A recent report from the Queensland Competition Authority shows that last year the number of households disconnected for nonpayment of their power bills reached a record high of 26,636. Under the LNP, the price hikes went up and up and up. Of the total disconnections for nonpayment, more than 22 per cent were pensioners. Our most vulnerable Queenslanders had their power cut off because they could not pay their bills, which had skyrocketed under the previous LNP government. Worse still, in that same year the LNP picked on pensioners in its state budget. Pensioners will never forget the LNP's plan writ large in its 2014 budget papers to cut \$54 million in concessions.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to ensuring that households are able to manage their cost-of-living pressures. That is why we have introduced new payment schemes, including the option to pay registration fees every three months. I know that will help families in my electorate. The payment scheme will be available for cars, motorcycles and trailers, giving motorists an option for an all-in-one direct debit package. This new plan offers householders options to manage their budgets and save. It makes sense to be able to roll registration into household budgets, planning without waiting for six months or 12 months. As part of the introduction of this new option, the Queensland government is also reducing the surcharge for six-monthly registration fees from 1 July. The introduction of these charges is part of our drive to continue to improve the services that we offer to Queenslanders.

Importantly, if the registration freeze were to continue for the next four years, this would lead to a loss in revenue of \$518 million. That is more than half a billion dollars. Those members opposite would cut road projects to make up for this massive shortfall. That spells bad news for the planned Mackay ring-road in my electorate. It is a \$565 million investment that is going to deliver 600 jobs. So, after three years of careful planning, one of Mackay's largest infrastructure projects may end up on the scrap heap. Stage 1 includes an 11-kilometre, two-lane highway bypass, which means that motorists will avoid 10 sets of traffic lights from Stockroute Road to Bald Hill Road. There would also be 14 new bridges, local road overpasses and major waterway crossings over the Pioneer River and the Fursden Creek flood plain.

This project is important for those people who live and work in Mackay. It is also important for the people who live in the neighbouring electorates of Mirani and Whitsunday, and the member for Whitsunday wants to vote against this. We cannot afford not to have this ring-road. That is why I urge the members of this House to vote against this destructive motion moved by the member for Indooroopilly.


As a former minister for transport and main roads he should know better. He should know how important the road network is for people in regional Queensland. He should know that for many regional communities a safe and reliable road network is absolutely vital.

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (8.40 pm): I rise to support the disallowance motion. The increase in registration could not come at a worse time for people in my electorate, in particular people in the western part of my electorate who are now suffering under one of the worst droughts in living memory. Not only has the Labor Party increased registration; that increase is double CPI which I think is an absolute insult to the people, including local hardworking people, graziers and small business operators suffering under this drought. Any increase in the cost of what I call kitchen table bills is going to hurt mums and dads, pensioners, small business operators and, of course, graziers and farmers in my electorate who right now cannot afford the increase.

Vehicle registration costs for a four-cylinder vehicle will increase from \$280.05 to \$289.85. Add CTP and the traffic improvement fee and that is now \$677. For a family with a six-cylinder car the cost will increase by \$15.50 to \$458.95. Add the CTP and the traffic improvement fee and it is now \$846.10. For a person owning an eight-cylinder vehicle—and a lot of people in Western Queensland own eight-cylinder vehicles out of necessity—the cost will go up more than \$20 next financial year to \$642.70. Add the CTP and traffic improvement fee and it is now \$1,029.85. This is a lot of money to fork out from the household budget and it is hitting families in drought affected communities such as Longreach, Ilfracombe, Isisford, Aramac, Muttaborra, Blackall, Tambo, Barcaldine, Quilpie, Windorah, Jundah and Stonehenge, all local communities impacted by drought.

The registration fee hike comes on top of already expensive fuel prices that we have in Western Queensland. At a time when rural and regional Queensland families are under increasing cost-of-living pressures, the Labor government is treating them like a cash cow. This increase is also impacting people on the eastern side of my electorate. On the Central Highlands we have a major downturn in the resources mining industry. Towns like Emerald, Blackwater, Capella, Tieri and Clermont have been hit hard by job losses because of the mining downturn, and small businesses in those regions are doing it tough. The last thing we need right now is a hike in registration costs and especially an increase that is double CPI. That is another increase to household bills on the kitchen table, another hit to an already stretched household budget. That is another blow to small businesses and those local communities because that is more money to pay on registration instead of flowing through those local communities. One only has to go to towns like Blackwater or Emerald and talk to small business operators doing it tough and look at their financial spreadsheets that have seen a massive decline. The money that the Labor government is slugging local families will disappear from those local communities and be sucked up in increased registration costs. It is not a smart move when our communities in that region are doing it tough.

I call on the Labor government not to do this, not to slug these families in my electorate which have been hit hard by drought in the west and, of course, the resources downturn in the east. The Labor government has previously said it wants to lead a government of integrity and accountability. I call on those opposite to also lead a government of compassion. Why not step up tonight and say to families in my electorate, 'I don't believe car registration fees should go up at 2½ times the rate of CPI.'

 **Mr WHITING** (Murrumba—ALP) (8.43 pm): I rise to oppose this disallowance motion in relation to the Transport Legislation (Fees) Amendment Regulation. We have heard the member for Indooroopilly accusing us of blackmail by linking this to roads funding. I will give members a real

example of blackmail: it was during the election campaign when Campbell Newman stood up on Boundary Road at North Lakes with the then member and said, 'If you do not vote for an LNP member you're not going to get the Boundary Road overpass.' Well, guess what? We got rid of the LNP and we got the Boundary Road overpass and we did not have to sell assets. Now, that was blackmail.

We have heard a lot about how the other side of the House had frozen registration fees. What did they really freeze? They froze infrastructure. What have those opposite built? One thing: this large phallic-like building over the road, One William Street. That is their legacy. That is the only thing they have built. They froze doing infrastructure.

Mr Watts interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ryan): Order! Member for Murrumba, we will wait for the House to come to order. Member for Toowoomba North, your interjections are disorderly and if they persist I will be warning you under the standing orders. I call the member for Murrumba.

Mr WHITING: The key words that describe this disallowance tonight are 'hypocritical', 'opportunistic' and 'irresponsible'. Hypocritical because those opposite were going to introduce it anyway if they were returned to government. If they had won they would have introduced a 3.5 per cent car registration increase from 1 July. They factored it into their midyear review released on 18 December last year. Table 18 on page 25 of their midyear review clearly shows the revenue by car registration increasing by 3.5 per cent and adding in a natural increase as well.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr WHITING: I take that interjection. It is an estimate. They were so convinced of it they made the estimate twice. They put it in there twice. They are saying, 'Don't believe us, we only wrote it twice.' It is irresponsible because it is untrue to say that we have the most expensive car registration in Australia. That is what those members opposite have been going out and saying in recent times. It is simply not true. Let me give members the facts. For a small car in New South Wales a person pays \$280 weight, \$62 rego, add in \$599 for third-party and the bill is \$945.70. In Victoria a person pays \$270 rego and no other fees. Add in CTP of \$487.30 and it is \$757.70. In Queensland it is \$280.05 in rego, plus \$48 traffic improvement levy. Add in your CTP of \$323.60 and the bill is \$652.50. In New South Wales it is \$945; Victoria, \$757; Queensland, for a small car, \$652. What those opposite have been saying is simply untrue.

It is irresponsible to bring this up because we need the funds to build roads in Queensland. If this does get up tonight this will cost the state \$51.829 million in 2015-16. If this freeze continues over the next four years the state could lose \$580.3 million. What will that mean to our roads projects? Does the other side want to cut the flood-proofing works on the Yeppen Floodplain? That is \$50 million and 350 jobs. There is \$21 million in safety works going on west of the Great Divide on the Warrego Highway. Do those opposite want to cut that \$21 million and sack those 210 workers?

Opposition members interjected.

Mr WHITING: What about the North Brisbane Bikeway Stage 2 along McDonald Road in the electorate of Clayfield? Does the member for Clayfield want to dump that one? What about the \$6.9 million that is needed for the Victoria Point Bus Station at Redland Bay Road? Does the member for Redlands want to cut that one? What will this registration freeze mean for the 28,000 workers on all our road-building projects in Queensland? Let me point out that the member for Indooroopilly has form when it comes to job losses due to cuts. As the former minister for transport he presided over the loss of 2,000 jobs from his department. That was 22.4 per cent; one in five workers.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ryan): The House will come to order. It is getting a bit rowdy in the chamber. People will have to respect the standing orders and respect the Speaker.

Mr WHITING: I hear a lot from the other side about the roads that they need in their areas. How will we pay for these road projects if \$580 million is stripped out of the budget over the next four years? How can those opposite face their electorate and say they have lobbied for these projects when they have voted to reduce the funding for these projects? That is what they will be saying to their electors: they have voted to take away money from road projects in their area.

It is irresponsible and hypocritical because it leaves a big black hole in the budget. This irresponsibility is to be expected: their side is always leaving massive holes in budgets; it is in their DNA. Look at what happened with Hockey in the recent second budget, with Queensland facing an

\$18 billion funding shortfall in health and education over the next decade. They have no regard for the integrity of public budgets and how we actually fund projects. It is opportunistic because they actually do not believe in this. It is only a tactic. It is part of a larger strategy of mischief and mayhem. In the end they do not really want to strip money from road projects in their areas. However, if they do vote for it, we will be telling their electors that this is what they have done.

Mr PERRETT (Gympie—LNP) (8.50 pm): I rise to support the disallowance motion in the interests of modest and hardworking families and in recognition that, in my electorate of Gympie, the car is a necessity and not an option. I support this motion for a number of reasons, but most importantly because the government's proposal to increase car registration fees is unfair, unjust and unreasonable. Its proposal is purely a money-making exercise to offset the unfunded promises that the government has made to its union mates and controllers. Its proposal is about treating the public as cash cows. Its proposal is about pandering to environmental purists who watch with glee when the cost of running a car increases, as they somehow think that this state can operate purely on pedal power. Its proposal is unreasonable and excessive when contrasted with the fee freeze that existed under the previous LNP government. That fee freeze was introduced because fees had increased by 30 per cent during the previous Labor government's last four years in office. Registrations will increase more than twice the level of inflation.

Raising car registration fees is purely and simply about making money to fill the government coffers. This is not a road safety measure. This is not a measure to increase infrastructure. This is not a measure about creating jobs. This is not a measure to help assist families, workers and businesses that are struggling to stay ahead. This government is bereft of ways to fund its promises to the union movement, which sees the Queensland government as a gravy train and taxpayers as a milk cow.

Yesterday we heard the union movement arguing for minimum wage increases because, in the words of the ACTU secretary, Dave Oliver, wage increases were needed to 'relieve the stress on low-income households in the face of increasing ... costs'. Guess what? It is this government, the unions' government, that is unashamedly increasing costs for ordinary Queenslanders. In fact, yesterday's minimum wage earner's entire weekly wage increase has just been grabbed by the Queensland government in car registration. Where is the union movement when increasing costs are being introduced by a Labor government? Nowhere! Their concern is mere noise; it is not real.

I cannot help but ask, what is next? This is payback time. Time and time again union bosses boast that they have unfettered influence in government decision-making. Union bosses are boasting of the influence they wield in the Palaszczuk government's party and cabinet rooms. One high-profile union leader even linked government policies to the resources poured into campaigns.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ryan): Order! Member for Gympie, I have been listening to what you have to say. I draw your attention to the subject matter of the motion before the House. I ask you to come back to that subject matter.

Mr PERRETT: All right. It would be interesting to see if the increase in car registration fees is another union dictated policy. The government is stuck in a time warp. Measure after measure, announcement after announcement and program after program are reruns of those under previous Labor governments. Increasing car registration fees over and above inflation is another case of back to the future. In fact, in 2011, as the minister for transport and multicultural affairs, the Premier stood in this House and justified increases with cross-subsidisation of public transport. She said—

... 'We know there are cost-of-living expenses ...'


...

That is why we subsidise the cost of some public transport modes ... giving people a choice about whether to drive or whether to use public transport.

I have news for the government: in an electorate such as Gympie, we do not have the privilege of choosing between those options. Using a car is a necessity, just as it is throughout most of regional Queensland. That throwaway line that residents can use public transport is pandering to inner-city environmental purists. In my electorate, families are not affluent and these increases are not easily absorbed. Every dollar counts. In regional areas, you cannot walk down the street and jump on a bus every 10 minutes or catch a train. Car costs are not a discretionary spend. This fee hike unfairly and unreasonably impacts residents of my electorate.

I love Queensland coming first. I am a fiercely proud and parochial Queenslander, but I am not a proud Queenslander when we have the gold medal for the highest car registration fees in Australia. We do not have the highest wages, we do not have the most valued assets and we do not have the

most expensive homes, but it is becoming increasingly clear that under this government we will have the highest government fees, charges and registrations. Little price changes can make a big difference to the hip pocket, and raising car registration fees at twice the level of inflation will hit hard. Therefore, I urge those opposite to support this motion and reject the notion that this is good for Queensland.

 **Miss BOYD** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (8.55 pm): Today I rise to speak against the disallowance motion moved by those opposite. It is no surprise that tonight we see those opposite in this House again playing politics. They are playing politics with jobs, with services and with our economy. I put these questions forward on the topic: what happens when the freeze is over? Does it ever end? If we freeze this, what else should we freeze? Perhaps we should provide everything for free and join the opposition in their land of make-believe where it is 2012 all over again, they had no responsibilities, they had not picked a fight with doctors or sacked public servants, and they had not taken an asset sales agenda to the electorate. It must be nice back there in the good old days before the nightmare that Queenslanders had to endure—that is, the LNP actually being in government.

A friend of mine always says that the problem for those who do not vote Labor is that they get LNP governments. I think the problem for the LNP with winning elections is that they actually have to govern and they get stuck. Maybe they do not need a policy like this. Maybe they do not need a review from their trusted party elders, who themselves had a great winning record in government! Maybe what they need is Doc, McFly and the DeLorean. Maybe when they go back—back to 2012—they go back to a future when this kind of trick worked on the electorate. Sadly for those opposite, even McFly cannot help them tonight.

Today those opposite stand in this place and put forward an argument, but let us separate the facts from the smoke and mirrors; let us really see this policy for what it is. As those opposite sit here tonight, we are being asked to buy into an LNP fantasy. We are being asked to pretend it is 2012 again and that 2013 and 2014 did not happen. We are being asked to forget about the election in January and we are being asked to buy into the historical reconstruction of those opposite. Again, sadly, like the rest of Queensland, we on this side remember the past three years.

The reality is that when Queenslanders went to the polling booth this year, they cast their vote on who would be best to govern Queensland and on who had the best plan for Queensland. They voted on the future that they wanted and on the direction that they wanted to head in. When Queenslanders went to the polls this January, they went equipped with the policy of political parties. What did voters find when they went searching for the LNP's policy on freezing registrations—nada, nil, zip, zero. The policy of freezing registrations did not feature in the campaign of the LNP, yet here tonight they seem to be trying to convince us that it was a crucial part of their long-term plan. What do we find when we start to scratch the surface of this? The LNP had no plans to continue this scheme into the future. It was not part of their Strong Choices program.

Let us look at the 2012 policy that the LNP had. On 1 July 2012, they applied a three-year freeze to the registration fees for family vehicles. It was a freeze that applied to all passenger cars and light commercial vehicles that were registered for the purposes of private use. Under the LNP regime, compulsory third-party costs, which of course were regulated by the Motor Accident Insurance Commission, were not included in the freeze. What we are debating this evening is whether a government will carry on its predecessor's policy, a policy that neither the government nor its predecessor, those opposite, had any intention of doing. This was never in the LNP's forward estimates and now they cry and moan that they will not be able to present it back to the future under our government, a new government. Give us a break.


The freeze on registration was only ever a three-year policy. It was an election commitment from those opposite—a commitment in 2012 not in 2015. It is only an issue in this place today because it suits the political purposes of those opposite. Rather than take a solid suite of policy positions to the last election, those on that side of the House were so fixated on their so-called strong plan that they forgot about this. Whatever the case, it was not a feature of the campaign that they took to the last election.

Perhaps those opposite need to take their advice from their party elders in their review of the election. Perhaps they should use this time in opposition as an opportunity to reflect and reform. But instead they want to re prosecute their government agenda from opposition—an agenda that the community has rejected. Do members know what? The LNP had its opportunity to put a positive agenda forward for Queensland's future through the recent election.

Those opposite chose not to. They chose instead to put forward an alleged strong plan. Their plan never included the continuation of a registration freeze. To stand here today and to pretend that it did demonstrates the reason that they were kicked out of office, and that was justified. It was deceitful. It was dishonest. The arrogance and the hubris of the LNP certainly abounds. We have some very slow learners sitting opposite, that is for sure.

The Palaszczuk government will do exactly what the LNP was planning to do. The family registration freeze will come to an end on 30 June 2015. Labor in government will apply the government's indexation policy of 3.5 per cent. Under the previous government the forward estimates also reflected an increase in fees and charges post 30 June 2015.

