



RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT

Friday, 4 December 2015

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FRIDAY, 4 DECEMBER 2015

 The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

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

MINISTER FOR POLICE, FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES AND MINISTER FOR CORRECTIVE SERVICES

Resignation

 **Mrs JR MILLER** (Bundamba—ALP) (9.31 am): Today I wish to inform the House that I have tendered my resignation from the Queensland cabinet to the Premier. It has been an honour to serve as the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services. I have enjoyed working with all of my commissioners, with the directors-general and with officers and staff right across my portfolio. It has also been a privilege to stand shoulder to shoulder with them, supporting them as they do what they do best in our community: keeping Queenslanders safe. I wish them all the best in their future endeavours, and I want each and every one of our emergency services personnel to know that my spirit will always be with them.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS

Address-in-Reply

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, the address-in-reply was passed last night and will be presented to His Excellency the Governor at Government House at a time and date to be advised.

Questions on Notice

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, standing order 114 requires questions on notice to be lodged with the Clerk by the end of question time each day. I remind all honourable members that question time will be concluded at 10.30 am today, pursuant to sessional order 1(i).

PRIVILEGE

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

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, on 18 September 2015 the Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games wrote to me alleging that the Leader of the Opposition and the members for Mermaid Beach, Toowoomba South, Indooroopilly, Aspley, Everton, Warrego, Caloundra, Southport, Chatsworth, Nanango, Moggill, Toowoomba North, Cleveland, Noosa and Mansfield deliberately misled the House via the preamble to the questions on notice asked on 6, 19 and 20 May 2015, 2, 3 and 4 June 2015 and 3 July 2015. I have circulated a ruling on this matter. I have decided that the matter does not warrant the further attention of the House via the Ethics Committee and I will not be referring the matter. I seek leave to have the ruling incorporated.

Leave granted.

On 18 September 2015, the Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and Commonwealth Games wrote to me alleging that the Leader of the Opposition, and the members for Mermaid Beach, Toowoomba South, Indooroopilly, Aspley, Everton, Warrego, Caloundra, Southport, Chatsworth, Nanango, Moggill, Toowoomba North, Cleveland, Noosa and Mansfield deliberately misled the House via the preamble to their Questions on Notice asked on 6, 19 and 20 May 2015, 2,3 and 4 June 2015, and 3 July 2015 which referred to the funding and costing of projects that were not contingent on the Strong Choices Program.

In her letter to me, the Minister stated that these Questions on Notice included a deliberately misleading pro-forma preamble referring to commitments made by members of the former Liberal National Party (LNP) Government during the election campaign in the lead up to the 2015 election.

The Minister advised she sought advice from the Department of Education and Training for each of these Questions on Notice and that none of these projects were funded or costed by the former LNP Government, nor were they included in the forward estimates. The Minister also contended that the proposed allocations were announced during the election period and were conditional on the re-election of the local LNP candidates.

I sought further information from the members listed about the allegations made against them, in accordance with Standing Order 269(5).

The members disputed the allegation that in order for a project to be fully funded or costed it must have either been done by the Department, or be contained in the Budget forward estimates.

The members stated that the LNP's election costings contained multiple components, including projects contained in the Budget Papers and forward estimates at the time; projects contained in the LNP's fully costed and audited election costings not contingent on asset leases; and projects contained in the LNP's fully costed and audited election costings contingent on asset leases.

Standing Order 269(4) requires:

In considering whether the matter should be referred to the committee, the Speaker shall take account of the degree of importance of the matter which has been raised and whether an adequate apology or explanation has been made in respect of the matter. No matter should be referred to the ethics committee if the matter is technical or trivial and does not warrant the further attention of the House.

Taking all the material before me into account, the members' statements demonstrate a difference in opinion to the Minister about how the costings and funding for the projects is undertaken, where they would be displayed, and whether the funding for all projects would have been covered by the Strong Choices Program.

Given the apparently equally reasonably held differences in opinion about this matter, any potential misleading of the House could, at best, be a technical one.

On this basis, I have decided that the matter does not warrant the further attention of the House via the Ethics Committee and I will not be referring the matter.

I table the correspondence in relation to this matter.

Tabled paper: Correspondence, various dates, relating to a matter of privilege concerning questions on notice asked by 16 opposition members to the Minister for Education, and Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and Commonwealth Games, Hon. Kate Jones MP [\[1850\]](#).

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



Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, on 15 October the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills wrote to me alleging that the member for Indooroopilly deliberately misled the parliament in his question without notice. I have circulated a ruling on this matter. I have decided that the matter does not warrant the further attention of the House via the Ethics Committee and I will not be referring the matter. I seek leave to have the ruling incorporated.

Leave granted.

On 15 October 2015, the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills wrote to me alleging that the Member for Indooroopilly deliberately misled Parliament in his question without notice when he asked:

My question is to the Attorney-General. I refer to the Attorney-General's Redcliffe by-election declaration in which she declared she received \$29,030 as a salary package from the AWU. Given the AWU Australian Workers' Union has not declared this in its own return, can the Attorney advise what investigations are underway?

In her letter to me, the Attorney-General stated that the question from the Member for Indooroopilly was deliberately misleading because the return of the AWU for the Redcliffe by-election was not available at the time the Member for Indooroopilly asked the question, and therefore it was incorrect to say that the AWU had not included the payment of the salary package in its return.

I sought further information from the Member for Indooroopilly about the allegations made against him, in accordance with Standing Order 269(5).

The Member for Indooroopilly advised that referring to the AWU having not declared the salary package in its return, he was stating that there was no return when there should have been if the AWU had paid the salary package as declared by the Attorney-General.

Standing Order 269(4) requires:

In considering whether the matter should be referred to the committee, the Speaker shall take account of the degree of importance of the matter which has been raised and whether an adequate apology or explanation has been made in respect of the matter. No matter should be referred to the ethics committee if the matter is technical or trivial and does not warrant the further attention of the House.

On the evidence before me I considered that the Member for Indooroopilly's Question Without Notice consisted of three parts; two statements of fact and then a question. In my view, neither the statement regarding the Attorney-General's electoral return nor the statement regarding the AWU's electoral disclosure return were factually or apparently incorrect or misleading.

Had the third part of the Question Without Notice been a statement of fact (for example, that investigations should be underway) it may well have been misleading, however, it wasn't, the third part was in the form of a question. To not allow questions as to whether the government is investigating a particular matter or not on the basis that some persons might jump to a false conclusion that something untoward has occurred would be contrary to the scrutiny function of question time.

I am satisfied with the Member for Indooroopilly's explanation, and, therefore, I have decided that the matter does not warrant the further attention of the House via the Ethics Committee and I will not be referring the matter.

I table the correspondence in relation to this matter.

Tabled paper: Correspondence, various dates, relating to a matter of privilege concerning statements made in the House by the member for Indooroopilly, Mr Scott Emerson MP, on 16 September 2015 [[1851](#)].

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

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, on 22 October 2015 the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services wrote to me alleging that the Leader of the Opposition deliberately misled the House in making two statements, on 19 May 2015 and 17 September 2015. I have circulated a ruling on this matter. I have decided that the matter does not warrant the further attention of the House via the Ethics Committee and I will not be referring the matter. I table the correspondence in relation to this matter.

Tabled paper: Correspondence, various dates, regarding an alleged deliberate misleading of the House by the Leader of the Opposition [[1852](#)].

I seek leave to have the ruling incorporated.

Leave granted.

On 22 October 2015, the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services wrote to me alleging that the Leader of the Opposition deliberately misled the House in making two statements on 19 May 2015 and 17 September 2015.

The first statement made on 19 May was:

Try telling that to the 6,485 people who are waiting for their surgery longer than clinically recommended, for seven, eight, nine or 10 years while living in pain—an absolute and complete and utter shame. At the change of government, that was reduced to 73.

This is about making sure that, when a patient is given an appointment to have their surgery within a clinically recommended time, they do have their surgery within a clinically recommended time. That is why it was reduced from 6,485 down to 73.

The second statement made on 17 September 2015 was:

Under Labor, 6,485 people were waiting longer than recommended for surgery; under the LNP, 72.

In his letter to me, the Minister stated that the Leader of the Opposition had deliberately misled the House regarding the number of patients waiting longer than clinically recommended for elective surgery at the change of government. The Minister argued that, when the Leader of the Opposition was the Minister for Health, the decision was taken to exclude the elective surgery long waits at the Lady Cilento Hospital as at 1 January 2015, 1 February 2015 and 1 March 2015 from the figures published on the hospital performance website. The Minister therefore contends that the figures being used by the Leader of the Opposition did not represent the total figure applying to the Queensland public health system.

I sought further information from the Leader of the Opposition about the allegations made against him, in accordance with Standing Order 269(5).

The Leader of the Opposition disputed the allegation made against him, and stated that the figures he used were those advised to him by the Department of Health when he was Minister, and the figures were based upon clearly articulated and transparent methodology which was in the public domain at the time.

On the information available, on the one hand the Minister is claiming to have data provided by the Department of Health, while on the other hand, the Leader of the Opposition is also claiming that his figures were provided by the Department of Health. Neither provides any documentary evidence to support their claims.

Therefore, on the information before me it is difficult to ascertain whether the Leader of the Opposition's statements were factually or apparently incorrect.

There is not enough information available to determine whether the statements were misleading to then be able to consider the subsequent elements, including whether the Leader of the Opposition intended to mislead the House.

I note there is insufficient authentication of facts to judge either the complaint or the Leader of the Opposition's response.

On this basis, I have decided that the matter does not warrant the further attention of the House via the Ethics Committee and I will not be referring the matter.

I table the correspondence in relation to this matter.

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

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, on 9 November 2015 the member for Currumbin wrote to me alleging that the Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games deliberately misled the Education, Tourism and Small Business Committee. I have circulated a ruling on this matter. I have decided that the matter does not warrant the further attention of the House via the Ethics Committee and I will not be referring the matter. I table the correspondence in relation to this matter.

Tabled paper: Correspondence, various dates, regarding an alleged deliberate misleading of the Education, Tourism and Small Business Committee by the Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games, Hon. Kate Jones MP [[1853](#)].

I seek leave to have the ruling incorporated.

Leave granted.

On 9 November 2015, the Member for Currumbin wrote to me alleging that the Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games deliberately misled the Education, Tourism and Small Business Committee when she stated that:

I, too, like you, would like to know what the delay was...

in relation to the delay in provision of answers to Questions on Notice to the Education, Tourism and Small Business Committee on 24 August 2015.

In her letter to me, the Member for Currumbin contended that as the minister was required to authorise and provide to the Parliament a revised set of answers, the Minister's response was factually incorrect as the Minister must have, at the time of making that statement, been aware that she had been required to provide a revised set of answers after the 10.00am deadline to which she refers.

I sought further information from the Minister about the allegations made against her, in accordance with Standing Order 269(5). The Minister disputed the allegation made against her, and stated she believed she had submitted the responses in accordance with the deadline, and, not being responsible for their distribution, had not anticipated a delay in their distribution as she was required to amend responses to questions for the Education portfolio and not the Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and Commonwealth Games portfolio.