A short-term freeze could come at the cost of jobs or infrastructure investment. What is the justification for this? 2012 is in the past. Most people want to move on from the mistakes of the LNP's past. We are not going to continue on like it is 2012. We are not going to cop their blast from their past agendas. A freeze now is short-term populist politics. It has no place in our real plan for the future and we will not have a bar of it.

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (9.01 pm): I rise to speak in support of the disallowance motion moved in this parliament on 2 June regarding the Transport Legislation (Fees) Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2015, subordinate legislation No. 25 of 2015, tabled in the House on 19 May. I am a member of the Utilities, Science and Innovation Committee and this amendment regulation was tabled at today's committee meeting, noting that a disallowance motion was before the House.

The current government indexation policy was confirmed on 22 April 2015 at 3.5 per cent. It speaks volumes for this government that they expect motor vehicle owners to pay these increases without any consideration of the impact these registration price rises will have on Queenslanders. The costs associated with this amendment are substantial.

If we look at the registration component without the traffic improvement and CTP fees, the registration component for a small car will rise by \$9.80, for a medium car by \$15.50 and for a large car by \$21.75. Add to this skyrocketing insurance premiums and fuel prices and we start to understand the implication these proposed increases will have on household budgets.

Let us not forget that the average household has two motor vehicles which will lead to further misery for already cash-strapped owners. At the present time, with the exception of the ACT, we have the most expensive registration fees in Australia. I cannot in all honesty stand here tonight and support an increase in fees that would give us the unwanted title of the most expensive state in Australia in which to register a motor vehicle.


We received a briefing from the director-general of the Department of Transport and Main Roads regarding Queensland's road network and the increasing number of vehicles using our roads. Queensland is a vast state. In regional and rural areas the humble motor vehicle is, in many cases, the only form of transport.

Try telling the families without jobs in Bowen and Collinsville or the farmers in the Burdekin who are already facing crippling costs associated with electricity prices and insurance costs that they will need to pay more for their registration. We do not have public transport in these areas in the form of buses, electric trains and ferries. Without these options residents are forced to rely on a motor vehicle for transport. I know of several uni students who drive from the Burdekin to James Cook University each day. For these cash-strapped students the proposed increases are simply not affordable.

The people in the Burdekin electorate and, for that matter, most of the rural and regional Queensland areas are doing it tough. Now is not the time to sting household budgets through substantial hikes in registration fees.

This should be seen for what it is—a money grab by a government desperate to raise funds without any regard for the impact this will have on ordinary Queenslanders. The previous LNP government froze family car registration fees during the last term because they knew how tough Queenslanders were doing it. Motor vehicle registration should not be seen as a cash cow for government to exploit at will. Already I have received a number of calls from my constituents complaining bitterly about the proposed increases.

We heard the Premier earlier today say in this chamber that her government is a 'listening government'. The message coming loud and clear from the community is that they do not support the proposed increases in registration fees. I urge all members to take on board that feedback when they vote on this disallowance motion tonight.

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (9.06 pm): I rise to support the disallowance motion. I note from looking at the speaking list that, aside from the Treasurer, there is just one government MP from outside South-East Queensland who has stood in this chamber tonight to try to justify this tax hike.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ryan): Order! Member for Warrego, previous Speakers have made rulings about reflecting on whether a member is on the list or off the list. Can I direct you to those previous rulings and ask you to refrain.

Ms LEAHY: This is a 3.5 per cent tax increase in car registration. It could not come at a more difficult time for the people of my electorate. Families are doing their best to deal with the effects of drought. The last thing they need is a state taxation increase on the family car. These families do not just have pressure from cost-of-living expenses; they are trying to survive.

We were reminded today that 80 per cent of the state is drought declared. So not only are families doing it tough in my electorate, others are doing it tough in 80 per cent of the state. The family car is essential in rural and regional areas. People just do not have public transport. They cannot walk down the road to catch the bus, the ferry or the passenger train. For many in rural and regional Queensland their only option is to use the family car to travel to and from work, to take the children to the doctor, to pick up the groceries or to take the children to school. Mums and dads will be the ones who will bear the brunt of this 3.5 per cent tax increase. About a million families will cop it in the hip pocket thanks to the Labor government, and many of those families will be in regional Queensland.

The mums and dads are trying to pay off the mortgage, pay the rent, keep their job, deal with the resources downturn in regional Queensland, educate their children. They will get slugged with an additional registration tax increase from this government. They already pay a lot more for fuel and now they will be paying a lot more for car registration.

This is a tax increase that families were not told about before the state election. We are back on the slippery slope of tax increases with this registration increase. Let us not forget the bad old days when Labor increased registration by 30 per cent in four years. Where are those people at the cabinet table who are supposed to be standing up for rural and regional families? The reason the LNP moved this disallowance motion is that we care about rural and regional families.

Mrs Frecklington: Thank God they've got you out there, Ann.


Ms LEAHY: I take the interjection from the member for Nanango.

Ms Grace: You're the only one who does.

Ms LEAHY: I take the interjection. We do need to stand up for these people. They are doing it very tough.

I compare this tax increase with what the LNP actually did in government. The LNP froze the family car registration for three years and it was very welcome in regional and rural Queensland. They also made a lot of improvements to the Warrego Highway. In fact, I think around \$1 billion worth of work went into the Warrego Highway, and also of great assistance to my electorate was that they secured a major project, the second range crossing.

But here we have tonight another tax. It is another tax on families who are doing it tough and they cannot afford that. They already have significant cost-of-living pressures. They are trying to survive. That is why I rise tonight in the parliament to support the disallowance motion.

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (9.10 pm): I will be brief. I rise to support this disallowance motion. Cost of living is an issue for every family regardless of where you live, and one of the expenses that we as motor vehicle owners are all faced with is car and vehicle registration. The LNP when in government recognised that this was a major expense not only for families but also for businesses.


When the LNP came to government, Queensland had the most expensive registration fees in the country thanks to the former Labor government, under which there was an increase of 30 per cent over four years. To provide some relief, car registrations were frozen by the LNP for the term of its government. The transport minister at the time of the former Labor government is now the current Premier, so it is no surprise to see the attack on motorists' hip pockets has started again so early in the term of this government.

In an attempt to soften the blow, the government has introduced a policy that registration can be paid every three months. It would be nice to think that this policy was for the benefit of car owners, but call me a sceptic. It does seem a bit of a coincidence that soon after that announcement the price

of registration is now set to rise. While I and members on this side of the House understand that car registration cannot be held to the same level indefinitely, I struggle to understand why this government is so keen for Queensland to regain the title of having the most expensive registration in the country.

I represent a regional seat and as such there are many families that own a large car or four-wheel drive to handle road conditions such as wet weather events and there is the constant worry of striking animals on the road. These vehicles are an essential and at times the only reliable mode of transport. Under the proposed fee increases, these car owners face the highest charges in the country for registration fees, excluding compulsory third party and the traffic improvement fee.

Rural Queenslanders are totally reliant on their own transport as there are few other options and they do not need this extra expense. The proposal is for a 3.5 per cent increase. The CPI is currently running at 1.4 per cent. If this is to be seen as nothing more than a cash grab then it would be impossible to justify any rise above the CPI.


 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (9.12 pm): I rise to speak in favour of the disallowance motion moved by the member for Indooroopilly. This debate can be summed up very simply. Who do you trust to run the economy? Do you trust these people, the Labor Party, who are a bunch of economic incompetents, or do you trust those on this side of the House who have a track record of proven competence in managing the economy? Who do you trust? It is quite easy to do a compare and contrast, and maybe we can educate some of the backbenchers who have recently been elected.

In the nine years leading up to the 2012 election government expenditure increased by an average of nine per cent per year and we were heading towards a debt of close to \$100 billion—\$100 billion. What happened under an LNP government? What happened when the adults came to government? Over the last three years we reduced that increase in expenditure by an average of two per cent. We brought that projected \$100 billion debt down to \$80 billion and we were on our way to eroding that even further.

Then we simply need to do a compare and contrast in the public transport area. As has been mentioned a number of times tonight, in 2012 those opposite had a projected 15 per cent increase in public transport fees for every year for the next three years. What did we do when we came to power? We halved that immediately. What else happened under the former Labor government? They had increased car rego by 30 per cent over the previous four years. When you spend like a drunken sailor and you have no other plan, the only way that you can raise revenue is to increase charges and taxes, and that is what they have a record of doing.

What did we do in the public transport space? We all know that we froze car rego for three years. We all know that we halved that projected 15 per cent increase per year to 7½ per cent. Not only did we do that; the transport minister at the time did something that has never been done before: he actually reduced public transport costs by five per cent. We froze the increase that was due on 1 January this year as well. What else did we do? Not only did we reduce public transport costs; we increased services. Every 15 minutes trains were running on the Ferny Grove line through my electorate, and that was to continue right across the state.

This is simply a debate about economic competence. I know that we are the ones who have to constantly come in and mop up the mess that Labor governments, whether they be state or federal, leave behind because they have simply no idea and no plan. They have no option whatsoever than to vote with this side of the House on this disallowance motion so that they can go back to their electorates and say that they fought for a decrease in costs, and the people in their electorates who struggle, such as those in the electorate of the member for Logan, will fully appreciate their support for that.

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (9.16 pm): I rise to speak tonight against this disallowance motion moved by the opposition. The move to freeze registration rises was quite clear when it was introduced, and that was that registration was to be frozen for three years. That time is now up. Those opposite seem to be somewhat hypocritical in their comments regarding this disallowance motion, seeing as though they factored in the very same increase in their forward estimates for 2015-16. It is quite clear that the LNP had no plan to continue the freeze if they were re-elected at the last state election—which they were not.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to building and maintaining our roads, and additional income from registration rises will be used to continue this work. This is particularly relevant in my electorate of Gladstone, where road infrastructure is required to ensure the Gladstone port and the city can continue to diversify, and having good road infrastructure will ensure that this can happen.

As a new member in the House, I have been interested in many of the address-in-reply speeches from both new and old members in the House, particularly from government, opposition and crossbenches who talked of road infrastructure and the needs in their electorates. Many speeches were in relation to new works required in their electorates to ensure livability and viability of their growing electorates. The only way these important infrastructure projects can be funded is from funds raised from registrations and from lobbying federal governments which the Palaszczuk government is intent on doing. I strongly believe that most people can accept rises in their registrations as long as they can see improvements, upgrades and new roads in their electorates. I read an extract from the *Gladstone Observer*—

The road network in and around Gladstone and Australia's second largest port is incapable of handling the trucks that keep Australia moving.

Transport operator Simon Humble forks out \$440 in fuel costs for a delivery that should only cost him \$200.

...

But to access one of his primary destinations, the Gladstone Port, his drivers are forced to unhook a trailer in Gracemere, for example, drive into Gladstone to unload, return to Gracemere, pick up the trailer, drive back into Gladstone to unload, before reassembling their trucks and heading off.

Mr Humble says the lack of transport infrastructure is a "disaster".

"It's a massive amount of extra time. The infrastructure is not up to standard.


"As a transport operator in Gladstone having road train access into the port would absolutely change the way we do business," Mr Humble said.

"If the infrastructure caught up (to the port) that would be good."

Last year 149,387 tonnes of grain was exported through Gladstone. This is expected to increase this year because of the better season.

And that means more trucks on the road, doing more runs between centres like Biloela and Gracemere, and Gladstone.

My electorate of Gladstone needs these road infrastructure projects which will continue to drive industry and help diversify our economy. These projects that my electorate is desperate for need to be funded, and this funding should not come at the cost of other funding from the budget.

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (9.20 pm), in reply: What a tepid piece of political amnesia and selective history we have seen in the last hour and a half from the opposition. We have to feel sorry for the first-term LNP members coming into this place and experiencing the ineptitude of the opposition frontbench, although I have to say it was good to see an animated contribution from the member for Everton in his desperate search for another two votes for the LNP leadership. We can at least rely on him to be a bit animated. I welcome the apparent rediscovery of the term 'CPI' by the opposition. After three years of increasing electricity at double-digit rates every year, after two years of increasing public transport fees in South-East Queensland by 7½ per cent, not a single—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BAILEY: They don't like it. In all of the contributions from the other side, they neglected to remind the chamber that they increased public transport fees by 7½ per cent. They were so concerned about CPI when they were in government that they did it not just once but twice. They can say all they like that they care about struggling families and cash cows—and I noticed that the member for Surfers Paradise seems to love the word 'profligate', bless him—but the fact is that I am looking at the LNP's own budget. We can tell that it is theirs: it has the Crosby Textor line and 'a plan for the future'. Let us have a look at their plan for the future. How did it go on 31 January, by the way?

In their budget of 2014-15 here are the motor vehicle registration figures: for 2012-13 and 2013-14 it bounces around pretty similarly—1.4, 1.5 and 1.5. Here is the rub—

Mr Emerson: Pretty similar; does that mean frozen? Is that what you mean?

Mr BAILEY: You don't want to hear the truth, do you?

Mr Emerson: Frozen; I think that is the word you are looking for, not profligate.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Indooroopilly, you have had a go.

Mr BAILEY: The member for Indooroopilly can deceive and distort all he likes, but I will answer him with the truth. Let us look at the LNP's last budget with a 3½ per cent increase bolted into their forward estimates. In 2014-16, it is \$1.65 billion. For the next year, 2016-17, it is \$1.74 billion. Then

we go to 2017-18 and they are up to \$1.82 billion. Yet here we have the member for Indooroopilly, in a lightweight effort, I have to say, bringing in the smallest fig leaf I have seen in a long time by blaming his budget on inflation.

Mr Emerson interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. Member for Indooroopilly, you have had a good go.

Mr BAILEY: He was trying to ascribe the LNP's commitment in its last budget to a 3½ per cent increase over the next three years to inflation. If you believe that one, I have a block of flats for you. Here are the facts: the inflation rate at the time was 2½ per cent—a full per cent lower than their increases. I will table these documents. Here they are in the midyear fiscal and economic review, and here are the figures again. We see a surge in revenue for 2015-16 from \$1.58 billion to \$1.65 billion, and there is \$1.72 billion and \$1.8 billion. It is all in their own budget. When they talk about Labor's increase in registration, they are really talking about their increase in registration. It is in their own budget.

What we have done is continued the exact settings—we have not changed them—that were in their budget. Those opposite can do this all they like. What we are seeing from the opposition is not a policy but posturing and positioning. I will table the LNP's own figures from their own budget and their own midyear review. In their own words they say, 'Under the government's election commitment there is no increase in the level of registration fees for private vehicles during this term of government.' I table those documents.

Tabled paper: Extracts from State Budget 2014-15: Mid Year Fiscal and Economic Review, pp. 25, 57 and 61 [\[526\]](#).

Opposition members interjected.

Mr Emerson interjected.

Mr BAILEY: They were so concerned—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. Member for Indooroopilly, you have had a pretty good go. I would ask you now to remain quiet and allow the minister to speak or I may have to make a ruling.

Mr BAILEY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. They were so concerned about the people of Queensland that during their last term of government they kept the 3½ per cent increase in registration for commercial vehicles. I hear them wax lyrical about small business but they were not afraid to whack them for 3½ per cent for the last three years. We all know that neither major party went to the last election promising to keep the freeze. The key question in this debate is this: does anybody believe that if the LNP won the last election they would have kept the freeze in place?

A government member: No-one believes it.

Mr BAILEY: Who would believe that? There is no way that that would have occurred. I have heard enough posturing about roads today. Let us look at the LNP's record on roads in Queensland over the last three years. Under every year of the Newman LNP government we saw QTRIP, the funding plan for roads in this state—slashed by \$200 million. They cared so much about roads that they cut \$200 million every year—year in, year out—when they were in power. I guess the cost of building their tower of power next door is fairly significant. We can safely say that they squirrelled away at least \$600 million in roads funding for their wonderful tower of power next door—their skyscraper which they thought they might be in when it is completed.

It is probably a bit galling for regional LNP members to come into this place and realise how badly their party treated regional and Central Queensland.

Mrs Frecklington: You need to look at the history, Minister.

Mr BAILEY: I will talk about history. In Far North Queensland, North Queensland and Central Queensland, LNP seats fell like nine pins.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. Member for Nanango, your voice is very clear.

Mr BAILEY: I am happy to talk about history. In the last election we saw LNP seats in Far North Queensland, North Queensland and Central Queensland fall like nine pins. Why? As I moved around the state it was very interesting to talk to mayors in regional Queensland—many of whom are very conservative mayors—who came up to me at events over a cup of tea to tell me how disappointed they were in how much funding was cut from their roads by the LNP over three years. The TIDS got slashed by \$20 million a year. QTRIP got slashed by \$200 million a year. Look at them; they are all very quiet right now. They are all very quiet when they are confronted with the facts.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members! Minister, I would urge you not to provoke the opposition. We have another bill to debate after this, I understand.

Mr BAILEY: I will behave myself. Mr Speaker, you can rely on the member for Indooroopilly to come into this House with the same job-destroying motions again and again. Four years ago when he was last in opposition he moved a motion just like this one—although he did not have his own budget behind it in which he was actually rescinding his own policy, as he is doing at this time.

Let us be perfectly clear what this motion is. It is a motion about revenge and wrecking politics. It is about people who cannot accept the decisions of the people at the last election. It is a motion that will cut funding to roads in this state. This time we can really see the hypocrisy for what it is—when it is exactly the same rises that they had. Let me outline for the House the impact on the budget over the next couple of years. We are looking at a \$51 million cut in the first year. If this freeze was to continue year in year out, it would be \$111 million in the next year and \$174 million in the year after that, rising to \$242 million and then \$580 million. That is not a policy; that is economic vandalism at a time when this state cannot afford it.

I find it fascinating that members of the opposition can come into this place professing to care about roads. Over the last few months I have had a litany of letters from LNP members asking me to fund their roads, yet here they are trying to take away the ability to pay for them. On 6 May the member for Glass House wrote seeking funds to upgrade the Jubilee Drive intersection in Palmwoods. On 30 April the member for Maroochydore was chasing funds for a slip lane to be built on the approach to the South Coolum Road and Yandina-Coolum Road roundabout. The member for Redlands raised the issue of a road out his way yesterday. We have heard from the member for Albert, the member for Southern Downs, the member for Mudgeeraba, the member for Burdekin, the member for Kawana, the member for Mount Ommaney and the member for Burnett. It has been an LNP linedance for road funding in the last couple of years but they do not want to give us the revenue to pay for it.

That is the problem here. They have got form here. They cut TIDS under the last government. If they want roads, it is very simple—they are not free, we have to pay for our roads. If we do not pay for the roads, there are three choices—cut jobs, cut services or increase debt. That is what can be done. The LNP increased debt by more than \$14 billion over the last three years and they want to blow debt by another half a billion with this measure.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Speaker, it is regretful that I have to inform the LNP that roads do not come for free. They do have to be funded. The Palaszczuk government will be delivering a fair budget for Queenslanders. We will stop the forced redundancies that were the hallmark of the former Newman government, which was a bleak chapter in Queensland's history. Tonight the LNP are having another go at driving the knife back into the budget, just as they did for three years by putting a hole there. We are talking about a 3½ per cent rise across all light vehicle registration fees. That is all vehicles under 4½ tonnes. That is the first thing the regulation does. The next thing it does is that it amends the heavy vehicle registration fees by 0.6 per cent based on fees set by the National Transport Commission agreed nationally. I did not hear a single LNP member refer to that aspect of the rescission motion; there was not a word. They do not know their own motion—either that or they are deliberately not covering that bit. They are not just trying to rescind their 3½ per cent; they are actually expanding it. Importantly—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Members, I really think we need to get this finished. I would urge you to allow the minister to finish in silence so we can have a vote and then move to the next bill. We have all had a good go.

Mr BAILEY: Importantly, what the Palaszczuk government has done is to keep the cost of registration as low as possible, consistent with the LNP's last budget forward settings. Queensland is the third cheapest state in the country for medium sized, four-cylinder vehicles like the Toyota Camry. I point out to the chamber the deceitful nature of the campaign by the LNP out there in the digital world. I quote this from their social media: 'Queensland will be the most expensive state in Australia to own a car under the Palaszczuk government.' The fact is that the annual costs for motorists in this state are not the most expensive in Australia when we take into account all of the compulsory costs for a motorist. When we look at small cars, there are four states that are more expensive than us. When we look at medium cars, there are four states that are more expensive than Queensland. In the large car categories, New South Wales—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BAILEY: They do not like to hear the facts, Mr Speaker. When it comes to V8s and six-cylinders, New South Wales is far and away more expensive than Queensland. When we look at motorbikes, we still see three states more expensive than Queensland when we look at all of the costs of motoring that people need to meet to be on the roads. I might add that around half of Queensland's registered vehicles are being charged registration fees at the four-cylinder rate—a rate in which we are one of the cheapest states across Australia.

The Palaszczuk government is mindful of cost-of-living impacts on households, including registration costs. We have looked at these changes and also at ways to lessen the impact on household budgets. That is why we are introducing a new payment option for registration fees that will take effect in July. That will enable regular direct debit payments towards vehicle registration renewal costs and make it easier for households to manage their budgets. Our plan is for a convenient, set-and-forget direct debit payment option. This will allow customers to take up three-month registration pay terms, which is not currently available and which could not be achieved by the previous LNP government.

The surcharges for selecting a reduced registration period for light vehicles will reduce from 1 July for both registration and compulsory third party insurance. This means that, for the three- or six-month registration option, a registered operator will save \$9.50 over a 12-month period. With respect to the heavy vehicle increases that the LNP are also moving to stop, I can inform the House that this will put Queensland out of step with most other states. These increases are part of a national reform process. So this is a change that will signal nationally that Queensland is out of step with national processes which have bipartisan national support. This is just another part of the LNP wrecking game.

In closing, I ask the House to not support this disallowance motion. This is more about tricky politics and political posturing than it is about good policy. I urge all members of this House to see this motion for what it is—a political stunt and exercise by the LNP who are trying to rescind their own policy from the last budget. They had every intention of increasing registration fees as we are proposing, as the forward estimates prove. They know that these increases are necessary to deliver roads in Queensland, infrastructure and jobs to grow our economy and to sustain our regions. I welcome the number of regional members in the Palaszczuk government's caucus—a surge in regional representation by Labor members which speaks volumes.

Members of the LNP are writing to me en masse, pleading for road funding, yet they do not want to give this government the ability to fund it. It is cynical; it is economically irresponsible. It is the same old LNP, the same old faces, the same old tactics. One would think that after losing 35 seats and having the most catastrophic defeat of a first-term government in Australian political history they might stop and look at their tactics and look at taking a much more integral approach to things.

What members opposite want to do is blow a \$580 million hole in this budget and add to the \$14 billion in debt that they added to the budget bottom line over the last three years. It is irresponsible. It is not a policy; it is posturing.

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

AYES, 44:


LNP, 42—Barton, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Costigan, Cramp, Crandon, Cripps, Davis, Dickson, Elmes, Emerson, Frecklington, Hart, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Mander, McArdle, McEachan, McVeigh, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, Perrett, Powell, Rickuss, Robinson, Rowan, Seeney, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Walker, Watts, Weir.

KAP, 2—Katter, Knuth.

NOES, 44:

ALP, 43—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Byrne, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Donaldson, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Lauga, Linard, Lynham, Madden, Miles, Miller, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Pitt, Power, Pyne, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Stewart, Trad, Whiting, Williams.

INDEPENDENT, 1—Gordon.

 **Mr SPEAKER:** The numbers being equal, I cast my vote with the noes. Honourable members, in voting against this motion, I understand the member for Indooroopilly moved a similar disallowance motion in 2011 and at that time I voted against an increase in fees. This time, some four years later and after a three-year freeze, I believe the circumstances are different. I understand the former government's budget documents show its own 2014-15 budget included a 3.5 per cent increase in the registration fee in its forward estimates for 2015-16. I understand this government's proposed

increase of 3.5 per cent is identical to that planned by the former government. I also understand the budget forecast that the loss of revenue from this indexation would result in a \$580 million black hole between now and 2018-19, and some \$51 million this financial year alone. I also understand that, with this government's indexation rate of 3.5 per cent, the total cost of registering a vehicle in Queensland will remain competitive with, or lower than, many other states in Australia. I cast my vote with the noes.


Resolved in the negative.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 1049, on motion of Ms Trad—

That the bill be now read a second time.

 **Mr PEARCE** (Mirani—ALP) (9.48 pm), continuing: Before the break I was talking about ratepayers across the three local government areas that fall within the boundaries of the Mirani electorate. I know from talking to these people, the grassroots of the electorate, that when asked the question who would they prefer to be running a local government election, the CEO of the council as the returning officer or a returning officer appointed by the Electoral Commission, the overwhelming response is always that they want somebody from the Electoral Commission to do it. That is because there is always suspicion between the mayor, councillors and the CEO. It is coming through very clearly to me that they would rather have the Electoral Commission involved in the process.

During the break, I received a couple of phone calls from people who were obviously aware that we would be talking about local government here tonight. I was asked if I could raise a couple of issues regarding the bill, and I will do so before I finish my speech. One of the concerns out there with regard to local government is that the CEOs feel as though they have lost a lot of power as a result of some legislation that went through under the last government and that those powers were handed to the mayors. There are some local government councillors who are a little bit concerned about this because the mayors are actually taking over and controlling the running of the council. It really takes away any independence that a CEO has. CEOs are very concerned about it and have asked if I would raise it here tonight, and I have done that.

The purpose of the bill is to enshrine integrity and accountability in the local government election process. Ratepayers are less than impressed with the performance of their local governments, as you would discover if you go around local government areas and you get talking to people. Some councillors do not help themselves in the way that they are attempting to do their business around town, and they at times attempt to hoodwink the ratepayers who are not as silly as some people would think. What I am about to reveal tonight is an example of what a council can do to damage itself and to make the community more angry about what is happening.

From information I have received earlier tonight, I understand that the Whitsunday council mayor in recent weeks has moved to put in place a gerrymander. She has changed the boundaries around to allow herself a better chance of getting re-elected. Three of the councillors who vote with her all the time are being put into better positions, and three other councillors who challenge what is happening in the council chamber have been put at a disadvantage with regard to the numbers.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr PEARCE: I appreciate your intervention. She will be going to lodge the application with the Electoral Commission on Friday. Just so people know, there were over 300 ratepayers at a meeting at Bowen on Monday who are absolutely angry and raging at what this mayor is attempting to achieve. The situation is not good. The council is not helping itself by the way it is going about this process, and as the local member in the area I am most concerned that the mayor has the power to do this. There has been no consultation. The councillors themselves did not know what was going on. There is no doubt that she is worried and under threat of losing her job at the 2016 local government election, and she saw that one way of saving herself was to rig the boundaries. I think it used to be called the gerrymander. That is happening in the Whitsunday council. The mayor has the voting ratepayers really upset. If you want to know who changed it, it was a fellow by the name of Crisafulli who was the local government minister in the last government. They happen to be very good friends. I think that this situation is unacceptable and it had to be brought to the attention of the House.

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Grace): Order, members! I am struggling to hear the member for Mirani and I really want to hear the member for Mirani, so could we please keep the audible conversation down. The member for Mirani has the call.

Mr PEARCE: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do get a little bit upset at times, because I really do try to get the message out, and it is difficult when you have people over there who do not understand that I am an emotional person and I need to be left alone to do my job.

In introducing the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015, the Deputy Premier told the parliament that—


The government also promised that local government elections will be run to the same high standards of independence and efficiency as state and federal elections.

That is what this bill is about achieving and this is what Queenslanders want to hear. They want to hear ministers of the government—in this case our Deputy Premier—focusing on high standards of independence. We have not seen a high standard of independence for a number of years, and we have a long and arduous task ahead of us to return Queensland to a place where Queenslanders can trust what is happening in local and state government areas. That is the way under a Labor government: integrity, accountability, transparency and lifting standards so that Queenslanders can have confidence in the role of their government.

After three years of abuse handed out by the Newman government, the people of Queensland are demanding accountability. They want transparency, they want a government that they can trust, and they are getting this under the Palaszczuk government. Queenslanders are getting what they expect through the leadership of ministers like Deputy Premier Jackie Trad. The report handed down by the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee has backed the Deputy Premier. During the work undertaken by the committee we were made aware of the cost of running a local government election when it is conducted by the local government or by the ECQ. There is a significant cost involved in the running of an election and those costs vary depending on the number of people, the isolation of the location and the availability of infrastructure like polling booths. These costs seem to vary to such an extent that the size of the shire, its population and isolation are clear factors when determining the cost of an election.

The committee was pleased to learn that the ECQ and the Local Government Association of Queensland are working together to determine how election costs can be reduced for local governments, and I think that is a great idea. We need to see more of that sort of thing happening and more cooperation at that level. They should not have to come to a place like the parliament of Queensland to have issues like that sorted out.

As I said earlier, there are other members in this place who want to make contributions to the debate. The members of the committee are working flat out to consider the legislation referred to it by the parliament. As chair of the committee, I always want committee members to have a chance to present their case for the contents of the report. We had discussions around the contents of the report with regard to fees and other issues which will be taken up by the ECQ. With that, I will give the members of the committee and other members of the House a chance to have their say about this bill.

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (9.58 pm): I too rise to add to the debate on the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. Firstly I thank my fellow committee members and the committee staff for their cooperation. As the member for Mirani said, at times we did not always agree but we remained respectful of each other's views. As a committee we unanimously agreed that the amendments to the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012 and the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Act 2011 would be supported, and I will shortly touch upon the reasons why.

I made a statement of reservations to the committee's report, and I would like to take this time to further outline some of the concerns I and my parliamentary colleagues share about those aspects we do not agree with. It seems to me that Labor's intent for this bill, first and foremost, is to undo legislation put in place by the former LNP government in 2014. That legislation by default made the CEO of a local government the returning officer for local government elections. The ECQ still provided safeguards under the legislation to ensure transparency and accountability. Before Labor's amendments after the 2004 election, the local government chief executive officer was always the returning officer for elections being conducted by the respective local government. After this point, costs to be borne by local government, and in turn ratepayers, skyrocketed by centralising the elections with the ECQ. At this time I think it is appropriate to have a look at the history with respect to local government elections.

From 1939 to 2004, local government elections were conducted by the relevant local government. The local government chief executive was in fact the returning officer for elections. 2008 was the first time in Queensland history that no local government conducted their own elections and, subsequently, the first time the CEO was not the returning officer, being replaced by the Electoral Commissioner. The chair of the committee, the member for Mirani, said in his contribution that for years there had been no integrity in the system and that people wanted to see integrity. In fact, from 2008 the ECQ was in charge of all local government elections, so the comment by the member for Mirani is a surprising one. I like the member for Mirani but I think he is a little off track there. When these changes took effect under Labor, the LGAQ said—

Whilst this action was aimed at clearly demonstrating electoral probity and confidence to the community, over a century of tradition and satisfactory service by local Returning Officers has come to an end.

At the time of the 2012 quadrennial election, the ECQ had been empowered to appoint a person other than themselves to be returning officers, excluding minors, party affiliates and council CEOs. However, if the CEO was the only reasonably available person then they would be appointed as the returning officer, provided they were not party affiliated. This clause meant that 12 out of 73 councils would have their CEO act as the RO.

In 2014—in fact, it was fairly late in 2014—changes to those acts reverted to the CEO being the default returning officer unless they were party affiliated. They could be withdrawn by the ECQ if the ECQ felt they were not capable of doing the job or it was inappropriate for them to do the job. What we are seeing in 2015 is just a complete reversal of that situation. Now the CEO cannot be a returning officer unless there is no other suitable person. Then the ECQ can in fact appoint that returning officer. They seem to think there will be some CEOs of local government who will in fact be returning officers at the next election.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Grace): Order! Member for Burleigh, I note that you have been given 10 minutes on the clock. You are the deputy chair of the committee so it should be 20 minutes. When the time on the clock has expired we will give you another 10 minutes.

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Only if you need it, of course, member for Burleigh.

Mr HART: It is a bit late, Madam Deputy Speaker, so I hope not to take 20 minutes, but you never know.

The committee heard from a range of stakeholders at public hearings and briefings. It is worth just highlighting some of the contributions made. The LGAQ actually said that local governments should be given the choice as to who runs their elections. That was their position in 2014 when they supported the previous government's amendments to this particular legislation because they wanted to actually see some reductions in cost to their councils. This time they have changed that position on the basis that the department has given an undertaking that they will endeavour to reduce fees. We did ask that question during the consultation and those discussions have actually not yet started taking place. One would hope they would start to take place soon.

There are a lot of things that could be done to cut costs. One of the interesting things we heard is that if a CEO is a returning officer hired by the ECQ then that CEO may in fact be paid twice—by the local council as CEO and by the ECQ as a returning officer for the time of the election. That has to add some cost to local government. We also know that a lot of the polling booths used on election day are council facilities—libraries, halls, state schools and those sorts of places. You would think it would be a lot cheaper for a local government to utilise their own facilities rather than have the ECQ hire that facility from them and then charge them for that availability.

We did hear from Logan City Council, but the member for Maroochydore covered that in her contribution so I will skip over it. A lot of stakeholders came in and had a chat to us—from local councils to the ECQ and LGAQ. We asked them all very similar sorts of questions.

The 2014 LNP changes, which made the local government CEO the returning officer by default, which came into effect on 1 January this year, have not been tested. We have not actually had a local government election since the situation changed and the CEO of a local government was the returning officer, so we have no idea whether this would have saved money for local governments. After all, the intention was to save money. The change we made on the basis of saving money for local governments during their elections has not been tested, so basically that position has been reversed just on a whim.