Standing Order 269(4) requires:

In considering whether the matter should be referred to the committee, the Speaker shall take account of the degree of importance of the matter which has been raised and whether an adequate apology or explanation has been made in respect of the matter. No matter should be referred to the ethics committee if the matter is technical or trivial and does not warrant the further attention of the House.

I find that the Minister has provided an adequate explanation in respect of the matter.

On this basis, I have decided that the matter does not warrant the further attention of the House via the Ethics Committee and will not be referring the matter.

I table the correspondence in relation to this matter.

Speaker's Ruling, Alleged Intimidation of a Member



Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, on 12 November 2015 the member for Mount Ommaney wrote to me alleging that the member for Bundamba had threatened and intimidated her. I have circulated a ruling on this matter. The member for Bundamba has made an adequate apology to the House. Accordingly, I will not be referring the matter to the Ethics Committee. I seek leave to have the ruling incorporated.

Leave granted.

On 12 November 2015, the Member for Mount Ommaney wrote to me alleging that the Member for Bundamba had threatened and intimidated her.

The Member for Mount Ommaney claimed that the Member for Bundamba made a throat slitting motion towards her and used the phrases 'I'm going to get you' and 'you're a goner'.

Standing Order 269(4) requires:

In considering whether the matter should be referred to the committee, the Speaker shall take account of the degree of importance of the matter which has been raised and whether an adequate apology or explanation has been made in respect of the matter. No matter should be referred to the ethics committee if the matter is technical or trivial and does not warrant the further attention of the House.

The Member for Bundamba has made an adequate apology to the House. Accordingly, I will not be referring the matter to the Ethics Committee.

I remind members that members are to strive at all times to conduct themselves in a manner which will tend to maintain and strengthen the public's trust and confidence in the integrity of Parliament and avoid any action which may diminish its standing, authority or dignity. Actions and words such as those for which the Minister has apologised are clearly outside the conduct expected in the House.

I table the correspondence in relation to this matter.

Tabled paper: Letter, received 12 November 2015, from the member for Mount Ommaney, Ms Tarnya Smith MP regarding an allegation of intimidation by the member for Bundamba, Hon, Jo-Ann Miller MP [[1854](#)].

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Achievements



Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.36 am): It has been a busy year for my government. Upon taking office in February I promised Queensland we would be a government for all Queenslanders, and we are delivering on that promise. My government is committed

to Queenslanders and supporting economic growth and especially creating jobs. We have seen a total of 43,800 jobs created since the election. We have seen a priority on job creation through specific measures such as reinstating the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program and also through the budget and its \$10.1 billion infrastructure spend, supporting 27,500 jobs throughout our state.

In recent weeks we have seen a series of major resource sector developments and projects announced for Queensland—projects and developments worth \$8 billion in expenditure and involving many thousands of jobs for our state. Our growth forecasts are on track. We are set to record nation-leading economic growth both this financial year and next.

We have restored our vital front-line services and returned fairness to the workplace. Our first budget included record spends on health and education, including 400 new nurses and 4,000 new graduate nursing placements, as well as 875 extra teachers.

Our much praised Advance Queensland initiative will see \$180 million invested over four years as part of our plan to diversify the economy and create the knowledge-based jobs of the future. We also established Jobs Queensland, an independent statutory authority providing strategic industry led advice on skills demand and long-term workforce development.

We are also delivering on our commitment to reduce the state's debt. Through our Debt Action Plan, general government debt will be \$7.5 billion less this financial year than was forecast by the previous government.

We have been proactive in securing investment and new endeavours for the state. The Northern Queensland Economic Summit, held between 4 and 6 November, attracted around 270 international and Australian delegates. The summit showcased the benefits of previous investments in northern Queensland and highlighted the prospective new investment opportunities in infrastructure, tourism, resources, agriculture, research and innovation. We intend to build on the summit and back-in investment opportunities that will grow the economy across Queensland.

Speaking of economic growth, my government released the draft Infrastructure Plan to manage future growth and deliver a long-term program of infrastructure projects and investments for Queensland. We will work cooperatively with the federal government to secure proper funding for key infrastructure projects. Canberra's commitment to Gold Coast Light Rail Stage 2 exemplifies the cooperative approach in considering vital infrastructure. There will be \$200 million for Building Our Regions program, with the first round of projects awarded later this month. I am very pleased to report that with around 850 days until the opening of the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games progress preparations are on time and, most importantly, Minister, within budget. The Commonwealth Games and associated projects will inject \$2 billion into Queensland's economy and create up to 30,000 jobs. My government is also proud that our initiatives to protect the Great Barrier Reef were recognised by UNESCO earlier this year. Significant progress has been made by banning capital dredging of ports through amendments to the Sustainable Ports Development Act. We look forward to reporting to UNESCO on the positive gains made through Reef 2050's actions.

A Queensland free from domestic and family violence is a vision worth striving for, but government cannot achieve this alone. Domestic and family violence is everyone's concern. All Queenslanders must work together to stop the behaviours that trivialise, excuse or perpetuate this violence. This year my government has taken some important first steps in realising this vision, including increasing penalties for breaches of domestic violence orders; trialling a specialist domestic violence court on the Gold Coast; establishing two new DV crisis centres, one each in Townsville and Brisbane; establishing the Domestic and Family Violence Implementation Council to oversee implementation of the domestic and family violence strategy; and responding to the *Not now, not ever* report and allocating an additional \$1.2 million to DVConnect.

We must also remember that drought affects more than 80 per cent of our state. The toll of this drought has been felt through the economy, the environment and most importantly by families and their communities. While we all hope the drought ends this wet season, my government is committed to continuing to support primary producers and local communities by providing \$52.1 million in the budget for drought assistance over the next four years. In the coming year we will continue the vital work we have started and we will strive diligently to serve all Queenslanders throughout our great state.

Catalyst Infrastructure Program



Hon. JA TRAD (South Brisbane—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade) (9.41 am): The Queensland government recently launched the Catalyst Infrastructure Program, or CIP, as part of the first

Palaszczuk Labor government's budget to help generate economic growth by investing in infrastructure that unlocks development and creates construction and long-term jobs throughout the state. The Palaszczuk government is working with local governments, utility providers and the private sector to identify opportunities to co-invest in catalyst projects. A total of \$59.35 million has been allocated to the program over three years commencing in this financial year. Economic Development Queensland, which is managing the program, is identifying infrastructure which will open up new opportunities for our communities, including transport, water supply, wastewater and storm water infrastructure.

The Economic Development Board recently recommended three catalyst infrastructure projects to progress to stage 2 for detailed assessment. These projects are Palmview on the Sunshine Coast for sewer and water supply infrastructure required for the development of the Palmview Structure Plan area, and this infrastructure will allow for the development of approximately 7,000 dwellings within the approved Palmview Structure Plan area; Gatton West Industrial Zone for road and other essential service infrastructure to free up 80 hectares of large-scale industrial land for private sector investment, and this land will connect with the adjacent agri-industrial precinct, the site for the Gatton showgrounds relocation and the newly relocated township of Grantham; and Discovery Rise, which is a new residential community being developed alongside James Cook University's Townsville campus, and the funding will be for public realm and community spaces including a pedestrian, cycle and Emergency Services connection with the nearby Townsville Hospital, and this work will provide amenity for the public and help attract private sector investment in the health and education precinct.

Stage 2 of the assessment of each of these projects will involve more detailed scoping of the projects, including reviewing cost estimates, delivery mechanisms and program and repayment mechanisms. Following this assessment, recommendations will be made whether to co-invest in the three projects and, unlike my predecessor, the former deputy premier, the member for Callide, our government will be making decisions about funding on the merits of the projects rather than in what electorate they are located. EDQ will be seeking repayment of its co-investments so that funds can be recycled and used as an ongoing source of further investment. If the projects are approved for co-investment, they will contribute to supporting design, construction and operational jobs for the state. It is anticipated that work will commence by the end of 2016.

State Library of Queensland, Independent Review

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algeria—ALP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Science and Innovation) (9.44 am): I want to take this opportunity to update the House on the independent review on the State Library of Queensland's handling of a serious workplace incident identified during 2012. As Minister for Science and Innovation serious concerns have been raised with me in relation to this matter. In response to these concerns, on 25 August 2015 I commissioned an independent review of the management of this workplace matter and the effectiveness of overall governance arrangements. I did so to provide greater transparency into this issue and to ensure that processes at the State Library were reviewed and strengthened where needed to provide a safe and supportive environment for staff and library users. The review was conducted by Rachel Hunter, former Public Service commissioner and former director-general of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, and staff had an opportunity to make submissions in accordance with the scope of the terms of reference. They had the opportunity to do so in confidence, recognising the sensitivity of the matters under consideration and the understandable desire of some people to remain anonymous. On 8 October 2015 I instructed Ms Hunter to include in the review the Industrial Court of Queensland's ruling and findings of a matter related to the workplace incident. Along with the Library Board of Queensland, I received Ms Hunter's report on 23 November and I am carefully considering its recommendations. I met with the chair the following day and have also asked the Library Board that it give full consideration to the report, its recommendations and any broader implications. I have also tasked the board with developing an action plan for consideration. Due to issues of privacy and legal privilege, I am unable to release the full report. However, in the interests of transparency, I now table the terms of reference, executive summary and the report's recommendations.

Tabled paper: Document, undated, titled State Library of Queensland, Review [\[1855\]](#).

I thank Ms Hunter for leading the review and also those who made submissions. The intent of the review and any subsequent actions that arise are very clear. First and foremost, going forward the State Library of Queensland must provide the best possible work environment for its employees and users. I would add that the recruitment process for the position of State Librarian is well underway. This is a vital role leading one of the great institutions of our state. I am determined to ensure that the public can have confidence in the State Library as a unique part of the cultural and educational fabric of Queensland.

Curriculum into the Classroom Resources

 **Hon. KJ JONES** (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games) (9.46 am): Not only is Queensland leading the nation when it comes to NAPLAN improvement but other states and territories are looking to us for our quality curriculum materials. I am pleased to advise members that from 2016 the Department of Education and Training will provide the ACT with access to our Curriculum into the Classroom teaching and learning resources. From next year, Queensland's curriculum resources for mathematics, English and science will be made available to teachers and school staff in the Capital Territory. These materials support implementation of the Australian Curriculum. Already, some Queensland non-state schools have access to our C2C materials. The department continues to receive requests from other jurisdictions and from non-state education sectors for access to our quality materials. The Palaszczuk government is committed to ensuring that our principals, teachers and school staff have the curriculum materials they need to ensure that we really are making a difference for every child in every classroom. Throughout 2016 we will continue to release C2C materials for humanities and social sciences, health and physical education, the arts, languages and technologies to the ACT.

Queensland is leading the way when it comes to our curriculum materials and resources. We are committed to advancing education for all Queensland students and ensuring they have the skills, knowledge and qualities they need for the jobs of the future. To that end, I encourage all members of parliament to engage with their local communities to ensure that everyone is having their say on our Advancing Education plan which closes before 23 December. They can just go to the Advancing Education website to do so.