During the briefing we actually asked the department—I note that one of the officers is present—why this was being changed and what evidence they could provide to justify it. The explanatory notes to the bill indicate that this is a matter of integrity—that there is some thought that the CEO of a local government may be conflicted in some way. I asked the departmental officers if they had heard of a CEO being conflicted or whether a CEO had ever been removed from the position of RO. The information I got back was that they had not heard any of that. At every hearing I asked every submitter if they had ever heard of an instance where a CEO was conflicted, there was an issue or there was a worry that an election may not have happened the right way, and the answer was no. Then I asked the department: given that, why are we making this change? The answer was that this is government policy. That is it: 'It is government policy. The government has told us to do it. That is why we are doing it.'

Mr Crandon: Just like the water meter stuff.

Mr HART: Yes. There is absolutely no other reason. It is government policy. To quote the department—

The change is as a result of government policy. It is a change we have been asked to implement.

As we have heard, over the last few days other government policies have been implemented.

Mr Crandon: Like the water meters.

Mr HART: I take the interjection from the member for Coomera. Over the last few days other government policies have been implemented like the water meters, giving possibly private information to a number of unions and other such government policies. It is interesting to note that this government policy is based on a perceived conflict of interest for a CEO who acts as a returning officer. As I said, when I asked the department whether this sort of issue had ever happened, the answer was no. Many members of the committee were actually quite perplexed as to why this particular part of the bill was being changed, and that is borne out by the committee's report.

A government member interjected.


Mr HART: The honourable member opposite will get her chance in a minute. In the committee's report there is the comment—

The committee supports the amendments and the intention of increasing transparency and integrity of local government elections. The committee notes however, no overwhelming evidence was provided to the committee to demonstrate issues associated with a CEO being the returning officer for an election.

Given that, members might well understand why I will not support the position that has been put forward as part of this bill.

I turn briefly to the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act, and I actually learnt a bit about this today during one of our hearings because I did not know too much about it. This is a bill that is hosted by Queensland and automatically then applies in many other states, so we are leading the way in terms of hosting this legislation. This part of the bill will defer when automatic dates are triggered with regard to registrations, and that has to be a good thing. We fully support that.

This bill also relates to the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. We all know that Queensland is beautiful one day, perfect the next—most of the time. Of course, that excludes the extensive flooding caused by periods of extremely heavy rainfall and the destruction caused by a number of storm cells including Tasha, Anthony, Yasi, Oswald and more recently Tropical Cyclone Marcia. The pain of these events that has been brought on our communities north, south, east and west will be everlasting, but it is incumbent on the government to ease the pain wherever possible. That is why I support the extension to the operation of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. Fourteen minutes is better than 20. As I mentioned, there are some good aspects to the bill and I support those parts of the bill. However, I cannot support the changes to the process for local government elections.

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (10.13 pm): Tonight I rise in the House to speak in favour of the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I thank the Deputy Premier for her hard work and dedication to this legislation—legislation that will restore fairness and transparency to local government elections, legislation to support industry, legislation that will see the continuation of the very important Queensland Reconstruction Authority. The parliamentary Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee examined the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 after the bill was referred to the committee on 27 March 2015. The committee would like to thank those who briefed the committee, provided submissions and participated in the inquiry. In particular, the committee acknowledges the assistance provided by the Department of Infrastructure,

Local Government and Planning, the Department of Transport and Main Roads, the Queensland Reconstruction Authority, the Local Government Association of Queensland and the Queensland Electoral Commission.

In March 2015 the Local Government Association of Queensland and the Queensland Electoral Commission were consulted with regard to the proposed amendments by way of an exposure draft of the bill. Both the LGAQ and ECQ supported the amendments. The Transport and Infrastructure Council also voted to support the delay of the commencement of the registration scheme. The committee unanimously supported the proposed amendments to the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012 and the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Act 2011. The majority of the committee supported the proposed amendments to the Local Government Electoral Act 2011.

The bill proposes to remove the default position of the chief executive officer of a local government being the returning officer and instead enables the ECQ to appoint returning officers. Under the new proposed section 9 of the bill, the ECQ may appoint a person as a returning officer for a local government election unless that person is a minor, a member of a political party or the CEO of a local government for which the election is to be held. Despite these restrictions, the ECQ may appoint a CEO of the local government as the returning officer if the CEO is not a member of a political party and the ECQ considers the CEO is the only person with experience in conducting elections who is reasonably available to be appointed as the returning officer—that is, if the CEO is the only person reasonably available in a community to perform the role with the necessary experience in conducting local government elections, provided the CEO is not a member of a political party. This approach ensures every community, including smaller communities, have an RO with the necessary capabilities to perform the role. The amendments are introduced to remove the potential for a conflict of interest for CEOs and a perceived conflict of interest. As local government CEOs work closely with elected mayors and councillors in carrying out their duties, CEOs performing the role of returning officer for a local government election present the potential for a conflict of interest or a perceived conflict of interest, especially where incumbent mayors and councillors recontest an election.

The Local Government Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 was introduced by the former Newman government and included provisions to provide that CEOs of local governments are to be the returning officer for local government elections. The bill was examined by the then Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee in 2014. The committee's report in relation to the bill summarised the submissions received during the consultation period. Aurukun Shire Council made a submission against this section of the Newman government's bill. Mr Bernie McCarthy, the Chief Executive Officer of Aurukun Shire Council, said—

Aurukun Shire Council does not support the Chief Executive Officer being the returning officer for a council election.

Council strongly believes that transparency as one of the main principles of the Local Government Act must be seen to occur with all Council matters at all times and this extends to the conduct of municipal elections.

It considers that a non-Council person is the more appropriate person to conduct elections.

The CEO of Aurukun Shire Council, despite being one of the councils with one of the highest 2012 election costs per vote of all local governments in Queensland at \$25.90 per vote, is concerned about the transparency and integrity of local government elections under the current legislation. The submission from the CEO of Aurukun Shire Council is a prime example of why today's bill must be supported by the House to restore transparency and fairness to local government elections. I am pleased to note that the ECQ, the department and the LGAQ are working together to determine how election costs can be reduced for local governments. The LGAQ confirmed that it is encouraged by initial discussions with the ECQ and that the ECQ has recently written to local governments to commence discussions in relation to election planning. The issue of cost of elections was canvassed with the Deputy CEO of Logan City Council, Mr John Oberhardt. Mr Oberhardt said that there are ways in which the council could work with the ECQ to ensure that local government elections are run more efficiently. In fact, he suggested working together with the ECQ to save money on facility hire. For example, a council owned hall could be used instead of commercial office space for polling booths, thus creating a cost saving for the ECQ and subsequently the council.

Sensible negotiations in relation to cost-saving measures is something that I am sure councils are willing to discuss with the ECQ. Changing the legislation to ensure that the CEO of a council cannot be the returning officer of a local government election except in exceptional circumstances is about restoring integrity, fairness and transparency to local government elections. But the members opposite have no idea about that. They have no idea about integrity, they have no idea about

transparency. Do they even know what a conflict of interest is? It is no wonder the LNP members are not supporting this part of the bill. They do not even understand it. The words fairness, integrity and transparency are not in the vocabulary of the LNP members. So when the committee met it was no surprise that the opposition members did not vote to support the restoration of fairness and transparency to local government elections.

'What is fairness? What is transparency?', they ask? They just sit and look at each other dumbfounded. The members opposite have no idea about transparency and fairness. No, they do not. They think that passing legislation in the middle of the night is transparent. They think that sacking 20,000 public servants is the epitome of fairness. They think that cutting the public question and answer sessions from community cabinet meetings is transparent. They think cutting—

Mr RICKUSS: I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): Order! Pause the clock. Member for Keppel, resume your seat.

Mr RICKUSS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I ask you to rule on relevance. This has nothing to do with the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order. Member for Keppel, please remain relevant to the long title of the bill.

Mrs LAUGA: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Keppel, if you antagonise the other side they are going to give it back and I will let them give it back.

Mrs LAUGA: I do not mind if they bite back. My fellow committee members the member for Gladstone, the member for Mirani and the member for Dalrymple can all see how important integrity, transparency and fairness are and I congratulate them on their position in relation to this matter. They can see how there can be a perceived conflict of interest when CEOs act as returning officers. Like me, the member for Gladstone, the member for Mirani and the member for Dalrymple know how important integrity, transparency and fairness are to ensure that local government elections are run without any conflict of interest, whether that be a perceived conflict of interest or otherwise. We know that our communities want local government elections for our mayors and for our councillors that are fair and transparent. We know that our communities want anything that threatens the principles of transparency and the fairness of council elections to be abolished. I have consulted with the mayors of both of the local governments in my electorate and both the Mayor of Livingstone Shire Council, Bill Ludwig, and the Mayor of the Rockhampton Regional Council, Margaret Strelow, are in favour of the proposed amendments.

I also support wholeheartedly that section of the bill that ensures the continuation of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority past 30 June 2015. Clause 25 of the bill relates to the adoption of the QRA as a permanent function of the state government. This will ensure that the QRA can continue the critical work of helping communities effectively and efficiently recover from the impacts of natural disasters that continue to devastate Queensland.

When the QRA was formed to get Queensland back on its feet in the aftermath of the one-two punch of the Queensland floods and Cyclone Yasi in 2011, no-one could foresee see that the state would be battered by no fewer than 34 natural disaster events between then and now. The authority's mission is to reconnect, rebuild and improve Queensland, its communities and economy. As the Deputy Premier has pointed out, without this amendment the QRA will cease to exist on 30 June 2015, leaving this state underprepared for when the next natural disaster strikes. In short, Queensland needs the Queensland Reconstruction Authority.

Central Queensland needs the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. On 20 February 2015, category 5 Tropical Cyclone Marcia crossed the Central Queensland coast near Shoalwater Bay. Within 48 hours after it formed the cyclone intensified rapidly into a category 5 cyclone. The area experienced heavy rainfall, destructive winds and abnormally high tides. The scale and scope of damage resulting from severe Tropical Cyclone Marcia saw the activation of the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements in 14 local government areas.

The social and economic impacts from this cyclone are serious. The impacts on residents, businesses and community organisations of all shapes and sizes are real. I witnessed firsthand the important role that the QRA has played in the recovery efforts from Cyclone Marcia. The authority worked to reconnect, rebuild and improve Central Queensland. It has helped and continues to help Central Queensland communities get back on track as quickly as possible. For that, on behalf of my community, I would like to put on record how extremely grateful I am to the QRA.

Since its formation, the QRA has evolved comprehensive systems and processes for the preparation for, response to and recovery from natural disasters. In the event of a natural disaster, as it did in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Marcia, the QRA performs a number of roles and support functions. The Commonwealth government is already looking at the QRA's innovations in the field of disaster response and recovery for adoption on a national scale.

The QRA is needed as we respond to the Commonwealth's move to reform the NDRRA and reduce assistance to Queensland communities following recommendations from the Productivity Commission that would leave disaster affected communities in tatters. Only this week we have seen the Abbott government short-change the Central Queensland community, refusing to fund its fair share of category D assistance under the NDRRA. The Palaszczuk government offered to fund category D assistance on a fifty-fifty basis with the Commonwealth to help those communities that were the hardest hit by Cyclone Marcia.

After a thorough assessment of the damage and in consultation with local councils, the Palaszczuk government requested \$198.5 million of category D funding from the federal government. This week, when it came to supporting regional Queensland, the Abbott government showed its true colours by approving a measly \$27.75 million—nothing in comparison to the \$198.5 million that is needed to get Central Queensland back on its feet. For the benefit of the House I table a table that outlines the amount of category D funding that was requested by the state in comparison to the amount of funding that was approved by the Abbott government.

Tabled paper: Document titled 'Category D proposals for Tropical Cyclone Marcia' [\[527\]](#).

I can tell members that the figures are very disappointing.

This is a real slap in the face for local families and businesses, who have had their lives torn apart by an extreme natural disaster. Essentially, the Abbott government is telling Central Queenslanders that they are on their own. But have we heard anyone from the opposite side of this House tell Mr Abbott that this is not good enough for Central Queensland? Have we heard anyone opposite tell Mr Abbott that this is not good enough for Queensland—a state that faces many natural disasters annually?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I ask that you rule on relevance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Keppel, I think that is well outside the scope of the bill. Can you come back to the bill, please.

Mrs LAUGA: I think it is a really important point, because we are talking about disaster relief.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Keppel, I have made my ruling.

Ms TRAD: I rise to a point of order. My point of order is that the QRA administers the NDRRA and it is very much within the purview of this bill.

Mr SPEAKER: Deputy Premier, I have made my ruling.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Ms Trad interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member for Kawana, Deputy Premier!

Mrs LAUGA: Without the full category D assistance—

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Ms Trad interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Kawana, Deputy Premier, there will be no more conversation across the chamber.

Mrs LAUGA: I am just wondering where the other \$170 million has gone. These projects—

Ms Trad: You know that those opposite won't fight for it.

Mrs LAUGA: I take that interjection. That is absolutely right.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is too much chatter across the chamber. The member for Keppel has the call.

Mrs LAUGA: Category D assistance is the safety net to support—


Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members, I am going to issue a general warning. If this carries on, I will start warning members under standing order 253A.

Mrs LAUGA: Category D assistance is a safety net to support communities facing extraordinary recovery costs following a natural disaster and a lifeline for the local economy that is doing it tough. In this case, the Rockhampton and Livingstone councils requested \$78.5 million under category D for iconic projects, but the Commonwealth has approved not one single dollar. These projects would not only provide a much needed boost to the local economy hit hard by Tropical Cyclone Marcia but also ensure that the community is more resilient should another natural disaster strike.

These types of requests are not unprecedented, with the use of category D funding approved for projects such as the Townsville foreshore, Grantham relocation and the Cardwell foreshore following previous disasters. The response from the Abbott government is unacceptable to the Queensland government and it is unacceptable to Central Queenslanders. Removing the expiration date from the QRA will ensure it continues its efficient and effective coordination of natural disaster efforts in transitioning from recovery to reconstruction wherever and whenever a disaster strikes in Queensland.

With regard to the proposed changes to the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012, this part of the bill provides a one-rule-book approach to national transport for heavy vehicles which will improve productivity and safety for all road users. This component of the amendment was supported unanimously by members of the committee. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (10.30 pm): It gives me great pleasure to speak on the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. Firstly, I would like to thank my fellow committee members: the chair, the member for Mirani, Jim Pearce; the deputy chair, the member for Burleigh, Michael Hart; the member for Keppel, Brittany Lauga; the member for Gladstone, Glenn Butcher; and the member for Dalrymple, Shane Knuth. I would also like to thank our research director Erin Pasley, principal research officers Margaret Telford and Mary Westcott and the executive assistant Dianne Christian.

I support that this parliament pass part 3 of the bill which would defer the commencement of chapter 2, registration of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012, until 1 July 2018. I support the Australian Trucking Association's calls that operators should be able to register all their vehicles through a single web portal or a service centre. This system would reduce compliance costs for operators and allow the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and its service provider to undertake roadside enforcement on a more targeted and risk management basis. What is meant by this is that we need the data shared through all states so that transport inspectors can concentrate on the so-called cowboys in the trucking industry, which are a minority, so that they are brought into line and targeted to bring them up to standard; and the good operators, which are the majority of operators, can get on with the business of keeping the wheels turning and are recognised as good operators. It would be essential that the registration portal include all state concessions available to the operator. It would be ridiculous for operators to have to claim back their concessions through a separate process.

If government takes up the NTC's draft heavy vehicle charges determination, the heavy vehicle industry will be overcharged by \$117 million in 2015-16. Until governments can resolve the existing overcharging problem satisfactorily, the Australian Trucking Association cannot see any reason for the industry to have to pay more money for a national registration system. The trucking industry is a major employer in the seat of Gregory. It plays a critical role in our local economy. Just like the previous member for Gregory, Vaughan Johnson, I am passionate about the trucking industry and its survival. We have some great family owned trucking companies in my electorate of Gregory, including Johnson Brothers, Emerald Carrying Company, Ballards, Nixons, Jason Ross Earthmoving and the list goes on. These are hardworking family operations that employ locals and are an integral part of our local economy, from shifting decks of cattle out of the Channel Country to the meatworks of the Darling Downs and Brisbane or shifting decks of cattle out of Central Queensland to meatworks in Rockhampton, Mackay and Townsville, to hauling grain and cotton right across the Central Highlands, also delivering goods or moving heavy equipment for both the resource and agricultural industry using the Warrego, Landsborough, Bruce, Capricorn and Gregory highways. Trucking companies are big business and essential to our region.

It is a high-cost industry to run and registration is one of the huge costs. In 2015-16, heavy vehicle registration nationwide—that is, the total money raised through the national registration charge—is expected to be about \$1.2 billion. For local operators registration is a big cost.