Royalties for the Regions, Auditor-General's Report No. 4 2015-16

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (9.48 am): This morning I have written to the Chair of the Crime and Corruption Commission, Mr Alan MacSporran QC, regarding a serious matter that has been brought to the government's attention through the release of the Auditor-General's report No. 4 2015-16 titled *Royalties for the regions*. The report outlines a series of findings that raise concerns about the conduct of the member for Callide, Jeff Seeney, whilst a minister of the Crown. In particular, there are allegations that Mr Seeney sought to preference the funding of projects in his own electorate, including the upgrade of airports in his electorate. These airports are all within two hours drive of each other and I am advised that no other council received funding for more than one aerodrome under the funding program referenced in the *Royalties for the regions* report.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Hinchinbrook, you are warned under standing order 253A.

Mr PITT: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am concerned that this funding was provided by Mr Seeney to his electorate for personal electoral gain. Pursuant to section 36(5) of the Crime and Corruption Act 2001, I have referred the entire Auditor-General's report No. 4 2015-16 to the Crime and Corruption Commission. It would appear to disclose evidence of corruption and I have asked the CCC to consider the matter and advise on appropriate action.

Sexual Health

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.49 am): I am very concerned about the current rates of infectious syphilis in Queensland. There have been an increasing number of notifications across parts of North Queensland since 2010. These rates are now the highest they have been in five years, especially among females and young people aged 15 to 24.

What I am particularly concerned about are the rates among Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The majority of notifications in these areas are for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The issue is not, however, isolated to discrete Indigenous communities.

Following the recent World STI and HIV Congress in Brisbane, which I opened, I announced that I had asked Queensland medical experts to design a new sexual health strategy to deal specifically with syphilis. A comprehensive, long-term regional strategy is now currently being developed to lower the rates of sexually transmitted infections across the impacted Queensland regions. An amount of \$3.5 million has been allocated from the Department of Health to improve sexual health in these

regions. This includes providing dedicated support to the impacted hospital and health services. The Townsville, North West, Cairns and Hinterland, Mackay and Torres and Cape hospital and health services are now working together to develop the strategy.

We need to better identify and address local needs and a regional strategy will deliver this by having input from staff who have strong local experience. The local community will also be involved and will inform the strategy and, of course, there will be input from experts in the field. At the core focus of the strategy will be service delivery, public health support for monitoring and advice and education of the health workforce and the public about sexual health. I anticipate that the strategy will be finalised by April next year.

This government is committed to working with the local communities and stakeholders to get a handle on the rising rates of infections. A regional strategy allows solutions and approaches to be developed that meet the needs of the local health services and affected communities. I look forward to seeing the outcome of this strategy—a set of sustainable actions and capacity in North Queensland to improve sexual health in these regions.

Road Infrastructure

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (9.52 am): The Palaszczuk government hit the ground running after the election and has been delivering for Queenslanders in the areas of roads, ports, energy, water supply and road safety, as promised. We have been actively delivering a whole range of road safety measures, such as double demerit points for repeated mobile phone usage, tougher learner practical driver tests and targeting young drivers with new innovative campaigns in conjunction with young Queenslanders.

The four-year QTRIP program outlines a record \$18.8 billion rolling program over four years. That includes the \$1.1 billion Gateway North Project, expanding the Gateway Motorway to six lanes with the federal government, which will support more than 1,000 jobs. Construction began on the \$74 million Coomera interchange—exit 54—after dithering by the previous government which will create 163 jobs.

Mr Boothman interjected.

Mr BAILEY: The member opposite could not deliver it. He could not deliver it in three years. The contract for the \$1.6 billion Toowoomba Second Range Project has been awarded and work will start in early 2016, with 1,800 jobs. Tenders for the \$189 million Eton Range Realignment Project are closed, with the successful tenderer expected to be announced in late 2015. That means more jobs in regional Queensland. There is an allocation of \$5 million over two years for the Upper Barron Road in Far North Queensland, which means more jobs in Far North Queensland. Construction of the \$200 million Townsville Ring Road Stage 4 commenced in March of this year, to be completed in 2017. Again, that means hundreds of jobs in North Queensland. Work has also commenced on the \$265 million Cape York Region Package, which includes the Peninsula Developmental Road. That means more jobs in regional Queensland.

Of course, upgrade works continue on the Bruce Highway. There is the \$40 million Western Roads Upgrade Program to support communities that have been affected by drought. There is the \$635 million Warrego Highway Upgrade Program, with 210 jobs. There is restored TIDS funding to local government. After years of cuts under the Newman government, there are more regional jobs for roads. Of course, we will be fighting hard for our fair share of federal government funding for the M1 after the previous government signed up last year to zero funding in the national partnership agreement.

We are increasing capacity through the Townsville port through the berth 4 upgrade. There is a \$160 million roads package for the Commonwealth Games, which are legacies for the Gold Coast. We are expediting the Emergency Vehicle Priority program, which is saving the lives of Queenslanders, including on the Sunshine Coast along Kawana Way in preparation for the opening of the Sunshine Coast university hospital.

We are creating jobs in energy as well. We are getting our large-scale solar sector going with our reverse auction process in partnership with ARENA. Large-scale solar is coming to Queensland, which means more jobs of the future. The Ergon EOI process means 150 megawatts of renewable energy, more jobs and industrial batteries. Ergon's battery research is taking advantage of our knowledge and know-how for more jobs for Queenslanders.

POLICE, FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES AND CORRECTIVE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (9.55 am): I inform the House that the Premier will answer questions during question time today in relation to the Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Corrective Services portfolio.

ETHICS COMMITTEE

Report

 **Mr RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (9.56 am): I lay upon the table of the House Ethics Committee report No. 161 titled *Matter of privilege referred by the Registrar on 16 June 2014 relating to an alleged failure to register an interest in the Register of Members' Interests*. I commend the report and the committee's recommendation to the House.

Tabled paper: Ethics Committee: Report No. 161—Matter of Privilege referred by the Registrar on 21 September 2015 relating to an alleged failure to Register an interest in the Register of Members' Interests [[1856](#)].

INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Reports

 **Mr PEARCE** (Mirani—ALP) (9.56 am): I lay upon the table of the House the following reports of the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee: report No. 14, titled *Subordinate legislation tabled between 15 July 2015 and 15 September 2015*; report No. 15, titled *Consideration of the Queensland Audit Office report to parliament 8 for 2014-15—Traveltrain renewal: Sunlander*; report No. 16, titled *Consideration of the Queensland Audit Office report to parliament 16 for 2014-15—local government entities 2013-14*; and report No. 17, titled *Consideration of the Queensland Audit Office report to parliament 19 for 2014-15: fraud management in local government*. I commend the reports to the House.

Tabled paper: Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee: Report No. 14, 55th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 16 September 2015 and 27 October 2015 [[1857](#)].

Tabled paper: Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee: Report No. 15, 55th Parliament—Consideration of the Queensland Audit Office Report to Parliament 8 for 2014-15—Traveltrain renewal: Sunlander 14 [[1858](#)].

Tabled paper: Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee: Report No. 16, 55th Parliament—Consideration of the Queensland Audit Office Report to Parliament 16 for 2014-15—Local government entities 2013-14 [[1859](#)].

Tabled paper: Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee: Report No. 17, 55th Parliament—Consideration of the Queensland Audit Office Report to Parliament 19 for 2014-15: Fraud management in local government [[1860](#)].

Mr SPEAKER: Before I call the Leader of the House, I am informed that the member for Cairns wanted to make a personal explanation. Bearing in mind that this is the last sitting this year, I will allow the member for Cairns to make a personal explanation.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Crime and Corruption Commission, Complaints by Local Government

 **Mr PYNE** (Cairns—ALP) (9.57 am): I would like to make a personal explanation in relation to comments made by the Deputy Premier last night in relation to documents that I have tabled in this House. I have an intimate knowledge of the local government complaints process, having served as a local government councillor for seven years. In relation to the recommended course of action of lodging complaints with council in the first instance, I credit Queenslanders with the intelligence to complain to their local council if they have problems. Unfortunately, that has not been the successful outcome that many Queenslanders would have liked to have seen. Indeed, complaining directly to councils on some circumstances has seen residents threatened with legal action, businesses locked out of council contracts and employees threatened to lose their employment.

The Deputy Premier mentioned the CCC. The CCC has consistently failed to identify and punish wrongdoers. Indeed, in over 95 per cent of low-level corruption complaints, the CCC has handed matters back to local councils to investigate—that is, back to the alleged perpetrator. Call me crazy, but getting the alleged perpetrator to investigate seems a bit odd—a bit like reporting the local used car salesman to the used car lot.

In relation to those complaints lodged in October that have allegedly been investigated, the complainant is in the public gallery and has received no reply from the department or the CCC. What if the CCC investigates? In a recent article in the *Australian* slamming the CCC, Professor Timothy Prenzler said—

The current approach is overly elitist. Ordinary complainants and whistle-blowers are treated dismissively, and the people of Queensland are badly let down. A major restructure is required to ensure optimal legitimacy and effectiveness.

I table the paper.

Tabled paper: Correspondence and other documents, various dates, between Lyn O'Connor and staff of the Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade Hon. Jackie Trad, regarding the operation of local government [1861].

Tabled paper: Article from the *Australian* (online), dated 9 November 2015, titled 'Queensland's Crime and Corruption Commission slammed' [1862].

The Local Government Tribunal was referred to last night. The tribunal sweeps in at the last minute, playing catch-up from day one. I have read tribunal rulings full of spelling mistakes, grammatical errors and errors of fact. There is no appeal from the outcome of the tribunal.

I might be seen to be a loose cannon on this issue. A loose cannon I may be, but my views are shared by many Queenslanders, many community organisations, a number of trade unions and at least one chamber of commerce. My interest in tabling the documents is not overwhelmingly for those who are complaining—though their cause is legitimate—and not overwhelmingly to target dodgy councillors, though I am sure there are a few of those; it is to draw attention to Queenslanders forced to work in a toxic, bullying environment where they are subject to ongoing harassment, leading many local government workers to lose their jobs and, tragically, some to lose their lives.

Mr SPEAKER: I note, member for Cairns, that that was more in the line of a statement and not a personal explanation, but it being the last sitting day of the year I have allowed it.

ABSENCE OF MINISTER

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.00 am): I erred earlier in not advising the House of the absence of the Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines who is at a ministerial council meeting today. I advise that the Premier will answer any questions relating to his portfolio area.

Mr SPEAKER: Question time will conclude at 10.30 am this morning.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Ethics Committee Report

 **Mr SPRINGBORG** (10.01 am): My question without notice is to the Premier. Will the Premier inform the House if the Premier or her office received any advance information on likely findings of the Ethics Committee report No.160 prior to the report's tabling in this House and, if so, by whom?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the Leader of the Opposition very much for the question. I am not aware of any of that. I am more than happy to check my office, but once again what we see from those opposite and the Leader of the Opposition is no questions whatsoever about the Queensland economy or about portfolio issues. This is the final sitting day of the Queensland parliament and this is all they have. This is it. Let us see if this Leader of the Opposition is here when we come back in February next year because we know the knives are out. We know the member for Clayfield is out there doing the numbers. The member for Nanango hosted the LNP conference out in her electorate. I stand by our Queensland budget. I stand by the people of Queensland. We will fight each and every day in the best interests of the Queensland public because what we do not want is a return to the past. We do not want a return to the three years we saw under the Newman government. I might even give the Leader of the Opposition a copy of Campbell Newman's book as a Christmas present. I have finished reading it and I will hand it over so that he can do some reading at Christmas time.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, Premier. You have had a bit of latitude, this morning being the last day. I now call the Leader of the Opposition for his second question.