Mr Costigan: Just ask Peter Haylock.

Mr MILLAR: Absolutely. I take that interjection from the member for Whitsunday. To give members some idea of registration, a semi-trailer is \$6,678 to register, a B-double \$15,050 and a type 1 road train—that is, a prime mover with two trailers connected by a dolly—costs around about \$17,340. It is a lot of money before you even start to turn a wheel. Of course, the cost of running a trucking business, whether it is trucking cattle, heavy machinery or grain, does not stop there. There are wages, administration costs, maintenance and mechanical costs and, of course, the big cost is diesel.


I would also like to speak on the continuation of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. I support that. I think everyone in this House appreciates and applauds the great effort by the Queensland Reconstruction Authority when a natural disaster occurs in this state. Of course, that was recently seen when Cyclone Marcia crossed the coast at Yeppoon and left a trail of destruction through the Capricorn Coast, Rockhampton, Biloela, Goovigen, Jambin right down to the North Burnett. It should be put on record that the LNP had intended in government to extend the authority's existence past the June 2015 time frame. The Queensland Reconstruction Authority is essential in times of disaster. It brings together all the key agencies to make sure that we maximise our efforts to restore communities and get them back online as quick as possible. Of course when most people think of natural disasters they think of cyclones and floods—an event that happens quickly and leaves a very visible trail of destruction such as power lines down, roofs ripped off, no power and no water. But the western part of my electorate is facing a very different natural disaster—drought. Drought is a slow-creeping natural disaster that has crept over the west in the past three or four years. I believe that the Queensland Reconstruction Authority has a role to play in a drought in coordinating the relief effort, such as coordinating donations, identifying people in need and assisting sporting clubs that need a hand, like the Ilfracombe Rugby League Club which has no playing surface at the moment and players have to leave the Ilfracombe area and play their games everywhere else.

Mr Costigan: God bless the Scorpions!

Mr MILLAR: Absolutely. People want to help the rugby league club but we need a coordinated approach. I think the Reconstruction Authority may have a role to play in that. They could also have a role helping children participate in local dance and ballet schools which are losing children because families cannot afford the fees. When people donate to drought funds they want to help those kids continue on with their extracurricular activities, whether it is dance school, ballet or tennis. I think we need a coordinated approach. When drought continues, like it has over the past four years, we need a coordinating authority and I believe the Queensland Reconstruction Authority could play that role.

Finally, I will speak on amendments to the Local Government Electoral Act 2011. The amendments to the Local Government Electoral Act mean that a local government CEO may withdraw from being the returning officer by giving the Electoral Commission of Queensland a withdrawal notice before the prescribed notification day. Following an LNP election commitment in 2012, as part of the policy of empowering local government, the Local Government Electoral Act 2011 was amended in 2014 so that the CEO of the local government is the returning officer for local elections unless the CEO gives a withdrawal notice to the ECQ, the CEO is a member of a political party or the Electoral Commission gives the CEO a removal notice. It is important to note that the ECQ still remains responsible for conducting local government elections. As the amendments commenced on 1 January 2015 they had not yet been tested at an election. Local government elections prior to 2008 were run by local governments with the CEO as the returning officer.

My position is to oppose the amendments to the Local Government Electoral Act and maintain the policy of empowering local governments to make decisions to benefit their local communities. Most importantly, we saw no evidence to suggest why we need to amend the act. No evidence was offered during the departmental briefings or public hearings to justify the suggestions in the explanatory notes that the amendments are to remove the perceived bias of having a local government CEO as a returning officer. In the seat of Gregory we have six local governments, the Central Highlands Regional Council, the Barcaldine Regional Council, the Longreach Regional Council, the Blackall-Tambo Regional Council, the Barcoo-Quilpie Regional Council and, of course, the Woorabinda Aboriginal Shire Council. As members would understand, many of these councils are remote councils. Sometimes they have no choice but to use the CEO as the returning officer. These councils can run their elections very efficiently. While contracting out the returning officer to the ECQ may be affordable for the bigger councils down in the south-east, even though we heard the Logan City Council estimate it could save up to \$400,000 if they use the CEO, bush councils do not have the luxury of a huge rate base to draw funds from to pay a contractor. They have to be prudent. They have to make every dollar count. They are also in the best position to run their local government elections. Thank you.

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (10.39 pm): I rise to speak on the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. The bill has three policy objectives: amending the Local Government Electoral Act 2011 to remove the mandate for a local government chief executive officer to be a returning officer for a local government election; deferring the commencement of chapter 2, registration, of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012 until 1 July 2018; and extending the operation of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority after 30 June 2015 to ensure that communities affected by recent Tropical Cyclone Marcia receive assistance in rebuilding and recovery. This is the first occasion I have spoken on a bill that has been reviewed by the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee, of which I am a member. I wish to thank the other committee members and those who briefed the committee, provided submissions and participated in the inquiry. In particular, I acknowledge the invaluable assistance provided by the Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning, the Department of Transport and Main Roads and the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. I acknowledge the work of committee members in the preparation of the report. I am confident that all members of the committee would agree that, despite some differences of opinion, we worked hard to make sure that the committee was able to table a report in this House.

I thank the committee secretariat staff who guided the committee through the review of the bill and provided all avenues to investigate aspects of the bill before us tonight. I know that the secretariat team worked incredibly hard to make sure that the points of view of government, opposition and crossbench members were shown in the report. Although members of the opposition had reservations about aspects of the bill relating to the Local Government Electoral Act 2011, particularly regarding a local government chief executive officer acting as a returning officer, those views were noted and included in our report.

The majority of the committee supported the amendments, with the intention of increasing the transparency and integrity of local government elections. The only way to ensure complete transparency in the election process is to ensure the election authority is at arm's length to those seeking election. The Queensland Electoral Commission not only has the experience of running elections, but also offers councils separation between candidates and the local authority for which they have nominated. By placing the responsibility of the returning officer on the Electoral Commission, voters can be assured that the person making decisions is, without a shadow of a doubt, the most appropriate person for the job. In some cases, that person may well be the council's chief executive officer, particularly in rural and remote parts of the state. However, for the majority of Queensland council electorates, the Electoral Commission of Queensland will be able to fill those roles with people not otherwise connected to or employed by the local authority. This amendment is not an attack on the credibility of councils or council CEOs; it is quite the opposite. This amendment acknowledges the importance of the chief executive officer's first priority, which is to help the council and councillors govern effectively.

The Palaszczuk government has made a commitment that local government elections will be run to the same high standard of independence and efficiency as state and federal elections. The bill ensures that a local government chief executive officer cannot be the returning officer for a local government election unless the chief executive officer is the only person reasonably available in a community to perform that role. Sensibly, the bill provides for an exception to be made in smaller communities if the local government CEO is the only available person with the necessary experience in conducting local government elections. In those instances, the CEO is appointed the returning officer by the Electoral Commission and, therefore, is under the direction and the authority of the Electoral Commission, ensuring the impartiality and integrity of the local government election is protected.

Queenslanders are entitled to have state and local governments that are accountable and open, according to the principles of the Westminster system. As CEOs of local governments work closely with elected mayors and councillors when carrying out their duties, a chief executive officer performing the role of a returning officer presents a potential conflict of interest, especially where incumbents are recontesting an election. It is also of interest that during the briefing process it was stated that whilst the CEO is being paid by the local council that same person may also be paid by the ECQ. One of the major issues identified during the committee hearings was the costs associated with the ECQ conducting local council elections. During the hearings I was pleased to hear that the department, the ECQ and the LGAQ are working together to determine how election costs can be reduced for local governments. I believe that local government is the level of government closest to our communities. Every day, local government affects the lives of Queenslanders and is a genuine partner in the Australian government system. As such, its elections should be aligned with the same high standards of integrity and independence as state and federal elections.

In relation to the parts of the bill regarding the Queensland Reconstruction Authority, I am proud that the Labor government has made a commitment to the people of Queensland to keep the Queensland Reconstruction Authority in existence after 30 June 2015 to protect disaster recovery infrastructure built over the past five years. The bill repeals the sunset clause of 30 June 2015 from the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Act 2011 to ensure that the Queensland Reconstruction Authority can continue the critical work of helping communities effectively and efficiently recover from the impacts of natural disasters that have devastated Queensland over recent times, including severe Tropical Cyclone Marcia, which affected my electorate of Gladstone.

On a local level in my electorate, Tropical Cyclone Marcia caused minor damage to 35 properties, moderate damage to seven properties and severe damage to seven properties. Most of those properties were on the outer edge of my electorate. During the event, the Queensland Reconstruction Authority put an officer on the ground in my electorate to ensure that there were clear lines of communication from day 1 of the cyclone. It was also pleasing that, during a very busy period, the CEO of QRA was in contact with the local council to ensure that they were consistently updated during the recovery period. In my electorate, the total bill for repairs and other works ran into many millions of dollars and around 2,000 man-hours were worked during and after the cyclone, including many hours clearing trees from roads, particularly in and around Mount Larcom and the surrounding area. It was well accepted by all in the electorate that the Reconstruction Authority was able to give vital support to our local government to assist residents on the hard and heartbreaking road back to normal life.

During Tropical Cyclone Marcia, the QRA put an officer, John Tuxworth, on the ground so that the council had clear lines of communication from day 1. In the days after the cyclone the council was also in direct contact with the CEO, Frankie Carroll, so they were fully informed at all times. In comparison to Tropical Cyclone Oswald, one of the reasons that the works contracts are being prepared a lot quicker is due to the direct hands-on involvement of the QRA. From the outset, the involvement of the QRA has helped the Gladstone Regional Council to ensure that the community is recovering in the quickest possible manner.

The Queensland Reconstruction Authority administers the rebuilding program for natural disaster relief and recovery arrangements for activated disaster events and works closely with local governments to ensure the effective recovery of Queensland communities. The work of the authority is integral as Queensland deals with natural disasters and moves from response into recovery. Many Queenslanders, including those who live in the country areas of my electorate, are going through traumatic times as a result of natural disasters. The extension of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority is recognition of the fact that, unfortunately, natural disasters are a common fact of life in Queensland and we need to be consistently ready to prepare, respond and recover after those disasters.

Fortunately, there were no fatalities as a result of Tropical Cyclone Marcia. However, the destructive winds, heavy rainfall and flood events continue to have catastrophic effects on many Queensland communities, particularly those in state electorates neighbouring mine, including Rockhampton and Keppel. I make special mention of the member for Keppel, Brittany Lauga, who is not in the House at the moment, who worked tirelessly during the cyclone event. She continually kept her electorate updated on ways to receive funding and consistently provided updates on the power supply to her area. The scale and scope of damage saw the activation of the NDRRA in 14 local government areas, not only Rockhampton, Livingstone, North Burnett and Banana, but also North Mackay and south to the Sunshine Coast. The Palaszczuk government acknowledges that many Queenslanders are continuing to face the uphill battle of getting their lives back to normal. With the passing of this bill, we can guarantee that the government's help and assistance is ongoing and that those people will not be forgotten.


The third part of this bill is the amendment to the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act. It is to ensure that the unproclaimed provisions of the act that relate to heavy vehicle registration do not automatically commence ahead of the implementation of a national heavy vehicle registration system.

The committee found that the national registration scheme for heavy vehicles will not be ready to commence in participating jurisdictions by July 2015. The delay in commencement will allow for all outstanding matters under the scheme to be addressed prior to implementation. In March 2015 the Transport and Infrastructure Council voted to delay the commencement of a national heavy vehicle registration system until 1 July 2018. The council also sought Queensland government support as the host jurisdiction for this important national reform to make the necessary amendments to the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012. The committee supported the proposed amendment to extend the commencement date to be fixed by proclamation or by 1 July 2018.

The bill amends the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012 to provide for the consistent regulation of heavy vehicle operations across most of Australia and establishes the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator to administer the national law. Queensland is the host jurisdiction for the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act and, as such, the Queensland parliament must first pass amendments to the legislation before they can be applied by the other participating jurisdictions.

The Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012 established a single national system for the regulation of heavy vehicles and is a cornerstone of the Council of Australian Government national vehicle reform agenda. The Heavy Vehicle National Law commenced on 10 February 2014 and was developed to ensure that the heavy vehicle industry can operate across all borders without the impediment of conflicting regulatory requirements. This bill represents the strong progress that continues to be made towards the harmonisation of heavy vehicle legislation across Australia and the reduction in red tape for the heavy vehicle industry.

As stated at the start of my speech, I am grateful for the opportunity to sit on the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee and to speak in favour of this bill tonight. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr KRAUSE** (Beaudesert—LNP) (10.51 pm): It did not take long, did it, for this new Labor government to begin meddling with local government again. As I recall, this was one of the first bills introduced into this House. Although there are provisions that relate to the QRA and the national heavy vehicle regulatory scheme, the title of the bill, which encapsulates local government, indicates that it is mainly focused on local government.

Who can forget the meddling of Labor in local government when they were last in office? I think this was the second bill that was introduced by this government on 25 or 26 March. Who can forget the meddling and boundary changes in 2008 and 2009 by the predecessors of the member for South Brisbane? Local government boundary changes were made overnight and without any consultation with the local community.

Mr Costigan: Shotgun marriages.

Mr KRAUSE: As the member for Whitsunday said, there were shotgun marriages between councils all over the state. Over 100 local government areas were amalgamated into just 76 in the dead of night and without any consultation. Who can forget the meddling in the utilities sector? Local governments had the authority for running water and sewerage facilities taken off them. They had those services taken off them, debt laden onto them and more costs laden on ratepayers.

Who can forget the abolition of the local government subsidy scheme for capital infrastructure and the imposition of provisions like the conflict of interest provisions that, in some cases, prevented local councillors from speaking out on matters of concern to their community if they could be seen to potentially have a conflict of interest when it comes to a matter before council? It stopped them standing up for their communities. Given that this bill was one of the first bills to be introduced by this new government, local government should be very alarmed about the intent of this government when it comes to local government.

If members on the government side vote for this bill tonight they will be voting for a second tax increase for the people of Queensland. They have just voted to increase car registration by 3.5 per cent. As far as I can tell, by taking away the ability of local governments to run their own elections or have CEOs as the returning officer for elections and mandating that the ECQ must run elections, Labor is increasing the cost on local government. Of course, those costs are going to be passed onto ratepayers.

I hear a lot about local government issues in my electorate. I hear a lot about local government issues that need to be resolved locally—that is, through local politics and the local electoral process. When rates go up because of this legislation and another piece of legislation before this House this week—the industrial relations legislation—we know that Labor can be held responsible. It is this House that is implementing a regime that local government cannot avoid and will mean that they have to pass on more costs to ratepayers. The ratepayers of my electorate will hold Labor responsible for that as they will in other electorates around the state.

This will lead to higher taxes and rates. I refer to a letter written to me by Logan City Council Chief Executive Officer, Chris Rose. In a letter to me, which I table, he indicates the Logan City Council's strong support to retain the present provisions in the Local Government Act where the returning officer for local government elections can be the CEO.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 30 March 2015, from the Chief Executive Officer, Logan City Council, Mr Chris Rose PSM, to the member for Beaudesert, Mr Jon Krause MP, regarding local government elections [\[528\]](#).

This letter was sent to me at the request of the elected members of council when this provision was proposed. They estimate that the cost to Logan City Council of implementing the regime that will be put in place is \$400,000 for each election. Some \$400,000 will be passed on to the ratepayers of Logan City Council.

I represent a proportion of Logan City—division 11 and division 4. But I ask tonight: where are the members on the other side of the House standing up for the ratepayers of Logan City Council? What about the member for Logan? What has he had to say about this? What has the member for Waterford had to say? These are members who represent ratepayers of Logan City Council. What is the member for Springwood, the member for Algester, the member for Woodridge and also the member for Stretton saying on behalf of the ratepayers of Logan City Council and the councillors of Logan City Council who have requested this government not implement this change to the Local Government Act?

They are not saying anything. While they voted for the increase in car registration fees tonight, they are also voting to pass on more costs to the ratepayers of Logan City. We have come to expect that from members on the other side of the House. They are constantly placing more costs onto the people of Queensland. I fear that this is only the beginning of what we are going to see in this term of government.

I heard the member for Mirani in here earlier this evening railing against the fact that elected mayors were being given more powers—

Mr Costigan interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Grace): Member for Whitsunday, if you want to interject I suggest you go to your seat.


Mr KRAUSE: I would have taken his interjection from there, but I understand the standing orders. I heard the member for Mirani and the chairman of the committee in here tonight railing against mayors having powers given to them—powers that were previously in the hands of CEOs or may have been in the hands of unelected CEOs—by the former government.

Local governments are accountable to their shires. They are accountable to ratepayers and to their voters just like every one of us is. They should have the powers to run their council as they see fit. The powers should not be placed into the hands of unelected officials. They should have that power so that they can be properly held accountable for the actions of their council and the way that they run their council. Placing powers in the hands of an unelected CEO is not the way to do business in local government. That is exactly what the member for Mirani was saying tonight.