Member for Ipswich West

Mr SPRINGBORG: My second question without notice is to the Premier. Given the actions of the member for Ipswich West in abusing the committee processes of this House, which has resulted in his removal from the Ethics Committee, will he also now be removed from the government member's position on the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee as controlled by her government?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the Leader of the Opposition very much for the question. The member for Ipswich West, I understand, made a very fulsome and comprehensive statement to the House yesterday about that issue. He apologised for those actions. We all know the member for Ipswich West is, indeed, a new member of this House.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Kawana, you will have an opportunity to put a question if you choose. The Premier is answering the question. I call the Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: He has been stood down from that committee. He is no longer a member of the Ethics Committee. My question to the Leader of the Opposition is what does he intend to do about the PCCC and the member for Callide?

Mr STEVENS: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The question was asked clearly and concisely about the member for Ipswich West's position on the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee. That question has not been answered. Then the Premier proceeded to move off into a question herself.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I rise to a point of order.

Mr STEVENS: I would please ask if you would redirect the Premier to answering the question as per standing order 118.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Mermaid Beach. I will hear the point of order from the Leader of the House.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: The Premier was clearly answering the question. The Premier was doing so as is permitted by the fact that she has three minutes to answer a question using some rhetorical opportunities. That is not unknown in this place. I would encourage you, Mr Speaker, to make sure that you understand how we do things.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, Leader of the House. Thank you, members. Premier, do you have anything further you would like to add?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have lots to add. I am just warming up.

Mr SPEAKER: No, it needs to be relevant to the question. There needs to be some connection with the question.

Ms PALASZCZUK: This is about leadership so let me talk about leadership, because on the other side of the House we see a lack of leadership. We have seen the Auditor-General's report and those opposite want the member for Callide to be the chair of the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee in this House. That is what those opposite want. Where is the action on this report of abuse of taxpayers' money? While I am on it, what about the boot camp report in relation to the member for Kawana? He is still sitting on their front bench. People in glass houses should not throw stones.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I do understand, as the leader of government business said, that there is a rhetorical opportunity for the Premier. However, my question specifically related to the member for Ipswich West and whether he would be continuing to serve as the government's representative on the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee. That is my question to the Premier. If in amongst the rhetorical latitude she is happy to answer that, I am happy for that broader latitude, but I would like an answer to my question.

Mr SPEAKER: I call the Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The question was about membership of committees.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, it was. Let me make it very clear: the member for Ipswich West is no longer a member of the Ethics Committee. My question to the Leader of the Opposition is this: is the member for Callide still a suitable person to be a member of the anti-corruption watchdog committee in this House? That is the question.

Mr Springborg: Mr Speaker, I am very happy to answer that question. If you want to ask me a question I am very, very happy to answer the question.

Mr SPEAKER: Hang on. I know everyone is excited.

Mr Bleijie: You have got 27 seconds on the clock, Lawrence.

Mr SPEAKER: Yes, there are 27 seconds left on the clock and the clock is being slowly wound down so other members may not have opportunities to ask questions in the last question time before Christmas. But I do not think we will do that.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I rise to a point of order on the issue of relevance under 118. Given that I cannot answer the Premier's question, will she at least answer mine?

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, Leader of the Opposition. The Premier has answered the question. I now call the member for Brisbane Central for her question.

Advance Queensland

Ms GRACE: My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on the progress of the government's Advance Queensland policy and any alternative approaches that the Premier is aware of?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Brisbane Central for that important question. We are happy to talk about Advance Queensland because it is a signature policy of this government. It helps to drive and diversify the economy and it clearly ensures that we have the jobs for the future for people throughout our state. Already we have announced—

Opposition members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I know it is the last day of parliament for the year, but some people on that side are very testy. We have announced \$50 million in the Advance Queensland Best and Brightest Fund, \$46 million towards the Advance Queensland Future Jobs strategy and \$76 million towards the Business Investment Attraction package. The Advance Queensland program is welcomed by the business community. In July, StartupAUS CEO, Peter Bradd, said—

The Queensland government is setting the agenda for other states and territories today with their Advance Queensland policy initiatives aimed at stimulating jobs growth via the local startup community.

That is what we are committed to and next year we will be having our Innovation and Investment Summit right here in South-East Queensland to match business opportunities with the start-up community. I pay credit to the minister, who is doing an outstanding job in this field, leading innovation and promoting the research innovation that is happening across the state. However, whilst we are focused on advancing Queensland, unfortunately those opposite are focused on taking Queensland backwards. We made it very clear—

An opposition member: It's just not working today, Annastacia.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Let us talk about your vote on the sugar bill, because that is taking Queensland backwards. In this House I made it very clear that if this bill was passed, it would put our foreign investment in jeopardy. The member for Maryborough has been a strong advocate of the industry. Today, the *Fraser Coast Chronicle* front page reports that the \$660 million Mary Harbour project has been crushed. That is \$660 million and 3,700 jobs put on hold through the actions of this negligent opposition.

Ms Trad: Economic vandals.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I take that interjection; they are economic vandals. Very clearly, \$660 million is at risk. Anyone can look at the *Financial Times* today.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, members. Before I call the member for Mansfield, the member for Nanango has been having a lot to say this morning. If she would like to join the list, she is invited to take up her matters with the member for Mermaid Beach.

Member for Ipswich West

Mr WALKER: I refer to yesterday's statement to the House by the member for Ipswich West in which he said he did not leak the contents of an Ethics Committee report. I table an article in this morning's *Queensland Times*, which states—

The Queensland Times was leaked content of the committee's report and published the exclusive story this week.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Queensland Times* (online), dated 4 December 2015, titled 'Ethics report leak now focus of a parliamentary inquiry' [[1863](#)].

I ask: as the member held the government position on the committee and still holds a government committee position that the Premier controls via the Leader of the House, is the Premier satisfied that the member for Ipswich West has not misled the House?

Ms PALASZCZUK: The member has made a full statement to this House. He is no longer a member of the Ethics Committee. I have said this at length. He is no longer—

Mr Walker interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: If the member for Mansfield is alleging that he has misled the House, he should write to the Speaker. He is the shadow Attorney-General of this state. If he believes that the member has misled the House, he should write to the Speaker. The member for Ipswich West has stood in this House and made a fulsome apology and he is no longer a member of the committee.

Queensland Economy

Mr BUTCHER: My question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer outline how the government's economic plan is driving investment and confidence in the economy?

Mr PITT: I thank the honourable member for Gladstone for his question. It is fitting that we get a question from the member for Gladstone, because as we know one of the great success stories is the export of LNG from Curtis Island at the port of Gladstone. It is a fantastic success story, because it is a Labor story that was built under previous Labor governments. Thankfully, we are seeing it through and we are seeing the benefits of a forward-thinking previous government.

Yesterday, the ABS released the merchandise figures for October. The nominal value of Queensland's merchandise exports rose 16.7 per cent or \$1.9 billion over the year to the October quarter 2015. Over the year, as we have said, growth has been driven by a ramp-up in LNG exports and also minerals, coal and meat exports. Coal exports rose 3.8 per cent over the year; \$6 billion in the October quarter. LNG exports commenced in early January 2015, but we know the second of the three LNG projects began exporting in October. Meat exports rose 15.8 per cent over the year to the October quarter 2015, driven by the increase in beef export prices. Minerals exports rose 18.6 per cent over the year to \$2.2 billion. Queensland's crops exports grew by \$133 million. Despite the rise in exports, a large proportion of Queensland's crop-producing areas are experiencing significant drought. The Minister for Agriculture knows all too well that we are at about the 86 per cent mark, which is deeply concerning. Despite that, we are seeing some good outcomes in terms of our crop exports.

While exports are the shining light, the state final demand figures that we have seen recently show that there is more work to be done in the domestic economy. For some time I have said that the growth we are experiencing in the state is export led and we must put our efforts into our domestic economy; therefore, our economic plan invests in our domestic economy. In the budget we funded the Home-Based Business grants program, which provides up to \$5,000 to support at-home enterprises, like the affectionately dubbed 'mumpreneurs program', which has seen over 200 successful applications receive nearly \$500,000 in support since the budget. If members do the maths on that, they can see how many home-based businesses are being created as a direct result of our economic plan.

The economic plan is well thought through, because we know we are doing well in terms of our exports and we must focus on the domestic economy and local economies to ensure that we have money circulating in those economies and people in jobs, which is where we will pull through after the economic vandalism of those opposite who cut, slashed and burned in terms of our economy. They drove down our domestic economy from levels of state final demand above eight per cent under the previous Labor government to minus 2.3 per cent. That is unbelievable. It is what they have done, time and time again. They made it up as they went along. In their reckless attempt to do things with the budget, they really damaged our economy. This government will not do that. We will stand by our domestic economy and home-based businesses, and we will continue to work.

Labor Government Ministry

Mr NICHOLLS: My question is to the Premier. Now that the member for Bundamba has resigned as the minister for police, will the Premier keep her election promise to have only a 14-member ministry?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Clayfield for that question. As I have said publicly, and I am quite happy to say again to members of the House, at the end of this parliamentary session I will be sitting down with all of my ministers and discussing issues with them. I make it very clear that a number of people from the business community and other sectors of the community have spoken to me about the possible need for a few extra ministers. I will be giving that very serious consideration over the next few days.

Queensland Investment

Mr SAUNDERS: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Could the Deputy Premier update the House on any recent investment decisions in Queensland?

Ms TRAD: I thank the member for Maryborough for his question. I know that the member for Maryborough understands that investment means jobs, particularly in regional communities. In regional communities, one in four jobs comes directly from foreign investment in this state. The member for Maryborough is an adamant fighter for jobs in Maryborough. As the Premier has already advised the House, today we have learned that the investment in the Mary Harbour has now been put in jeopardy. The \$660 million redevelopment of the Mary Harbour project has been crushed because on Wednesday night in this House those opposite in the Liberal National Party—or, rather, the Queensland National Party—supported a bill from the crossbenches to re-regulate the sugar industry.

The *Australian Financial Review* has a very interesting editorial today. I will table a copy of that editorial for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Financial Review* (online), dated 4 December 2015, titled 'Queensland's sugary socialism' [1864].

I will read the last two paragraphs. They state—

Yet this—

—meaning the decision of the Liberal National Party to support the sugar bill on Wednesday—

—is all now at risk. Already, MFS Sugar—

Mr STEVENS: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, you have ruled in this House that there is no 'Gordon Palaszczuk' Labor government in this House. Quite clearly, there is no Queensland National Party in Queensland.

Mr SPEAKER: I would ask members to refer to political parties by their correct titles.

Ms TRAD: I will not refer to him as 'the lord of the chicken dance'. I thank you for your guidance, Mr Speaker. Let me convey the last two paragraphs of the *Australian Financial Review* editorial today. The *Australian Financial Review* states—

Yet this is all now at risk. Already, MFS Sugar, which has four mills and is owned by Mitr Phol in Thailand, has immediately withdrawn approved capex for a new Australia "cogeneration" plant, where the cane waste is used for power generation.

If this is what the LNP thinks constitutes sensible economic management, it is no wonder Queenslanders voted them out.

It is no wonder Queenslanders voted them out given those sorts of decisions. To turn their back on years of economic reform, deregulation, job generation and investment in the state it is no wonder Queenslanders voted them out. Can I say, we will not let them forget this decision. As jobs disappear from regional Queensland—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: I urge all members to cease interjecting.

Ms TRAD: Let me make it clear how many jobs have been lost because of this decision. Some 3,700 jobs on this one project, 3,700 jobs in regional Queensland have been lost because of the Liberal National Party's decision to support the sugar reregulation bill.

Mr SPEAKER: Members, I think that is enough. You have had a pretty good go. The members for Gaven and Chatsworth, I think you are the leaders in the disruption. I give you notice that you will join the member for Hinchinbrook on the list if you persist. I would prefer not to do that, but I am in your hands. You have three seconds left, Deputy Premier.

Ms TRAD: When they go in to vote on who will be leader, they will know that 3,700 jobs—

Mr SPEAKER: Deputy Premier—

Ms TRAD: That is what it cost you. That is what it cost Maryborough.

Mr SPEAKER: You will join the list, Deputy Premier, if you persist.

Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines

Mr CRIPPS: My question without notice is to the Premier. Given the Premier has relieved the Minister for State Development and Minister for Natural Resources and Mines of his responsibility for the Vegetation Management Act in favour of the Deputy Premier, has the Premier issued the minister with a revised charter letter and, if so, did the minister lose any other portfolio responsibilities at the time?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Hinchinbrook very much for that amusing question.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Members, we have seven minutes to go until question time concludes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is getting close, Mr Speaker. The minister made a very full explanation in the House the other day. He talked extensively about the consultation process that he has been undertaking.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Hinchinbrook, you are on notice. I would urge you not to push it too far.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Vegetation management is a very important issue for this government. It crosses over a number of portfolios. That is why I personally asked the Deputy Premier to coordinate the government's response to this. This is not unusual. It crosses six portfolios. That process will continue. We will get the policy framework right because, as I have said, we are a government of consultation.

I have been out west. I have met with the farmers. I have spoken to them at length about self-assessable codes. I have been on their properties. I have met with farmers one on one. There is no way—

Ms Leahy interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Warrego!

Ms PALASZCZUK: What we cannot see is the broadscale clearing of high-value regrowth in this state.

Mr CRIPPS: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. I raise a point of order in relation to relevance. I have waited for some time—

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Leader of the House, I will first hear the point of order raised by the member for Hinchinbrook and then I will ask you for your point of order.

Mr CRIPPS: My question was rather specific in relation to the charter letter issued to the Minister to Natural Resources and Mines. I would like to inquire whether or not the Premier has replaced the minister's original charter letter following her relieving the minister of his responsibility for the VMA?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. The question related to the charter letter of the Minister for Natural Resources. I presume the Premier can talk about anything involved in the charter letter, which is what she is doing.

Mr Watts interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Toowoomba North, if you persist, you will join the member for Hinchinbrook on the list.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We will get this policy framework right. We will introduce legislation early next year.

An opposition member: What about the charter letter?

Ms PALASZCZUK: While we are talking about charter letters—

Mr Hart interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Burleigh, you now join the member for Hinchinbrook on the list. I warn you under standing order 253A. If you persist you will be formally warned and asked to leave the chamber. Premier, you have 43 seconds left on the clock.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have written to the ministers about creating jobs. That has been our firm focus. In the last two weeks we have seen thousands of jobs created in the resources industry. I thank Minister Lynham, even though he is not here today. He is in Canberra fighting for jobs. I am quite sure he is raising with the federal minister at this moment how this LNP opposition has put 3,700 jobs at risk.

Mr SPEAKER: Premier, I think you have had a pretty good run. I think that is enough.

Advance Queensland, Women's Academic Fund

Ms LINARD: My question is to the Minister for Science and Innovation. Will the minister update the House on how Advance Queensland is helping women researchers to maintain their careers?

Ms ENOCH: I thank the member for Nudgee for her question. I know how passionate she is about Advance Queensland and she joins the rest of us on this side of the House in focusing on jobs for the future.

It gives me great pleasure to update the House on our Advance Queensland Women's Academic Fund. This program supports the retention, development and progression of female researchers within Queensland. It is about supporting female researchers in this state right now. It offers three types of funding to help female researchers build their research reputations and maintain their research momentum and for Queensland organisations to promote their achievements.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for the Nanango, you are now warned under standing order 253A. Those comments are not appropriate; please desist.

Ms ENOCH: I am pleased to advise the House that to date, 40 recipients—that is, 40 people who are actively engaged in our economy—are sharing in more than \$350,000 of funding under this program. Of these, 26 female researchers have been awarded up to \$25,000 in maternity funding to support their careers, totalling more than \$330,000. This funding aims to encourage women to return to work following maternity leave, and can be used to engage someone to continue projects in their absence. This funding is supporting the continuation of critical research in areas such as prostate and breast cancer, recycling wastewater and the impact of climate change on coral reefs.

Nine recipients will share in nearly \$7,000 for carer funding, which provides up to \$1,000 to help female researchers attend and present their research at conferences. Some of this funding is already being put to good use, with female researchers presenting their work at conferences around Australia with the help of carers funding. Dr Tracy Ainsworth from James Cook University presented her findings at both the ComBi02015 in Melbourne and the Future of Marine Ecosystems symposium in Hobart, and Dr Michelle Brady from the University of Queensland presented her research at the Australian Social Policy Conference in New South Wales in September 2015.

Finally, five organisations have been successful in securing up to \$2,000 each in lecture funding to support planned events in 2016. This funding is available to organisations to help cover the costs of delivering conferences. I would like to congratulate the 40 recipients of this funding. This is all about jobs—supporting women in research so that they can create the jobs of the future.

Mr SPEAKER: Question time has expired.

MOTION

Order of Business



Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (10.30 am): I move—

That government business order of the day No. 1 be postponed to enable debate of general business order of the day No. 1.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

LEAVE TO MOVE MOTION



Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.30 am): I seek leave to move a motion without notice to suspend standing orders to allow me to move a motion to establish a select committee to investigate breaches of confidential information in the Ethics Committee.

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

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

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, members! Leader of the Opposition, you are aware of the requirements that you have to first seek leave to move a motion without notice. That is then considered.

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: No, I do not need your assistance, members of the government. That is then considered and voted on. It is after the vote that you then get the opportunity, if the motion is successful, to put the motion. What was your point of order, Leader of the House?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: You have neatly summarised my point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr DICK: I had a similar point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, you have now sought leave to move a motion without notice. Is leave granted?

Division: Question put—That leave be granted.

AYES, 40:

LNP, 40—Barton, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Costigan, Cramp, Crandon, Cripps, Davis, Dickson, Elmes, Emerson, Frecklington, Hart, Krause, Last, Leahy, Mander, McArdle, McEachan, McVeigh, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, Perrett, Powell, Rickuss, Robinson, Rowan, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stuckey, Walker, Watts, Weir.

NOES, 42:

ALP, 41—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, Madden, Miles, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Pitt, Power, Pyne, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Stewart, Trad, Whiting, Williams.

INDEPENDENT, 1—Gordon.

Pairs: Lynham, Langbroek; Miller, Seeney.

Resolved in the negative.

Mr Hart interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Burleigh, you are already warned. Those interjections are not taken, not necessary and not appropriate.

CONSTITUTION (FIXED TERM PARLIAMENT) AMENDMENT BILL

CONSTITUTION (FIXED TERM PARLIAMENT) REFERENDUM BILL

Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill resumed from 17 September (see p. 1985) and Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Referendum Bill resumed from 17 September (see p. 1986).

Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

 **Mr WALKER** (Mansfield—LNP) (10.38 am): I move—

That the bills be now read a second time.

In February this year, we announced that an LNP government would conduct a referendum on a fixed four-year parliamentary term during this current parliamentary term. Since that time, we consulted with members of the public through a consultation paper and with peak academic and legal bodies around the state. That led to the introduction of the bills we are currently debating, in conjunction with the inquiry that was announced on similar issues by the government.

The debate about the term of the Queensland parliament, or at least its possible extension from three to four years, is one that has been around for at least the last 25 years or so when Queenslanders had a say on whether the Queensland parliamentary term should be extended from three to four years, unfixed, on 23 March 1991.

It was also an issue that was canvassed and discussed in the context of the work being undertaken by the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission. Page 100 of the EARC report, volume 1, refers to a media release being issued on 28 May 1990 by then premier of Queensland Wayne Goss announcing, 'State cabinet today approved in principle four-year terms for both the Queensland parliament and all local authorities.' Some two months later, on 9 July 1990, a further statement was issued stating, 'The Premier, Mr Wayne Goss, announced today that legislation would be prepared for a referendum to provide for four-year terms for state and local government in Queensland.' On that occasion, the referendum narrowly failed. It should be noted in that instance the question being voted upon did not have bipartisan support.

It took until 2000 for local governments in Queensland to change to fixed four-year terms, and some 15 years later we are at a point where the parliamentary committee has supported the proposition in principle and there is, it appears, bipartisan support for this issue to be debated and resolved in a mature way and for the people of Queensland to have a say on a measure that will improve how the state is governed. In that context, I would like to acknowledge the parliamentary committee, the Finance and Administration Committee, for the manner in which they conducted their inquiry, which was both comprehensive and timely.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Grace): Order! Members, there is a little bit too much audible conversation. The member for Mansfield has the call.

Mr WALKER: The process of consultation was also one that I think the members of the committee should take great pride in. I thank particularly the chair of the committee, the member for Bulimba; the deputy chair, the member for Coomera, and other members from Broadwater, Barron River, Condamine and Stretton; the committee secretariat and research staff; and also the Clerk of the Parliament for his report.

The committee received 45 submissions from individuals, political parties, local governments, peak bodies and academics. I want to refer specifically to a couple of the submissions because they reiterate the benefits of these reforms, as I outlined in my explanatory notes. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry stated—

CCIQ has long held the view that state elections cause serious disruption to the economy with both consumers and business putting on hold major decisions relating to purchases, capital expenditure and employment levels.

...

CCIQ is aware of many projects or policy initiatives stalling through change of government or at the very least delayed through care taker arrangements implemented during elections.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Grace): Order! Members, I am not going to say it again. I will start naming members who are having conversations that are causing disruption to the House. If you want to continue your conversations, please take them outside. I would like to listen to the member for Mansfield, who has the call.

Mr WALKER: The submission of the CCIQ continues—

Accordingly in our view longer parliamentary terms have the potential to enhance business confidence and business investment, by eliminating uncertainties created by frequent elections and subsequent shifts in government policy or attitudes towards certain projects.

CCIQ is of the view that if Queensland were to adopt fixed terms business would be able to plan around State elections and make major project and investment decisions with greater confidence. Additionally CCIQ believes fixed parliamentary terms are beneficial because:

- Provides for private sector certainty about the term of government with guaranteed tenure for the implementation of policies and projects that facilitate better economic growth;
- Provides State Government with the ability to plan the parliamentary timetable more effectively with greater certainty for parliamentary committee inquiries/processes and implementation of fiscal and economic policy;
- Provides organisations such as ours the ability to undertake more effective advocacy and campaigns on member needs to current and future State Governments; and
- Incumbents will no longer have a partisan advantage in choosing an election date.