Not only is this bill going to place more costs on to the ratepayers of our state, and in the Scenic Rim Regional Council and the Logan City Council areas that I represent, but, as the member for Burleigh pointed out, from 1939 to 2004, this system of local governments running their own council elections seemed to work pretty well. We did not come across any documented instance of irregularities in the voting process or situations that were untoward.

In a previous debate that we have had in this parliament in relation to voter ID provisions, members opposite have fervently and stridently argued the case that there is no evidence that there is a problem in relation to fraudulent voting or multiple voting. Well there is no evidence that there is any problem in relation to CEOs or local government running their own elections. You cannot pick and choose the arguments you want, members opposite—well you can because you are members of the ALP. As members on this side know, we all know how to spell 'hypocrisy', don't we? It is A-L-P. A-L-P is how you spell 'hypocrisy', and we are seeing that again here tonight.

I urge all members in this House to reject this bill tonight and especially to reject the passing on of more costs to ratepayers because, as the Logan City Council has quite clearly indicated, this will result in passing on costs to ratepayers, and the measures should be rejected.

 **Mr MADDEN** (Ipswich West—ALP) (11.00 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. The object of the bill, as outlined in the Deputy Premier's introductory speech made on 27 March 2015, is to amend the Local Government Electoral Act 2011, the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012 and the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Act 2011. I note from the report by the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee that a majority of the committee recommends that the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill be passed.

Prior to the January 2015 election, the Labor Party made a commitment to the people of Queensland to maintain the Queensland Reconstruction Authority, the QRA, beyond 30 June 2015. The QRA was established in January 2011 to manage and coordinate the recovery efforts across the

state of Queensland for the disaster events of December 2010 and January 2011. The QRA is administered pursuant to the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Act 2011. This act includes a sunset clause to wrap up the authority after two years, recognising that the focus of the authority was to fast-track the rebuilding efforts and get Queensland back to a business-as-usual footing as quickly as possible. But soon after the act was proclaimed, it was clear that the reconstruction process would take longer than two years, and consequently the QRA Act was extended in 2012 and again in 2013 until 30 June 2015.

As an essential part of its function, the QRA administers the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements, the NDRRA. The NDRRA is a joint funding initiative of the Commonwealth and state governments to provide disaster relief and recovery payments and infrastructure restoration to help communities recover from the effects of natural disasters. Most relief measures under the NDRRA are currently funded 75 per cent by the Commonwealth government and 25 per cent by the Queensland government. However, these funding arrangements are presently under review by the federal government. The work of the QRA is integral to how the state government deals with natural disasters and moves from response to recovery.

As a former local government councillor, like a number of members of this House—including the member for Toowoomba South, the member for Cairns, the member for Yeerongpilly, the member for Gympie and others—I have firsthand knowledge of the importance of the QRA and the good work done by its staff often under difficult circumstances and with applications to be processed within short time frames. The work done by the QRA staff should be congratulated and I would like to do so tonight.

The effect of the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 is that the operation of the QRA Act will extend beyond the expiry date of the act, past 30 June 2015, with no end date specified.

Mr Rickuss: Are you disagreeing with my illustrious mayor, are you?

Mr MADDEN: Possibly. I take that interjection from the member for Lockyer. The bill also provides for amendment to the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012, the HVNLA, to ensure that the unproclaimed provisions of the act that relate to the heavy vehicle registration do not automatically commence ahead of the implementation of the national vehicle heavy registration scheme. Chapter 2 of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012 establishes legislative requirements for a national registration scheme that will capture all heavy vehicles, over 4.5 tonne gross vehicle mass, garaged in each of the participating jurisdictions.


On 20 March 2015, the Transport Infrastructure Council voted to delay the commencement of a national heavy vehicle registration scheme until 1 July 2018. There are significant policy and system development issues yet to be resolved before a national heavy vehicle registration scheme can be delivered and, based on assessments undertaken to date, this is expected to take several years. I note that the committee supports the proposed amendment to the act to extend the unproclaimed provisions of the heavy vehicle national scheme to a date to be fixed by proclamation or by 1 July 2018.

The bill also provides for the Local Government Electoral Act 2011, the LGEA, to be amended to remove the mandate for a local government chief executive officer to be the returning officer for a local government election. Section 9 of the LGEA provides for the chief executive officer of the local government for which the election is to be held to be the returning officer for that local authority. But the act also makes provision for the CEO to withdraw from being the returning officer should they so wish by giving notice to the Electoral Commissioner of Queensland, by giving a withdrawal notice before the prescribed notification date. But, as I am well aware having served as a local government councillor, having the CEO act as the local government returning officer creates the possibility of a conflict of interest. This is because the close working relationship that the CEO has with the local government mayor and councillors can create an actual or perceived conflict of interest where the mayor or councillors recontest the next election. To avoid the possibility of a conflict of interest, the bill provides for the removal of the mandate for the local government CEO to act as the returning officer for a local government election.

However, the bill does make provision for the situation where the local government CEO is the only person reasonably available in the community with the necessary experience to perform the role of returning officer. In such circumstances, the act provides for the Electoral Commission to appoint the CEO as the returning officer provided the CEO is not a member of a political party. As submitted

by the Deputy Premier in her speech on 27 March introducing the bill, Queenslanders are entitled to have state and local governments that are accountable and open, according to the principles of the Westminster system of government.


Finally, I would like to thank the committee members, the parliamentary staff, the submitters and the witnesses. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (11.08 pm): Once again I will be brief. I rise to speak to the amendments in the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. Council elections, as we all know, are an essential part of the democratic process and, as we also know, they are expensive. Anything we can do to manage that cost to the ratepayer is worth pursuing as long as the democratic process is open and transparent. Allowing the CEO to serve as the returning officer with the support of the council would be one way of doing this. This has been done for many years before the change in 2008. In 2014 the act was amended again to allow the CEO to be the returning officer. Once again we see this government reversing amendments where there would not appear to be any valid or overwhelming argument to support the change.

In the seat of Condamine, in both the Toowoomba Regional Council and the Western Downs Regional Council, there is much more interest in support of a full postal ballot to elect both councillors and mayor. This would be a significant saving for both the council and the candidates and also their families and supporters. It would also save the general public from having to visit a polling booth on election day which in some areas of the region can be quite a drive.

We all know the time and expense that is involved on polling day and all that goes into the arrangements to secure venues and staff for the day. All this would not be necessary if we had a postal plebiscite. Not everyone and not every council would probably be in favour of this proposal, but I believe it is a discussion that we need to have.

As we know, local government is recognised as being a more hands-on forum of government than others, mainly because of the services that are provided and the community services it is involved in. I am sure that if you asked most of the local government representatives the one thing they would like most from both their state and federal colleagues, other than money, would be to stop changing rules and regulations and let them get on with their job. Let them use the valuable dollars that they have as they are meant to be used, not paying for electoral workers but on the services they specialise in—roads, rubbish and water. There is no need for this change, and I do not support it.

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (11.10 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The policy objectives of the bill are to amend the Local Government Electoral Act to remove the mandate for a local government chief executive officer to be the returning officer for a local government election; to defer commencement of chapter 2 (registration) of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act until 1 July 2018; and to extend the operation of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority under the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Act.

I note from the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee report that the committee unanimously supported the proposed amendments to the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act and the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Act. The majority of the committee supported the proposed amendments to the Local Government Electoral Act.

Under the current Local Government Electoral Act, the chief executive officer of the local government for which an election is to be held is the returning officer. The bill proposes to remove this default position and instead enable the Electoral Commission of Queensland to appoint returning officers and in so doing enhance accountability and transparency and remove any potential for a conflict of interest. I believe the policy objective of this amendment is critical—to ensure that local government elections are run to the same high standards of independence and efficiency as state and federal elections.

As I am sure many members in this House can attest, matters of local government jurisdiction are often among the first raised when talking to people in the community. They affect people's daily lives, whether local roads, development impacts or public infrastructure. It is important that local governments are accountable and open and that elections are conducted in an impartial manner without fear of conflict of interest, whether perceived or otherwise. We have already seen evidenced in this House in the results of the recent state election the importance the Queensland electorate places on public accountability, on transparency and on openness, and the ratepayers of the Brisbane City Council would expect no less.

Under proposed section 9 of the bill, the ECQ may appoint a person as the returning officer for an election unless the person is a minor, a member of a political party or the chief executive of the local government for which the election is to be held. Despite these restrictions, an exception allows for the Electoral Commission of Queensland to appoint the CEO of the local government as the returning officer if the CEO is not a member of a political party and the ECQ considers the CEO is the only person with experience in conducting elections who is reasonably able to be appointed as the returning officer. I believe this is an important exception to ensure that every community including smaller communities have a returning officer with the required capabilities to perform the role. Importantly, in such a situation the appointed returning officer would operate under the direction and authority of the Electoral Commission, ensuring the integrity of the local government election is protected.

I note from the committee's report and comments already canvassed in the House this evening that the Electoral Commissioner favours the appointment of returning officers by the ECQ rather than CEOs being the returning officer by default. I support the amendments and the intention of increasing transparency and integrity of local government elections.

The bill before the House also seeks to amend the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act to ensure that the unproclaimed provisions of the act that relate to heavy vehicle registration do not automatically commence ahead of the implementation of a national heavy vehicle registration system. I note from submissions to the committee process that the Australian Trucking Association and Queensland Trucking Association are both highly supportive of the move to defer commencement of chapter 2 (registration) of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act until 1 July 2018. This will allow more work to be undertaken on the planned national registration scheme.

The bill will also make minor but very important amendments to the Queensland Reconstruction Act 2011. As Queenslanders, we are all aware that we live in the very best part of Australia and enjoy the very best climate, but we also know that natural disasters can and will come, and have devastated Queensland over recent times. The Queensland Reconstruction Authority coordinates the government's program of infrastructure reconstruction within disaster affected communities to ensure their effective recovery. The authority was initially established for a period of two years and is due to expire on 30 June 2015. Clause 25 of the bill removes the expiration clause of the act to provide open-ended continuation. I note that the LGAQ in its submission to the committee welcomed the fact that the Queensland Reconstruction Authority will be maintained as a central whole-of-government contact for councils affected by natural disasters. With these few short comments, I commend the Deputy Premier on bringing this bill before the House so expeditiously and I commend the bill to the House.



Mr DICKSON (Buderim—LNP) (11.15 pm): I rise tonight to speak on the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. I rise to speak because I am particularly concerned about the proposed changes to section 9 of the Local Government Electoral Act 2011, which sees Queensland once again go back to the future with this inept Labor government which after three months still has no new ideas for Queensland. They are rehashing old ideas, as is Labor's way, asking taxpayers to pick up the bill for their ill-advised thought bubbles.

Let us take a closer look at what we have here. The government set out to improve the legislation governing local government in Queensland. It was the same side of politics—a Labor government—that imposed the 2007 council amalgamation on Queenslanders. Amalgamation was supposed to make local governments more effective and sustainable. Given the outcomes of that particular process—and I see it in my own area on the Sunshine Coast—I think we have a very good reason to be very sceptical.

This is not the first time I voice my concerns about a Labor government's action in relation to local government here in our great state. I remind the House that in 2007 Labor claimed amalgamation would save money but then tied local councils' hands by not allowing them to rationalise jobs for a three-year period and failed to adequately compensate local government for their costs. I am told that the Sunshine Coast Regional Council needed to spend several million dollars just to make its computer system compatible. I am sure most other councils would have faced similar problems, to say nothing of all the other costs involved in setting up these new entities. Labor did not properly compensate councils for its costs involved. So who ended up paying the bill for yet another ill-advised Labor thought bubble? The answer is, of course, ratepayers who are already facing increased costs for electricity and water, and this government has no plans to address any of these issues.

I have carefully read the explanatory notes that accompany this bill, and I cannot find any information on the costs of the implementation of this particular amendment. I am sure the minister will enlighten us on a later date on exactly what that is going to be. Does this mean a Labor government will guarantee local government that the bill will have no financial implications on councils at all? Given the government's track record in estimating the costs of amalgamation, I am certainly not going to hold my breath.

As a former local councillor, I am the first person to acknowledge the enormous contribution strong local government makes to our communities. I am therefore appalled by the suggestion in the explanatory notes that these amendments are needed to remove the perceived bias in having a local government CEO as a returning officer. These amendments, according to those opposite, are needed to ensure accountability in local government, unless you live in regional Queensland. Then accountability is all of a sudden not such a big issue.

The amendments provide an exemption when the CEO is the only person reasonably available in the community to act as a returning officer. Talk about double standards. This is yet another example of Labor not caring about regional Queensland. It does not seem to care about providing services for regional Queensland. What message is Labor sending to council CEOs? Where is it evident of the need to act immediately on this issue? It certainly was not offered during departmental briefings or the public hearing, as noted in the statement of reservation. Labor should be focusing on ensuring our local governments are equipped to meet the challenges of supporting their local communities. The Labor government should be focusing on plans for the economy and for jobs for Queenslanders. The proposed amendment, I am afraid, fails on all of these accounts.

The Labor government should be empowering local governments to make decisions that benefit their local communities. We will not achieve effective and sustainable local government if councils are burdened with further debt and red tape. As I have said before, this side of the House has no issue with the proposed amendments to the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act 2012 and the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Act 2011. I certainly acknowledge the ongoing work the Queensland Reconstruction Authority is undertaking in our communities affected by natural disaster and, as such, I support the continuation of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. The QRA administers the rebuilding programs for Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements—or NDRRA—working closely with local governments to ensure the effective recovery of affected communities.

I remain concerned that, under changes to the NDRRA made at the Commonwealth government level, assets are now to be considered essential public infrastructure to be eligible for a claim. Many assets in national parks, such as our walking tracks, lookouts and bridges, do not meet this definition. Likewise, sport and recreation clubs impacted by disaster can no longer rely on the NDRRA assistance to replace much needed equipment and repair clubhouses and sportsgrounds.

Queensland's grassroots sporting and recreation clubs are the backbone of our local communities, and national parks that are well managed and open to be enjoyed by all play an important role for the Queensland tourism industry. I suggest much more can be achieved for local communities across Queensland by ensuring that these vital pieces of local infrastructure are safeguarded by the NDRRA provisions. I suggest more can be achieved for local communities across Queensland by working with local governments to actually reduce the cost of local government elections. Local governments should be afforded the opportunity to run their own elections if it is more cost efficient to do so and, as such, I do oppose the amendment being put forward.


Much has been said on the other side of the House tonight, and I think those opposite need to look at what they are doing. Local government has a special place in Queensland. We have people who represent their community. Many speakers from the government have said tonight that they believe that, but do they really believe it? Do they want to make sure that local governments can be cost efficient? Do they want to make sure that local governments can continue to pay their way? That is not what they are demonstrating through this bill tonight, because we all know that it is going to cost more to run a local government election if the CEO does not do it. Anybody who has been involved in local government will know that—and if members opposite do not know that, they should.

This is the place where we make laws and legislation. Tonight is an opportunity for those opposite, those people who have been in local government or those people who believe in local government, to make a difference. They can vote for the right reasons. I believe that the federal government needs to fund the NDRRA better than they are doing for sports and national parks. Let us see those opposite come to the party, and let us see those opposite vote in favour of local government. That is what they should be doing.

This is another biased law. It is about unfolding and unpacking anything that our side of politics put in place. One day very, very shortly, government members will realise that they are actually getting it wrong. They need to look at what they are imposing upon the people of Queensland. I want to be polite—I am trying to be polite—I am trying to call upon government members to do the right thing by Queenslanders because that is what they should do.

Ms Trad interjected.

Mr DICKSON: I know the Deputy Premier is a very caring person who would always want to do the right thing for Queenslanders and look after them. So the Deputy Premier should change her amendment and not go through with it. She needs to look after local government and be the person that she purports to be to the people of Queensland, not show them who she really is.

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade) (11.23 pm), in reply: I start by thanking all those members in the chamber who have made a contribution to the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I also thank the contributors from the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee for their work on this bill and their contribution to the debate tonight in the chamber. I particularly single out the chair of the committee, the member for Mirani. I also point out the contributions made by the member for Gregory, the member for Keppel and the member for Gladstone, particularly in relation to their contribution around the effects of natural disasters on their local communities and how important the QRA has been in relation to the recovery and the reconstruction post disaster in their local communities.

I note and appreciate the bipartisan support for the continuation of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority and also the amendment to section 2 of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act. I place on record my appreciation on behalf of the government to the QRA and all the work they have done since 2011 in assisting Queensland recover and rebuild after natural disasters.