In CCIQ's view extending Queensland's parliamentary term to four years without introducing a fixed term component, would not achieve the desired goal of creating certainty and confidence, as it would leave a number of these factors unresolved.

Former Queensland Speaker and Adjunct Associate Professor at QUT, the Hon. John Mickel, said in his submission—

This submission suggests that a four year term is in the best interest of developing effective public policy in Queensland.

Four Year terms enable time for the proper identification of issues, effective research and analysis, the generation of policy proposals, effective consultation, and the evaluation of policy responses and above all effective implementation of those policies.

A policy cycle developed over the four year term would improve public policy development in a unicameral system of Government.

A four year term will improve accountability of the Executive to the Parliament.

As I mentioned in my explanatory speech, there are a number of significant advantages in having fixed four-year terms of government. It provides for better government and better public policy making because decisions can be made in the interests of outcomes and better services for Queenslanders rather than short-term political gain or what may be in the news that day or that week. It also removes constant speculation from the political process and provides fairness to all political parties rather than what happens to be in the interest of the government of the day, and it provides confidence and certainty in government—from the business community, which drives investment, economic confidence and job creation, and from the public.

I should acknowledge some of the public contributions from members and their support for this issue both during the debate to the parliamentary committee and in various media publications around the state—namely, the members for Moggill, Buderim, Bundaberg, Cleveland, Redlands and Capalaba.

I note that the committee has made 12 recommendations including that the bills be passed with amendment. We agree with those sentiments. However, we do not believe that recommendations 9 and 10, which deal with the parliamentary committee system, should be supported at this time and that those should be considered as a separate issue to this debate. The timing of that was dealt with yesterday in a resolution passed by this parliament with an inquiry in relation to that matter to be conducted by the Committee of the Legislative Assembly to report to the parliament by the end of February 2016.

At this stage I should publicly disclose that the government and the opposition have been in discussions about this issue and the committee report for the last couple of weeks and have reached an agreement about how those recommendations should be dealt with. That would not come as a surprise given how the bills have been dealt with this week. I thank the Leader of the House and the Leader of Opposition Business for working through the process on this issue and getting the bills to a stage where they can be supported by both sides of parliament.

In that context, I can foreshadow that the Attorney-General, on behalf of the government, will move amendments to the current bills to give effect to the recommendations of the committee—specifically, recommendations 1 to 8 and 11 and 12. The opposition has been briefed on those amendments, and I thank the Attorney-General for that. We will be supporting those amendments.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the cooperation from the Attorney-General, her office and the department for their assistance in preparing the amendments—they were significant and they were speedily done—and for the consultation from the government throughout the discussions that have taken place over this important reform.

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (10.47 am): I rise to support this legislation. The government has taken a bipartisan approach to this issue, seeking to work constructively to ensure the best outcome for the future of Queensland's system of government. Early this week the House agreed to divide the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015 into two bills. This was in response to a recommendation of the Finance and Administration Committee in its report on its inquiry into the introduction of four-year terms for the Queensland parliament including consideration of the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015 and the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Referendum Bill 2015. I thank the committee for tabling its report on 9 November 2015 and for its prompt consideration of these matters. I also thank the committee and its staff for their considerable efforts to seek the views of many during its inquiry and those parties who made written submissions, who completed the survey or who appeared at the public forums or at the public hearing.

The Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015 provides a model for fixed four-year terms for the Legislative Assembly of Queensland. The second bill considered by the committee, the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Referendum Bill 2015, provides for a referendum to be held on the amendment bill if the bill is passed. The committee made the unanimous recommendation that these bills be passed with amendments as detailed in the committee's recommendations. I now table a copy of the government's response to the committee's report.

Tabled paper: Finance and Administration Committee: Report No. 16, 55th Parliament—Inquiry into the introduction of four year terms for the Queensland Parliament, including consideration of Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015 and Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Referendum Bill 2015, government response [\[1865\]](#).

While most of the recommendations in the report are not directed to the government, given the significance of this matter and the need for members to have a clear understanding of the amendments to be moved to the bills, the government determined in this instance to respond to all of the recommendations contained in the report. These bills propose significant constitutional reform for this state and a significant change to Queensland's parliamentary landscape. It is therefore a very important cognate debate that we will be having on these bills today.

Maximum three-year terms have been in place for the Legislative Assembly of Queensland since the 1890s. It has been almost 25 years since the Queensland electors were asked to vote on a bill to extend the maximum term of the Legislative Assembly from three to four years. This proposal was narrowly defeated, with just over 51 per cent of electors voting against the bill. The arguments in favour of longer parliamentary terms are well documented in the committee report. These include the capacity for governments to take a long-term view in developing and implementing policies and projects which enhance the quality of government decision-making. Longer terms also give greater certainty to the private sector in forward planning, resulting in greater business confidence and flow-on benefits to the state in investment and employment opportunities.

The government has formed the view that the introduction of fixed four-year terms will create more stable and effective government for Queensland. Significantly, this is a change that largely has bipartisan support—from the unanimous agreement by the Finance and Administration Committee members on the committee's recommendations to the government's support today for these bills subject to amendments. Mostly, these amendments arise from the committee's recommendations.

I will deal first with the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015. This is the bill that, if passed, will be submitted to the voters of Queensland for approval. The committee made several recommendations about this bill. Firstly, the committee recommended the drafting of the provisions be consistent with the simple style of drafting in the Constitution of Queensland 2001 and focus on the requirement for the bill to be approved by voters at a referendum. It is imperative that the style be easy to read and be understandable. The committee also recommended that cross-referencing in the entrenched acts to non-entrenched acts should not occur. The amendments proposed to be moved today will simplify the drafting of the bill and also remove references to non-entrenched legislation in the provisions that are intended to be entrenched.

The committee also recommended that the bill, if passed by the parliament and by the Queensland voters, commence on a fixed date or the day the Legislative Assembly of the current parliament is dissolved for a general election. The government considers it is more suitable for the bill to commence on the date of the instrument by which the Governor summons the Legislative Assembly after the next general election. This commencement is proposed to avoid any potential issues arising if the provisions were to commence prior to or during the next general election process. It also minimises the transitional provisions required. Perhaps most significantly, the committee made recommendations to amend the provisions related to the extraordinary dissolution and extraordinary election of the Legislative Assembly and to the provisions related to ordinary and postponed general elections.

With the introduction of a fixed-term parliament, it is appropriate for provisions to be made to regulate the exercise of early dissolution powers. It is also critical that the reserve powers of the Governor are preserved. The bill currently provides that the Governor must dissolve the Legislative Assembly early in specified circumstances where the government loses the confidence of the Assembly or the government is unable to secure supply through an annual appropriation act. The committee has recommended this provision prescribe the wording required in the motions of confidence or no confidence. The committee also recommended a provision to the effect that nothing in the provisions affect the Governor exercising reserve powers in accordance with established constitutional convention.

The government supports the intent of these recommendations. However, the government considers a further small but significant change is necessary to provide that the Governor 'may' exercise the early dissolution powers rather than provide that the Governor 'must' exercise these powers. This will ensure that the Governor still has the discretion to act in accordance with constitutional convention. This change is also consistent with similar provisions in other jurisdictions. The government also supports the committee's recommendation that the normal polling day be on the last Saturday in October, given the feedback received by the committee and the committee's rationale for this date.

The government also supports that a general election following an extraordinary general election is to be held in the third calendar year after the extraordinary election, as this will ensure the parliamentary terms do not go beyond four years. The government also agrees with the time frames recommended for the normal dissolution and the postponement of the polling day. The amendments to be moved by me today will reflect this. The amendments will also retain provisions for the Governor to postpone the dissolution of the Legislative Assembly in the event the Governor has postponed the polling day. This is considered necessary given the time between the dissolution of parliament and the postponed polling day could be unnecessarily long without it. The government also supports the retention of provisions requiring the Premier to obtain the agreement of the Leader of the Opposition to request the Governor postpone the dissolution day and/or polling day.

The committee recommended that the next general election be treated as an extraordinary election such that the following general election needs to be held on the last Saturday in October in the third calendar year after the year in which the previous general election was held. This is supported, as it will ensure the term of the 56th Legislative Assembly does not exceed four years. It is also an effective way to transition to the fixed four-year term.

In its report, the committee noted that the likelihood of a referendum succeeding on fixed four-year terms is improved if parliament can demonstrate a commitment to greater accountability and transparency. The committee made a recommendation about entrenching the basic requirements of the parliamentary committee system and also recommended a review to ensure the efficacy of the committee system be undertaken during the current term of parliament.

The committee agrees that the parliament needs to be committed to greater accountability and transparency. Given the significance and implications of entrenching Queensland's parliamentary committee system, this is a matter that warrants full consideration. On 3 December, the House agreed to a motion that the Committee of the Legislative Assembly inquire into and report to the Legislative Assembly by 25 February 2016 on issues raised in the committee's recommendations regarding entrenchment and a review of the parliamentary committee system.

I turn now to the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Referendum Bill 2015. The committee has made two recommendations relating to the Referendums Act 1997. The first was for amendments to enable prepolling and postal voting at any referendum on this issue. The second was that, in the event the bills are passed, the parliament should agree to the words of both the arguments for and against to be published by the Electoral Commission of Queensland. The committee has noted that, in the event a referendum bill or question has the unanimous support of the parliament, there is currently no mechanism to allow the authorisation of an against argument to be published. The government agrees that it is in the interests of public transparency and accountability that a mechanism exists for the authorisation of both for and against arguments for such a bill or question to be published, including where the bill or question has the unanimous support of the parliament.

I will be moving amendments during consideration in detail to the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Referendum Bill to address this gap in the legislation. In addition, I will be moving amendments to implement committee recommendation 11 and other amendments to the Referendums Act which have been proposed by the Electoral Commission of Queensland to facilitate the conduct of referendums in Queensland. These include specific amendments to facilitate the conduct of a referendum in conjunction with a local government election. All the amendments that I will be proposing have been settled by the Solicitor-General and crown law. I urge the support of the House.

 **Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.57 am): I rise to support the bills which are before the House today. This is an extremely important issue for the people of Queensland, and I sincerely hope that we are successful in the referendum on this occasion. Referendums are historically very difficult to succeed, not only in the context of Queensland but also in the context of Australia. It is also true that the public at large generally have a significant level of cynicism about the motives of those in power as they seek to put forward a referendum proposal. They ask questions about whether it is going to be good for the population or whether it is going to be good for the politicians. With regard to what we are debating here today, if we are successful with the passage of this legislation and if we are successful at the referendum, then I think this will be good for the people of Queensland. There is absolutely little doubt about that.

We also should be heartened by what has been a very, very strong display of bipartisan support between the government and the opposition on this issue. We can only assume that that same level of support will come from the crossbenchers as well. It is going to be absolutely critical to ensure not only the successful passage of this legislation but the successful translation of that into the confidence of the people of Queensland.

I would like to commend in particular the shadow Attorney-General for the work that he has put into the private members' bills which were introduced into this parliament some months ago. Those private members' bills have been used as the basis for what we are going to hopefully pass through this parliament during today's sitting.

The committee that was charged with the responsibility of taking public submissions and making recommendations has said that these bills should be passed, with amendment. I do commend the government for accepting the recommendations of that parliamentary committee, for to try to construct a new approach to this with new legislation before the parliament to be debated today without reference to committee and without reference to the public of Queensland would have created a significant degree of cynicism. People do have a level of assurance around the committee system. People would be somewhat worried if we passed legislation through the parliament today in the form of a new bill without reference to the committee on a matter of changing the Constitution of Queensland. Therefore, I think that what we have been able to achieve here through good cooperation and bipartisan discussion is the best outcome for the people of Queensland.

In the construction of these bills, the shadow minister did move around Queensland and consulted with the people of Queensland. Indeed, after the Premier clearly stated in this parliament a few months ago that her government was very committed to the notion of four-year fixed terms, because of the work that was done by the shadow minister we were able to quickly move to introduce those private members' bills within 24 or 48 hours. Because that work was done, it provided a very sound and expeditious basis on which to put this matter to the consideration of the people of Queensland through their particular submission.

This also carries on from discussions that I had with KAP during the interesting interregnum immediately after the last state election when it was unclear as to how the cards may fall. During the discussions that I had with KAP I gave an undertaking that if the LNP were successful in being given the commission of government in Queensland, we would conduct a referendum on four-year fixed parliamentary terms during the current parliamentary term. Whilst it was not specifically on fixed terms, it was very clear from the notion of discussions that they should be fixed with the necessary constitutional provisions in case the parliament became dysfunctional. I think that that gives a clear indication that we should have almost absolute support of this parliament given those particular undertakings and discussions earlier on this year.

In relation to four-year fixed terms, there is little doubt that if we can assuage Queenslanders that their interests are going to be served by the conduct of this parliament and the respect for its institutions, they will believe it will lead to greater certainty and that it should reduce cynicism around the opportunism that comes from elections being called early in Queensland. That is something that I think is not going to be automatically embraced by the people of Queensland but it is something that we should be able to convince them of as we go forward. People have grown cynical. I am not convinced that the government of the day, particularly the Premier of the day, maintaining the element of surprise is necessarily beneficial for the state or for the government. I am not necessarily sure that it was highly beneficial during the course of the last state election. I think that the people of Queensland would be best served by knowing what the date of the election is going to be. It gives absolute certainty. It removes speculation. Let's face it, in the circumstance of a three-year flexible term, during the third year you are starting to think differently. You are really not quite sure what is going to happen within departments and within the ministry because of the element of discretion that is around those things. We would get far more certainty. If we look at the other states around where there are fixed terms, we can clearly see that they smoothly go into an election campaign process, the parliament is prorogued and the writs are issued. Everything is mapped out and everything is planned.

I would be most concerned if this opportunity was missed. My experience in this place and that of all members who would have been involved in some way or another, except the younger members in this place given that it was 20-odd years ago, is that the referendum failed at that time. If this fails this time, when would we get to do it again? Therefore, we do need to have that confidence. We do need to ensure that people have confidence in the parliament and that we do have the business confidence that comes from four-year fixed terms.

This does not guarantee good government; no-one should think that. It guarantees a greater degree of certainty. Regardless of the calibre or the style of government or people's perception, with a greater degree of certainty people would at least know when the election is going to be held. So we do have certainty beyond the machinations that would happen within the government and within the parliament and, of course, there is the need to ensure the constitutional provisions if there is absolute dysfunction.

The other issue that I would like to quickly touch on is this. The LNP and the government take very seriously the issues of concern that the people have with regard to the nature of the unicameral parliament and making sure that there is some fettering of the unique circumstances around that by a really strong recognition and a commitment to the committee system. Therefore, I think it is very important that the people of Queensland can be assured that, through the motion of this parliament moved by the Leader of Government Business earlier this week, we are committed to making sure that the people of Queensland know the committee system is something that we adhere to. It is going to be critical and it should be a part of this process. They can have some degree of confidence in that and that it is going to be reported back to them in due course.

Therefore, I am very encouraged today that this is the way the parliament should work, that we have bipartisan support on what is such an important issue: four-year fixed terms. If this passes and the referendum is carried, it will provide certainty to the people of Queensland and will reduce cynicism with regard to political motivation and the opportunism that comes around calling an early election because there will not be one. The people of Queensland can be confident that the opposition and the government have agreed on this, because it is critically important. Therefore, the process of filtering that comes through this place has managed to overcome the concerns at which the people of Queensland would otherwise necessarily expect their members of parliament to look.

(Time expired)

 **Ms FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (11.07 am): I rise as chair of the Finance and Administration Committee to support this bill. Before I do anything else I would like to congratulate the members of this committee. We have looked at a lot of legislation in the past 12 months. We have had some major

disagreements about legislation and we have had some major agreements as well. I have to say the process that we went through over the past couple of months was an excellent process. We were so committed to having a bipartisan approach to what we were doing and so conscious that the outcome of our inquiry could not be successful unless it was bipartisan. So I want to thank each and every member of the committee for the hard work. There were many, many hours put into this inquiry and I want to thank all of them for the professional approach they took to doing this.

I also want to particularly thank the Clerk of the Parliament and the Manager of Committees, who spent a lot of time with us helping us craft what was quite a complex set of issues and accompanying us on our tour around the state when we were talking to members of the community. I know that many other officers of the Parliamentary Service also put in quite a lot of time to support us given that it was such a massive task. We were very conscious of the significance of this inquiry given that it involved a change to this state's Constitution. That is why we put a process in place to make sure that, as much as possible, our recommendations were going to reflect community sentiment. It is why we went around the state. In the time that we had we fitted in literally as many forums as we possibly could, and that was 11.

We wrote to 441 stakeholder groups and the over 700 email subscribers to the inquiry, and we received 45 submissions from that. A number of people also appeared before our committee. I would like to thank the gentleman who appeared before us in our first forum in Toowoomba for suggesting that we do a survey as well. As a result, we did do a survey. We received over 1,000 responses, and it really assisted us to get a strong idea on some of those key issues. I would also like to thank the constitutional experts, Professors Twomey and Orr, and also the Clerk of Parliament, who assisted us in our decision-making on some quite tricky issues. I thank the member for Mansfield and the Attorney-General for their acceptance of our recommendations. Obviously there were still a few that they did not accept, and in fact I completely understand the decision about the committee system because it was one on which we had some major tussles ourselves.

I do not want to speak for a long time on this because I think the report is quite thorough and speaks for itself, but I think the major issue that we were concerned about was the issue of transparency and accountability. As we all know, Queensland is the only state without an upper house and we were very conscious of its history. When the upper house was abolished in this state, it was the very serious intention that three-year terms be entrenched so that we were always going back to the people to make sure that they were making choices about the government. So in making recommendations about the four-year terms, even though there was overwhelming support from the public for four-year terms, for a number of the reasons that have been—and I am sure will be—outlined we wanted to make sure that we still retained an accountability in the Queensland system which was the check and balance. We are all aware that the committee system here in this state is very strong and has become stronger. Certainly our recommendations around entrenching the committee system so that it could not be thwarted in any way were about strengthening that. I do understand the concerns about taking quite a complex question to a referendum; however, I note the recommendation that the CLA will be considering the committee system, and I highlight and I acknowledge the reflection that the CLA has given to the importance of this task.

I think I can speak on behalf of all of the committee in saying we stress that, if we are going to a four-year term, the naysayers against it will say, 'It's just politicians giving themselves some more time.' I think it is very, very important for us as a parliament to show that we take our responsibility very, very seriously to ensure there are checks and balances. I am not going to touch on the other matters because I think the report speaks for itself, but I acknowledge everyone who has been involved with the process. I look forward to what will be happening over the next few months to help this rollout.

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (11.12 am): I rise as the deputy chair of the committee to make a small contribution to the debate in relation to the inquiry into the introduction of four-year terms for the Queensland parliament, including consideration of the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015 and Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Referendum Bill 2015, and of course there have been some changes to those bills.

The inquiry process included calling for public submissions, holding public forums around Queensland, briefings with the member for Mansfield—who is the architect of the two bills that I referred to a moment ago—officers of the Electoral Commission of Queensland and public hearings. We also, as was alluded to by the chair of the committee, had an online survey. We considered expert advice on the bills' conformance with fundamental legislative principles. Our public forums were in a number of metropolitan and regional areas including: Brisbane, Toowoomba, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Mount Isa, Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Emerald and Maryborough.

The committee used a variety of local and regional print and radio advertising media to promote the consultation forums. We had many Queenslanders appear before us, including a number of past members of this House. Indeed, local councillors were also in attendance at some of our forums, and I think it is important for us to reflect on the fact that councillors have had four-year terms since 2000. So we were able to get very good advice from them in relation to what their feelings were, particularly if they were in three-year-term councils prior to that. A number of them were, so they were able to give us a contrast between the two. A number of previous members of this House were also prepared to give us their views on things, and they had nothing to gain by it other than coming along to give their strong views. I have to say that by and large across-the-board with very few people against the concept, the support was there for four-year terms, and in particular fixed four-year terms.

All in all, it was a comprehensive inquiry given the limited time available. That is really the only criticism that I have of the process that we went through. I note that our recommendations 9 and 10 are now being sent off to the CLA for further consideration. They, of course, relate to the entrenchment of the committee system. Our recommendations around the minimum six weeks that we refer to in recommendation 9 would, I suggest, be along the lines of fairly simple, straightforward legislation and perhaps legislation that would not be contentious. The more complex legislation certainly deserves more time and more effort by the committee system to give the people of Queensland that voice and that opportunity.

A total of 12 recommendations were made, and in the interests of time I will refer those who are interested in the particular detail of those to Report No. 16. It is a very comprehensive report, as was alluded to by the chair of the committee. There are over 60 pages of material. Those 12 recommendations are quite involved in themselves, quite technical in nature in some parts, and on that basis I do acknowledge that both sides of the House have accepted, for all intents and purposes, 10 of our 12 recommendations with just some technical detail around bits and pieces of those various recommendations that were accepted. I fully support the concept of the CLA doing a further review of the committee system, because I note that that is due back at the end of February next year. So it will not be any surprise to people as to what the outcome will be; it will all be known before any referendum could possibly be had in relation to the matter.

I think that I am going to pretty much leave it there. I thank the Attorney-General and I thank the shadow Attorney-General for his effort in bringing these two bills to the House. I know that there has been a lot of discussion and negotiation between both sides to make sure that we had it absolutely right for the purpose of coming here today to debate these issues. Of course I thank my colleagues right across the House. We had some very interesting times. We had a cancelled flight on one occasion and it caused a bit of disruption.

Miss Barton: And for us!

Mr CRANDON: Yes, I must admit that the chair and I managed to find a flight that would take us directly to Cairns and we had to leave the rest of the committee where they were, but there were very good reasons for doing that. In the end it all worked out, and we were able to get back to Townsville to give the people of Townsville an opportunity to give us their views as well.

I particularly thank the expert witnesses. I think it is important to note that the expert witnesses we spoke to were from the academic sphere. They were very open and capable expert witnesses with credentials of their own that gave them a lot of support. Also, the input of the Clerk of the Parliament, who has a vast amount of experience in these areas, was absolutely invaluable to us as a committee. Finally, I thank the people of Queensland who took the time to come and see us, took the time to write to us and took the time to put their questions forward to us and give us their frank views on the matter. It gives me great pleasure to commend the bills and the inquiry to the House.