The amendments to the Heavy Vehicle National Law Act, as members would know, will ensure that those provisions of the law that remain unproclaimed by the end of August this year do not automatically commence. Importantly, this will enable the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, the National Transport Commission and all individual state and territory road transport authorities to work collaboratively towards a revised implementation date of 1 July 2018. As I said earlier in the debate, I hope that we reach agreement well before then in relation to a harmonised national heavy vehicle registration scheme. I sincerely do. I know there are a number of states, including Queensland, who do want to see this harmonisation, who do want to see registration equally applied right across all the jurisdictions, but we do acknowledge that there needs to be a lot more work done before we get to that place.

I note the contributions from the member for Maroochydore and also the member for Buderim in relation to the changes to the Local Government Electoral Act, and I am particularly referring to the provisions that revert the returning officer for local government elections back to the Electoral Commission of Queensland. There are a number of reasons why we are doing this and I will repeat them for the benefit of the House tonight because it is clear from the contributions from a number of individuals opposite that they still clearly do not understand.

Firstly, on the issue of there being no overwhelming need to change the provisions that were brought in by the previous LNP government in relation to CEOs being returning officers for local council elections, I say that there is one overriding reason why there is a need to change this—that is, this side of the House made a commitment to the people of Queensland by way of an election policy that we would go back to the Electoral Commission being the returning officers for local government elections. In other words, we made a promise to the people of Queensland. We said that the standard for elections for local councils should be no less than the standard for the elections in the state arena and the federal arena—that is, an independent body should be responsible for the conduct of the election. To allow CEOs by automatic right to be the returning officers for local council elections is fraught with conflicts of interests and they have been outlined throughout the debate here tonight and previously during the committee inquiry.

I do not take heart from the advice provided from those opposite about why this provision should still remain in the Local Government Electoral Act. I take no heart and I take no heed of their advice because, quite frankly, how can we trust that side of the parliament, the LNP, when it comes to electoral integrity and electoral advice? This is the party in Queensland which delivered the gerrymander for so many years. This is the party that lowered the threshold—

Ms SIMPSON: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I draw your attention to the issue of relevancy to the bill and section 118. The minister has well and truly strayed from the bill.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Maroochydore. Minister, I draw your attention to the importance of relevance.

Ms TRAD: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I am talking about the conduct of elections, which is exactly what we are talking about, and how boundaries are drawn by the Electoral Commission of Queensland is very important. I note that the Electoral Commission of Queensland is looking at local government electoral boundaries as we speak. That is the side of politics that brought us an increased threshold for political donations, in other words, the side of politics that delivered secret donations back into Queensland. I will not take electoral advice from them.

Ms SIMPSON: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I think that the Deputy Premier is ignoring your ruling. I refer again to standing order 118 and relevance.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, the member for Maroochydore has made a valid point. I ask that you make your contributions relevant. Thank you.

Ms TRAD: To say that the CEO of a local council can automatically be the returning officer of a local government election is like saying that Michael Caltabiano could have run the state election when he was DG of the Department of Transport and Main Roads or Jon Grayson, for example, former director-general of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, who was hand-picked by the former LNP premier, Campbell Newman.

We actually believe that there should be a separation between the public servants, who serve on a daily basis—who serve on a daily basis, and I think the member for Hinchinbrook wants me to make the comment twice because he is holding up two fingers.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Hinchinbrook, I think we would all appreciate it if you did not provoke the minister. It is getting late, and, Minister, we are all keen for you to resume your seat when you are finished so we can have a vote.

Ms TRAD: We on this side of the House believe that there should be a separation between those public servants who are responsible for the discharge of elections and those public servants who are responsible on a daily basis for serving those elected officials. It is a fundamental separation of duties and responsibilities. That was the commitment that we gave to Queenslanders and that is the commitment that we will see through in this bill. As much as those opposite do not like it because we are overturning something that they brought in during the last term, perhaps if they had heeded or will heed the advice of their own LNP review—and that is to follow through on commitments that they make to the electorate. They should take note that we will do exactly the same thing—

Ms SIMPSON: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I refer to standing order 118 and the relevance to this bill rather than her political diatribe of the day.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, please, I again ask you to be relevant.

Ms TRAD: I am responding to comments made by those opposite about them not seeing the need for this provision. I am explaining that we made an election commitment. We will follow through on that election commitment, unlike those opposite whose own LNP review found that they had an inability to listen and follow through.

Ms SIMPSON: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I refer to standing order 118. The Deputy Premier is straying far from the bill before the parliament.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I appreciate the point of order being drawn to your attention by the member for Maroochydore, but she should refer to the correct standing order.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, members. Thank you, Leader of the House. Thank you, member for Maroochydore.

Ms TRAD: In conclusion, can I say that—

Mr Elmes interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Noosa—

Ms TRAD: I am happy to keep going.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Noosa, I think we are all keen for the minister to finish.

Ms TRAD: In conclusion, I am appreciative of the support provided by those members of the House who have seen the necessity to continue the QRA and they will provide their support to that effect and those members of the House who have agreed to the postponement of chapter 2 of the Heavy Vehicle National Law Amendment Bill. I also thank those members on the Labor side of this House for their support to return integrity to the conduct of local council elections.

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


Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Clause 3—

 **Ms SIMPSON** (11.35 pm): This clause deals with the replacement of the returning officer. It is the clause that omits the provision that we are predominantly talking about with respect to the Local Government Electoral Act. This was LNP policy and at the 2012 election we gave a commitment to re-empower local government. That was a commitment. We followed through also in respect of deamalgamation after the failed forced amalgamations under Labor.

Part of the empowering in respect of local governments was about recognising the professionalism of CEOs as returning officers. This was a provision that was supported by the LGAQ. I wish to draw this to the attention of the House, particularly Labor members who have spent a lot of time verballing and speaking down in respect of the professionalism of officers of local government. There were checks and balances: there were measures to ensure that integrity of elections would continue. There has been no evidence provided that in the past actual conflicts of interest have existed by having CEOs as returning officers in conducting elections. To those who have spent a lot of time saying that this is an integrity measure, I say that they have presented no evidence that there has been an actual conflict of interest with regard to past elections where, historically, there was a case of the professional officers of local governments conducting those local elections.

The provisions that the LNP put into place in 2014 as a result of our election commitment to the people of Queensland did have checks and balances in that regard. It is a well-known concept that professional officers of local government have to act under many pieces of legislation where potentially there is the opportunity for conflicts of interest. However, what is important is how they mitigate them and what those checks and balances are. That is a fact that is also true of the members of parliament who sit in this House.

I draw to the attention of the House again the submission from Logan City Council, who pointed out quite clearly that the council officers such as the CEO have to be able to act independently and with integrity in their day-to-day roles. That is something that is accepted. We stand by our provision in which we said that we believe in the capacity of local governments having the appropriate checks and balances where the ECQ still was able to oversee essentially elections and ensure that, if they were not satisfied that those elections were being conducted appropriately, they could step in. On that basis, we will be opposing consistently this provision which is disempowering local governments and the professional officers who were in place to undertake those elections.

Ms TRAD: Of course, this goes to the issue that I touched upon when concluding and responding to those members who made a contribution to the debate. I will reiterate. The Labor Party took to the election a commitment to ensure that the Electoral Commission would be the returning officer for local government elections. We promised that we would return to local council elections the same standards that are expected of the election of every single member in this House.

Mr Elmes interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Noosa, you will have a chance to speak if you wish to.

Ms TRAD: As I said, this is no reflection on the professionalism of CEOs. I have met many of them and I think they do a great job, but we on this side of the House believe there should be a separation between the public servants who conduct the day-to-day obligations of adhering to councils and mayors, and the public servants and officers who conduct elections. We believe that the person who is responsible for the day-to-day duties of responding to councils and mayors should be different to the individual responsible for the conduct of elections.

Quite clearly the opposition spokesperson was referring back to a 2012 election policy. We have had another election since then and things have changed. We are committed to seeing through our election commitment. While I am on my feet, can I that I extend my thanks to the Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning for their work in relation to this bill, and can I also thank the Department of Transport and Main Roads for their help and assistance with this bill as well.

Mr ELMES: I have been listening very closely to the Deputy Premier talking about this election commitment to restore the Electoral Commission as the returning officer in council elections. While she has been speaking I have been going through this document very carefully—I like to study these things. We have a number of pages here on local government, Labor beliefs, Labor priorities in government, finance and community development and participation, but nowhere in the document does it say anything about your so-called election promise to remove CEOs from the process. I understand that you would be very keen to implement an election promise, but I cannot find the election promise.

Ms TRAD: Obviously the member for Noosa has not been talking to the LGAQ. We made it very clear in our correspondence to them.

Division: Question put—That clause 3 stand part of the bill.

AYES, 46:

ALP, 43—Bailey, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Byrne, Crawford, D'Ath, de Brenni, Dick, Donaldson, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Furner, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Kelly, King, Lauga, Linard, Lynham, Madden, Miles, Miller, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Pitt, Power, Pyne, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Stewart, Trad, Whiting, Williams.

KAP, 2—Katter, Knuth.

INDEPENDENT, 1—Gordon.

NOES, 42:


LNP, 42—Barton, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Costigan, Cramp, Crandon, Cripps, Davis, Dickson, Elmes, Emerson, Frecklington, Hart, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Leahy, Mander, McArdle, McEachan, McVeigh, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, Perrett, Powell, Rickuss, Robinson, Rowan, Seeney, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Walker, Watts, Weir.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clause 3, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 4 to 25, as read, agreed to.

Third Reading

 **Hon. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade) (11.48 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. JA TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade) (11.49 pm): I move—

That the long title of the bill be agreed to.

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


Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr HINCHLIFFE (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (11.49 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Childers, Hydrotherapy Pool

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (11.50 pm): In a callous move, Labor's health minister has shown his contempt for regional communities by backing away from a key promise of a heated hydrotherapy pool for the Childers community. A community led campaign calling on the minister to restore the funding of \$300,000 has fallen on deaf ears. Many in this little rural community have told me of the great disappointment they feel as they make the long trek to Bundaberg for hydrotherapy rehabilitation following trauma accidents, surgeries and crippling disease.

There is no question in my mind that the decision to scrap this project was politically motivated and malicious. The people of Isis are victims in a nasty political game. Having brought their community and the Bruce Highway to a halt in a street march to show their disgust, they continue to rise up and demand that the minister shows he cares for the bush. The march was a great example of over 100 community members wanting what is rightly theirs. Protesters made their way down the street from the Isis Club, crossed at the lights with police assisting and finished at the Isis War Memorial Swimming Pool, where a meeting was held immediately following the march.

When we see the minister throwing millions of dollars from an operating surplus at waiting lists to make the waiting lists worse, it begs the question why Childers is missing out. In an important show of support, many people put their names to petitions, both paper and online, requesting the Labor government to reinstate funding for this vital resource in Childers. Mrs Jo Jennings of Childers is the last in a long line of people to write to me on behalf of the elderly, cancer patients, amputees and children with disabilities. I table that letter for the minister's reference.


Tabled paper: Letter, dated 10 May 2015, from Mrs J Jennings to the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services, Hon. Cameron Dick, regarding funding for a hydrotherapy pool for the Childers area. [\[529\]](#)

She wrote to me imploring the health minister to reverse his decision. This non-chemical, non-invasive treatment has been known to work miracles in many medical situations. It is a low-cost therapy that saves the medical system money in the long term as people regain their lives and the strength of their limbs through gentle water exercise. Having an indoor heated pool in the community would provide a place for our precious children to learn to swim without the risk of sunburn, and they would gain a life skill that could save their lives in the future. It would give the local swimming club the ability to train all year round and attract local swim meets and carnivals. That is a win-win for the community and local businesses, with more visitors attracted from out of town.

The message from this community is clear. On their behalf, I call on the minister to reverse his hard-hearted decision and show compassion for the people, young and old, of Childers. If he continues to refuse their one simple wish, which was already committed and funded, then he should have the decency to visit the Childers community and have the guts to look the people who want to learn to swim and the patients recovering from serious injuries in the eye and tell them why they cannot have their life-changing pool. There is also the issue of the expected two permanent jobs and four part-time jobs that will not eventuate.

Letters have been written to Anastacia Palaszczuk, Cameron Dick and Leanne Donaldson. The letters talk about a diagnosis of cancer, treatment of chemotherapy and radium, and people having to travel 56 kilometres to receive important treatment. The effect on one's body is traumatic and the side effects can be long lasting or permanent without suitable rehabilitation facilities. For both cancer and heart patients, the ability to access a pool all year round for exercise is vital and should be provided in a timely manner. People need to return to work, to be proactive in the community and to have a sense of self-worth after debilitating health issues. The people of Childers and surrounding communities expect and deserve access to high-quality healthcare services, and they have every right to feel betrayed by this Labor government. Childers is a very strong and determined community. Give them their hydrotherapy pool.

Nepal Earthquakes; Temang, Mr S

 **Mr PYNE** (Cairns—ALP) (11.53 pm): Tonight I speak about the recent earthquakes in Nepal and the good work of a Cairns man in helping people in the recovery process. The quake on 25 April had its epicentre to the west of Kathmandu and shook mountains as far away as Everest to the east. That quake ruinously rattled mountains, mainly in the Langtang valley, where entire villages were buried under avalanches and landslides. It even blocked a major river. The biggest aftershock—a 7.3 magnitude quake on 12 May—caused further devastation. Many Australians were affected by the earthquake, none more than Cairns man Som Temang.

Born in the village of Batase in Langtang, Nepal, growing up Som did not have access to education, which so many of us in Australia take for granted. With no school in his village, as a 10-year-old Som travelled to the city to be educated and advance his lot in life. Unfortunately, once in Kathmandu, he was physically abused and treated as a slave. It was two years before he was able to escape. Som found work in a backpacker hostel as a porter, and this led to an opportunity to come to Australia. In 2008 Som became an Australian citizen. He then completed grades 11 and 12 followed by a Bachelor of Arts at JCU. While at JCU, Som accomplished his goal of creating an organisation to support and educate children from his home village, Friends of Himalayan Children. The organisation builds classrooms, pays for teachers and houses orphans.

Besides being a husband and a father, Som runs a fair trade business, spearheads FHC and works as a Nepali interpreter for those in need including the local Bhutanese community. Tragically, when the earthquake struck, Som not only suffered the destruction of his beloved school but also the death of his brother, who died while trying to save others. I was honoured to recently attend a charity night fundraiser at Kangaroos Rugby League Club in Cairns to help Som's charity rebuild. People were supportive and generous, and another fundraiser will take place at the TAFE on Friday, 12 June.

Writing to me last week, Som said that he was overwhelmed by the generosity of the Cairns community. He said—


I shared my vision of empowering children in Nepal through education. When all this work was undone, the community trusted that FHC can start over and continue with the goal of educating children in remote communities. Over the years Cairns locals have come to my village and seen what FHC is achieving. Our transparency has gained trust and confidence. We are a grassroots organisation and 100 per cent of the money raised is reaching the people in need. We are a team of volunteers who are passionate about our work.

Som concluded—

I have experienced slavery and know what it is like to not have anything and I don't want other children to go through what I had to go through. I know that education is what will break the cycle of poverty and that is why I am determined to rebuild the school in my village as soon as possible.

I thank Som for all his wonderful work. I thank Cairns residents for supporting him, and I ask people to visit their website. Just a few dollars can make all the difference.

Redlands, Eastern Busway

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (11.56 pm): One of the biggest infrastructure projects that the people of Cleveland and Redlands want to see happen is the Eastern Busway. Brisbane City deputy mayor, Adrian Schrinner, and I have put the busway back on the agenda by launching a petition. Already almost 900 people have signed it electronically on the parliamentary website. I encourage all residents of Brisbane and Redland City to support Councillor Schrinner and me: sign the petition on the parliamentary website or a paper copy of it.

On 24 July 2011 the *Brisbane Times* ran a story titled 'Eastern Busway on the skids' saying—

Completion of the Eastern Busway in Brisbane is in doubt, with no new funding available and the project now slated as a 'concept'.

Under Labor, both state and federal, the busway was reduced to a concept and was unfunded. The *Redland City Bulletin* ran a story on 27 May, 2015 titled 'Eastern Busway back on agenda' correctly stating—

Cleveland MP, Mark Robinson, has taken up the challenge and put the 'ditched' Eastern Busway back on the state government agenda.


State and federal Labor governments effectively ditched the busway in 2011 when they removed the 2026 end date and had no plan to fund it with state or federal spending in the forward estimates. An earlier story in the *Brisbane Times* shows that Labor's ditching of the busway was a broken promise to the people of Queensland. In the piece titled 'Busway won't need federal cash: Bligh', then premier Anna Bligh said—

The future of the total 18-kilometre project did not hinge on federal government cash. It is currently in the South-East Queensland infrastructure program for 2026 and federal funding will just bring it forward.

Premier Palaszczuk, the then transport minister, was present and in agreement with then premier Bligh at the phase 2 opening to continue the busway 'whether or not we get the Commonwealth on board', was what was said. Both Labor premiers agreed the state would pay for it and it would be built by 2026 even if no federal funds were forthcoming. Did we see that in their forward estimates for 2012 and beyond? No. Did they match their rhetoric with the funding to keep it moving? No. They ditched it in 2011 after promising to fund it totally themselves.

When the LNP came into government in 2012, the then federal Labor government rejected further funding applications by the LNP government to continue the busway. Now Labor is back in government and I say to the current state government: no more excuses, no more blaming the feds, no more blaming the LNP. Get on with it and build it with state funds as previous Labor premiers and transport ministers committed to do.

Queensland Week

 **Mr PEGG** (Stretton—ALP) (11.59 pm): Queensland Week is a time when people across our great state come together. I want to take the opportunity to recognise a couple of great Queenslanders who make such an important contribution in my local area. Our local area is very fortunate to have so many fantastic people who make a great contribution. There are so many fantastic, hardworking community minded people in our local area that it is impossible to recognise everyone individually. However, tonight I want to mention two local volunteers in particular.

Steve Durrington is the President of the Calamvale Community College P&C and the convenor and marketing coordinator for the 2015 Calamvale Carnival. As members would know, taking over the presidency of a P&C is a big task, particularly when it is a state college with 2,200 students. Steve is a radiographer and his wife, Leanne, also works in the health sector. It seems to be a characteristic of those who work in the health sector that they care for others and have a commitment to the community. I do not know how he fits it all in. Calamvale Community College is a fantastic school. In addition to his role on the P&C, as I said, Steve is the convenor and marketing coordinator for the 2015 Calamvale Carnival. The Calamvale Carnival is taking place on 25 July this year and features Ekka-style rides and the nationally renowned Justice Crew. This is a huge event for the south side of Brisbane, and I encourage everyone to attend.


The other great Queenslander in my local area I want to recognise this evening is Hugh Polson, a Runcorn local and president of the Sunnybank RSL subbranch. Hugh worked tirelessly with other members of the Sunnybank RSL subbranch on this year's successful commemoration of the 100-year anniversary since the landings at Gallipoli. The attendance at both the dawn service and the morning service was more than double previous years that I have attended. What struck me the most about Hugh's speech on Anzac Day was when he said that, while this is an important day where we recognise the 100-year anniversary of the landings of Gallipoli, this Anzac Day is no more important than last year's Anzac Day or the commemoration of Anzac Day next year. I wholeheartedly agree with Hugh's sentiments that Anzac Day is always important.

In addition to these Anzac ceremonies, Hugh and the team at the Sunnybank RSL subbranch organised representatives to attend 32 schools and 10 aged-care facilities to conduct the passing of the spirit ceremony. I had the privilege of attending these ceremonies at the local schools in my electorate, and it was great to see the way in which Hugh engaged the students and how receptive the students were in relation to the commemoration of this important day. The Sunnybank RSL subbranch also has a great tradition of watching State of Origin games, and I look forward to joining them in the future to watch interstate contests. I know the member for Sunnybank is keen on joining me.

Mr Russo: I'll be there.

Mr PEGG: As I said in the beginning of my speech, we are fortunate to have so many fantastic and dedicated Queenslanders in our local area. We can never have too many.


Currumbin Electorate

 **Mrs STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (12.02 am): The southern Gold Coast is witnessing an events smorgasbord. From 11 to 19 April our world-class beaches of North Kirra, Bilinga and Tugun were inundated with competitors for the 2015 national Surf Life Saving Championships 'The Aussies'. Our picturesque foreshore is transformed into a mini-city, hosting the largest event of its kind in the world with over 7,000 competitors. I stopped by to see our homegrown athletes in action and witnessed crowd favourite Shannon Eckstein from Northcliffe and popular Liz Plummers from north Burleigh take home the Ironman and Ironwoman titles against fierce competition. However, it was the day before these titles that will be remembered by so many when the family spirit of surf lifesaving was well and truly evidenced in the open men's board rescue. The sensational win of father and son Trevor and TJ Hendy was applauded by all. Trevor was still buzzing from the experience when I saw him the next day. Congratulations are also in order to Louise Bezzina and the Bleach Festival crew for putting on another creative festival.

Right now Coolangatta turns up the music, cars and everything fifties with Cooly Rocks On. Gail O'Neill and her team have put in a terrific effort again for this year's event. Animals with Attitude is an initiative that sees funds raised for Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary Hospital whilst raising awareness of our native wildlife. Last Friday evening over 400 supporters gathered at Jupiters to bid for giant hand-decorated fibreglass koalas, silent auctions and raffles. Their generosity is to be commended. However, I once again place on record my deep disappointment that this Labor government refuses to recognise the wonderful work of staff and volunteers who treated over 8,000 injured wildlife last year by refusing assistance of \$450,000 over three years. The Premier recently gained media attention declaring the koala as vulnerable in Queensland, yet she fails to give Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary a single cent to care for them, whether injured or healthy.

I was delighted to be with Samantha Way and her team at Palm Beach Neighbourhood Centre for their 25th anniversary last month to celebrate this significant milestone. The centre provides an invaluable service to our local community, touching the lives of approximately 4,000 people each year through services including child, youth and parent counselling, community computer-internet, financial counselling, tax help, money management workshops, personal development programs and more—all delivered in a caring and supportive manner that makes an enormous difference to the outcomes achieved. I was pleased to be able to purchase a new laptop last year which I understand has been put to good use, and I look forward to the centre continuing to grow and service the southern Gold Coast for the next 25 years. Events in Currumbin book out our hotels and motels for miles along the southern coastal strip, and our hospitality and retail industries benefit from the visitor boom and the welcome from locals.

Rockhampton and Yeppoon, Community Cabinet

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (12.05 am): It was a great honour and privilege to have the Premier and her cabinet in Rockhampton and Yeppoon on 24 and 25 May 2015 for the second community cabinet of the Palaszczuk Labor government. The community was so grateful to host the Palaszczuk government's community cabinet so soon after the election and so soon after Tropical Cyclone Marcia devastated many parts of our great region. The Premier and cabinet held a public forum. This is in stark contrast to the community cabinet held by the Newman government last year. That is right: the government held a public forum where people can actually ask questions from the floor and have the answer given to them then and there. There are no closed doors; no invitation-only community cabinet.


The Palaszczuk Labor government is about transparency and accountability. Those important principles of democracy were front and centre at the community cabinet last month. Yes, there were groups of local people at the school campaigning about various issues. The Premier and I both talked with the different groups and listened to their concerns. This is another example of the Palaszczuk Labor government doing what it promised: listening to Queenslanders. We did not ignore them or go in the back door like Campbell Newman did at the last community cabinet in Rockhampton last year. We did what we have always promised: we listened.

Deputations were held by the cabinet with stakeholders, community organisations and constituents representing the entire Central Queensland region. Many issues, concerns, opportunities and ideas were shared with ministers and the Premier over several hours. It was wonderful to join the Premier, Minister Lynham and the Mayor of Livingstone Shire Council, Bill Ludwig, to announce a further \$1.5 million towards the Yeppoon foreshore project. Work is due to start in two weeks and will be completed just in time for summer this year.

Good news also for Rockhampton residents with \$1.12 million committed by the Palaszczuk Labor government for cleaning out our local waterways and to help improve waterway and creek health. These projects will make local watercourses more resilient to flood events, improve river health and water quality flowing into the Great Barrier Reef.

I was also very pleased that the minister also announced an investment of more than \$4.5 million to support vulnerable families in Central Queensland. The funding will establish two new services: Family and Child Connect, to help families struggling to cope to access support, and Intensive Family Support, for families with more critical problems who are at risk of crisis. I thank the Premier and cabinet for their leadership and for holding a community cabinet in Rockhampton and Yeppoon last month. It was a great honour and a privilege for Central Queensland to host you. I know the community greatly appreciates you all taking the time to listen.

Mansfield Electorate, Public Transport

 **Mr WALKER** (Mansfield—LNP) (12.07 am): It has been great tonight to hear the commitment those on the government side of the House have to the implementation of the promises they have made to the people of Queensland. I have been moved to hear what they have said, and I have been particularly moved by their statements of sincerity and accountability in relation to the delivery of those promises because it is about exactly that that I want to speak tonight.

I had a bit of a setback last year in my electorate. In early 2014 some bus routes were taken away from part of my electorate to Mackenzie. It is an important part of my electorate. It is a multiple winner of spotless suburb awards and has a great Neighbourhood Watch committee. We all tried to get together and restore those bus services. The then minister was helpful, but my persuasive talents were not sufficient to change that position. But help was at hand because the Labor Party promised to restore those services. Happily, I have a letter, much the same as the letter the Deputy Premier spoke about sending to the Local Government Association, in which the local candidate says—

I am committed to reversing the changes to Bus routes 260 and 262. You can find a short Facebook post detailing my position on my public profile ...

A flyer detailing our position will be forwarded to you as soon as possible.

I am sure that it was. I table that communication.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 12 May 2015, from Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade, Hon. Jackie Trad, to the member for Mansfield, Mr Ian Walker MP, regarding bus routes 260 and 262 [532].

That is to a resident of Mackenzie. When I saw that good news, that that promise had been made, I subsequently wrote to the Deputy Premier earlier this year on 30 March. Surprisingly, I got a letter back in very similar terms, I must say, to that which the department had drafted for the previous minister, telling me that unfortunately the services would not be restored. There has obviously been a mistake. I table that letter.


Tabled paper: Email, dated 30 March 2015, from the member for Mansfield, Mr Ian Walker MP, to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade, Hon. Jackie Trad, regarding bus services 260, 261 and 262 servicing the suburb of Mackenzie [531].

The Deputy Premier herself has been very strong on this point. You might recall it was part of the to-and-fro of the last election campaign that it could not possibly be that if your candidate wasn't elected that your policies in that seat would not be implemented. I have an article here from the *Courier-Mail* where the Deputy Premier herself promised to consider laws so this blackmail would not happen. If your bloke did not get elected, the policy would not be implemented. So it is great to see that. I table that article.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Courier-Mail* online, dated 28 January 2015, titled 'Labor government would consider laws to ensure electoral "blackmail" could not happen' [530].

I am sure that, as a result of that and her emotional statement tonight about her commitment to putting those sorts of policies that have been in the letters to the organisations that she spoke about, she will have a similar view to the electors in Mackenzie and the bus services there will be restored. They are very important to the people of Mackenzie. It is an isolated pocket which needs those services. I ask the Deputy Premier to reconsider the matter in the light of the comments that she has made to the House this evening.

Lynch, Mr G and Mrs J

 **Ms FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (12.10 am): I often talk in this House about how close my local community is and how strong is the social fabric. If an event I attended last Saturday night was not one of the best illustrations of how that happens, then I do not know what is. The event was called 'Gary's journey out of the woods'. It was a function put on by Gary and Janelle Lynch to say thank you to the Princess Alexandra Hospital for saving Gary's life last year and to raise money for the Princess Alexandra Hospital Foundation.


There does not seem anyone who does not know Gary and Janelle and their sons, Andrew and Benjamin. They are one of those families that is always doing something for someone. Whether it is the Bulimba Uniting Church, Bulimba State School, Bulimba Festival, Cannon Hill Anglican College, new families or new neighbours or any community cause—you name it—they are in the thick of it. So when we heard news last year that Gary had been taken to hospital and was gravely ill and might not survive, the ripples spread right across our community. We were all devastated for Gary and the whole family. We waited tensely for Janelle's Facebook updates. When we saw each other on the

street the only thing we asked each other was whether there was any news from the hospital. The kindness and generosity that Gary and Janelle had shown throughout their lives paid forward with people praying and hoping and doing whatever practical things they could think of to help make things even a little easier.

Gary was released from hospital after 18 days and spent the next six weeks quarantined at home and he is still not fully recovered. But in true form, the first thing he wanted to do was something practical to thank the hospital for saving his life. That is what last Saturday night was about. It showed our community at its best. What was originally to be a little morning tea at home turned into a function for over 200 people. It was held at the Bulimba State School hall, backed up by a huge team of volunteers and included a giant silent auction and raffle supported by so many donations that I stopped counting. The indomitable Bec Lawrence exceeded. I was so grateful to Cameron Dick, our health minister, for attending and helping to officially say the thankyou. We heard from Dr Andrew Staib, the specialist who saved Gary's life, and our very own local, Dr Claire Sullivan, who is part of the research team helping to dramatically reduce mortality rates at the hospital. These two doctors are so humble but we know they do amazing things. They showed us the best about our public health system.

Although it is not confirmed, Gary and Janelle are hoping they may have raised almost \$25,000. I know they would want me to tell everyone in this House what a fantastic hospital the Princess Alexandra Hospital is with the most amazing staff. That is exactly what I am doing now. At the same time, I say how amazing also are Gary and Janelle Lynch.


Inlander Passenger Service

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (12.13 am): I rise tonight to talk once again about the *Inlander* passenger service between Townsville and Mount Isa. There is a petition containing over 1,000 signatures in relation to the service, which was affected late last year when the government decided to remove the sleeper car and the cafe cart. Most of the people who travel on the service are elderly. They now have to undertake a 20-hour journey without a sleeper carriage or a cafe cart which almost renders the service useless. It is a service that I myself have used a few times. The number of passengers who use the service is not large, but those people rely on it. We do not have many modes of transport. For an elderly person living in Julia Creek who wants to visit family or get to hospital but who is not suited to bus or air travel, this is a very affordable service they can access. This passenger service needs to be kept alive for the people who have helped build the wealth of our state. They live in hot, remote areas doing jobs that keep industry going which in turn keeps our state going. Keeping that passenger service alive is a small thing that we can do for those people.

There has obviously been a concerted effort from previous governments of both political persuasions to get rid of this service because it is not considered important and 'not many people are using it anymore so who cares?' The flipside is that when passenger numbers on trains in Brisbane diminish media releases are put out to incentivise people to use them, but unfortunately we do not apply the same standard to western services. Once numbers decline, ways of getting rid of the service are made up and that has happened with the *Inlander* service.

Much to my surprise, a large number of people have signed this petition because they feel very strongly about it. We do not have many modes of transport in our area and it is very isolated. If a service is removed it will never come back. Removing the sleeper car and the cafe cart is one step towards getting rid of the service altogether. It is a service that these people deserve. It is lower income and elderly people who use it. They deserve it. It is a small thing for the state to give back to those people who create a lot of wealth that we all benefit from. I think it is something they deserve and that the government should deliver. It is something that I certainly will keep on the back of government about so that it is delivered to those people and they get to continue to enjoy that service.

Marriage Equality

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (12.16 am): There can be no doubt that the time has come to act on marriage equality. When we as legislators continue to be out of step with the attitudes and expectations of the community that we represent, we are failing at our jobs. There is overwhelming support across Queensland, and Australia more broadly, for marriage equality. Recent polling suggests more than 70 per cent of Australians support marriage equality. I heard a commentator say on the weekend that every English-speaking country—including a majority of states in the US—has marriage equality in some form. It is time to catch up.

I am a member of the party of reform, a party that recognises people from right across the sexuality spectrum as equal. It was Labor that, way back in 1998, amended legislation to provide same-sex couples with the same protection under domestic violence laws as heterosexual couples—much to the derision of those opposite at the time. It was Labor that provided—and the other side that undid—recognition of people in same-sex relationships as loving, caring people capable of being good parents. This was done through amendments in relation to removing discrimination regarding surrogacy and parental recognition. It was Labor that, when last in government, established a civil unions regime to register, recognise and celebrate before the law stable, committed, loving, long-term partnerships. Proudly, it is Labor that will restore this. When in government federally Labor amended 85 pieces of legislation to remove discrimination against LGBTIQ people and same-sex couples.

It has come to Labor again to stop talking and start acting. Labor leaders Bill Shorten and Tanya Plibersek have this week introduced a bill to amend the Marriage Act to remove discrimination. It is not just the Labor leaders who support this. Many conservatives are also backing equality, from long-serving MPs like Warren Entsch to parliament's youngest, Wyatt Roy. Current legislation is also out of step with industry leaders, with 53 of Australia's leading companies proudly advertising their support for marriage equality over the weekend. That list grows by the day. It includes every major bank, all the major consulting companies, airlines and telecommunications companies. It is time for marriage equality, and I urge all Queensland federal MPs to support marriage equality and support the bill introduced by Bill Shorten and Tanya Plibersek.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 12.19 am (Thursday).

ATTENDANCE

Bailey, Barton, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Byrne, Costigan, Cramp, Crandon, Crawford, Cripps, D'Ath, Davis, de Brenni, Dick, Dickson, Donaldson, Elmes, Emerson, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Frecklington, Furner, Gilbert, Gordon, Grace, Harper, Hart, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Katter, Kelly, King, Knuth, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Lauga, Leahy, Linard, Lynham, Madden, Mander, McArdle, McEachan, McVeigh, Miles, Millar, Miller, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Perrett, Pitt, Powell, Power, Pyne, Rickuss, Robinson, Rowan, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Seeney, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Trad, Walker, Watts, Weir, Wellington, Whiting, Williams