 **Mr CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (11.20 am): I rise to make a short contribution in support of the bills. I was proud to be part of the Finance and Administration Committee that toured Queensland with 11 forums to receive feedback from Queenslanders. I certainly thank the other members of my committee and the parliamentary staff that assisted us. As we know, this began as an interesting topic after some tweets and statements from various leaders and ended up with us sitting in public forums around Queensland talking to Queenslanders about what they wanted for the future. I was quite cognisant of the fact that we were talking about changing something that would affect us not just for the next few years but for a very long time.

It was good to have the education sessions from the Clerk. I learned quite a lot about constitutional arrangements in Queensland, how we have come to the position we are in, what happened with the upper house in Queensland all those years ago and why we have to go down such a road as we are going down at the moment.

As other committee members have done before me, I acknowledge the bipartisanship on this issue. There was never any doubt in the committee about the feelings on particular subjects. We began with a few issues, but by the time we had finished the committee tour and the forums there had been an increase in the number of topics we had to discuss and the recommendations we had to make. The key issues we began with were whether Queenslanders wanted a three- or a four-year term, whether they wanted that term to be fixed or unfixed, what time of the year they wanted that election to be held and when they would like the referendum question to be posed to them. Intertwined with that, naturally, was a discussion about an upper house in Queensland. At pretty much every forum that topic was raised and discussed.

It became quite clear to us very early in the piece that there was a definite move in wanting a fixed term of government for Queensland. In terms of whether the term should be three years or four years, there is no doubt that people were leaning quite strongly towards four years. Certainly, it was the fixed term that Queenslanders wanted most. That came from pretty much everyone we spoke to. It came from businesspeople talking about wanting stability in government—knowing when there would be a scaling down of government leading up to an election—and about overseas investment and trade, and it came from farmers talking about trade and overseas investment. People wanted to know when the next election would be. They were quite concerned about the current system whereby the media starts having conversations about when the election will be. As a result, there can be a period of six to nine months in which a lot of business and industry scales down and maybe stops employing extra labour. They spoke about the effect that was having on them. We also spoke to a lot of ordinary Queenslanders out there. They really want to know when an election will be. They want to be able to plan their lives—their weddings and so on—and know when an election will be held.

In relation to the timing of the election, the original proposal we took to Queensland was for March. Particularly North Queenslanders and Western Queenslanders outlined the issues that would cause in terms of the wet season and other weather events. A number of people cited examples of previous elections over the years where some issues had been caused. We kicked around the idea of a May election. In the end, the committee decision was to recommend the last Saturday of October. That idea seemed to resonate fairly well with Queenslanders and the committee felt that was best.

There were some good arguments put forward in relation to the timing of the referendum. The overwhelming reason to hold the referendum at the same time as the local government elections related to cost savings. It would cost a number of millions of dollars extra to run a stand-alone referendum. We were also cognisant of the fact that we would potentially be bringing Queenslanders out a third time in 2016 to cast a vote as they already have to vote at local government elections and may have to vote in a federal election. We were quite mindful of reducing the number of times people had to go out to vote.

During our 11 forums we discussed this topic with a number of current members of parliament on their own particular patches. I thank those members, because they did quite a bit of work to get the word out in their communities and to bring people in. It was not stacked by one particular side of politics, either. Members were very good about getting the word out to their chambers of commerce, their parties—on both sides of the fence—

Mr Crandon: I think Emerald was particularly good, wasn't it?

Mr CRAWFORD: Emerald was very good. I thank the local member. We also spoke to some former members and some representatives of local government.

We had an interesting situation in Mount Isa. The member for Coomera mentioned it briefly, but I want to expand on it from a personal perspective. After we had arrived in Mount Isa, Qantas unfortunately had to cancel the plane out of Mount Isa that night, so there was a bit of last-minute running around. It worked out that we could get the members for Bulimba and Coomera on a last-minute plane up to Cairns and the rest of us would stay in Mount Isa overnight and fly to Cairns the next day. I want to thank the check-in agent at Mount Isa airport. When the member for Bulimba tried to check in her bag she was told that she could not take it on the plane because it was too heavy. The member for Bulimba proceeded to say, 'This is the same bag I brought up from Brisbane this morning and there were no problems then, so why can I not take it to Cairns?' After a long discussion, it turned out that it was not the bag of the member for Bulimba; it was actually my bag. I thank Qantas for not sending my bag to Cairns. If they had, the next day I would have had to rely on the wardrobe of the member for Bulimba, and that would have been quite interesting!

In summary, a fixed term was definitely the key with Queenslanders and they were definitely more in favour of four years. The call for an upper house was quite minimal. I thank the Attorney-General and the member for Mansfield for the bipartisan way in which they have acted on this subject. I certainly support the bills.

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (11.29 am): Today I rise to support the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015 and the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Referendum Bill 2015, subject to amendments to be moved by my colleague the Hon. Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills. The duration of the Legislative Assembly in Queensland has long been a subject of debate. In 1991 a referendum was held to allow Queenslanders to vote on whether the parliamentary term should be extended to four years. The proposition put was: do you approve of a bill to extend the maximum term of future parliaments from three to four years? The question was defeated by 808,112 votes or 51.1 per cent to 771,103 or 48.9 per cent. The question posed in 1991 did not ask people to decide whether terms should be for a maximum of four years or for a four-year fixed term but simply sought approval for an extension from three- to four-year terms.

In 1999 the Queensland Constitutional Review Commission was established to look at the much wider question of reform of the Queensland Constitution. One of the issues that was looked at in the committee's inquiry, however, was the question of parliamentary terms. The committee recommended that terms be extended to four years and the government resolved that a bill to give effect to this change should be introduced in the next term of the parliament and that the bill should be submitted to a referendum. However, this did not occur. At various times since different political leaders have raised the question of four-year terms, but there has never been the level of bipartisan support for four-year terms that is considered necessary for its success.

In September this year the parliament resolved that the Finance and Administration Committee inquire into the possible introduction of four-year terms for the Queensland parliament. The committee, in its unanimous report tabled on 9 November 2015, recommended that a referendum for fixed four-year terms should be put to the voters of Queensland. The committee considered this should only occur where there is bipartisan support. I am pleased that today we have consensus, with both major parties supporting a proposal to change the term of the Legislative Assembly from a maximum three-year term to a fixed four-year term. If these bills are passed today, it will pave the way for a referendum to be held on the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015 to provide for fixed four-year terms for the Legislative Assembly. It will also indicate bipartisan support for the yes argument at that referendum. I commend members in this House for their bipartisan support.

The constitutional legislation of this state requires a referendum to be held to extend the duration of the term of the Legislative Assembly. We are elected by and accountable to the people of Queensland and the people of Queensland rightly must have a say in the change proposed for this parliament. In undertaking its inquiry, the Finance and Administration Committee was asked to compare three-year and four-year parliamentary terms, including the advantages and disadvantages of each. The committee also looked into whether the terms should be fixed. The committee's report notes that a majority of submitters to the committee's inquiry support the concept of a fixed term and a fixed date for an election. The committee came to the unanimous conclusion that fixed four-year terms should be introduced for the Legislative Assembly. The introduction of fixed four-year terms will mean Queenslanders are no longer caught by surprise with snap elections held at what may be opportune times for the Premier and the government of the day but what may be inconvenient times for the voters and the businesses of Queensland. The committee concluded that a longer term will enable those elected—the members of the Legislative Assembly—to become more familiar with and hence more effective in their roles.

Integrity and accountability in Queensland's parliamentary system is of the utmost importance, and I think we all agree on that. In 2011 significant reforms were made to Queensland's parliamentary committee system to enhance the parliament's oversight and examination of legislation and to strengthen the committee system and accountability of the executive government. The review of the parliamentary committee system that was yesterday referred to the Committee of the Legislative Assembly will check whether we are doing enough—that is, whether the committee system introduced in 2011 is working effectively or whether there are any needs for improvement. My government is committed to jobs and the long-term economic prosperity of this state and the introduction of fixed four-year terms will provide the certainty that the Queensland people and the Queensland economy need—that is, more certainty for government, business and community planning and for all Queenslanders. Business and community will know when an election is due.

As noted in the committee's report, there are views that a longer term may enhance business confidence and support economic activity and employment in this state. The business sector and the economy in general stand to benefit from the improved stability and greater certainty brought about by a longer parliamentary term. The Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015 and the

amendments to be moved by the honourable Attorney-General today include safeguards that provide for the calling of an early election in extraordinary circumstances despite the fixing of ordinary elections at four-year intervals. There is rightly an explicit role for the Governor in such extraordinary circumstances—for example, if a future Premier loses the confidence of the Legislative Assembly before the four-year term expires. In this regard, the bill further provides that the new provisions do not have any effect on the Governor exercising reserve powers in accordance with constitutional convention. I can inform the House that, as a matter of courtesy, this week my department briefed the Hon. Paul de Jersey, Governor of Queensland, to keep His Excellency apprised of the bill currently before the parliament.

Queensland is a vast state with some remote communities. I thank the committee for considering a range of issues around identifying a suitable fixed date for general election polling days. In particular, concerns were raised about the impact a fixed polling day during certain months would have on North and Far North Queensland when wet weather and other weather events are more likely. I note that the recommendation to hold the normal polling day for general elections on the last Saturday in October was unanimously supported by committee members.

Lastly, it is worth noting that the constitutional provisions establishing the fixed four-year term for the Legislative Assembly are proposed to be entrenched so that like the current maximum three-year term the fixed four-year term cannot be amended by future parliaments simply by passing legislation. The voters of Queensland would again have to endorse any future changes. The introduction of fixed four-year terms will bring Queensland into line with the majority of other Australian jurisdictions. All other states and territories in Australia have four-year terms for their lower house and all of them, with the exception of Tasmania, have fixed terms. It will also bring the state level into line with local government in Queensland, which also has four-year fixed terms. If these bills are passed today, it potentially represents a significant moment in history for Queensland's parliamentary system. It will mean that electors of Queensland will go to a state referendum for the first time in over 20 years. It will mean that we are one step closer to changing a term which was set for this House over 100 years ago and entrenched in 1934. I commend the bills to the House.

 **Miss BARTON** (Broadwater—LNP) (11.36 am): I rise to contribute on the cognate debate into fixed parliamentary terms in Queensland. At the outset I want to acknowledge my good friend and colleague the member for Mansfield and shadow Attorney-General. At the end of the debate today when these bills pass with bipartisan support, the member for Mansfield can be justifiably proud of the significant change that he has led here in the Queensland parliament and I very much look forward to supporting his bills and the Attorney's amendments in a bipartisan fashion when we come to consideration in detail. I also want to acknowledge my fellow members of the Finance and Administration Committee. I think all members would agree that this was something that consumed a great deal of our time, but the members of the Finance and Administration Committee very much worked in a collegiate fashion on this issue because I think we were all very conscious that this was a significant debate that we were going to have and the recommendations and the inquiry that we were going to lead were going to have a significant impact on Queensland's history and the future of parliamentary democracy in this state.

I also want to acknowledge the secretariat, who worked incredibly hard with us on preparing the report that was tabled on 9 November. In particular I also want to acknowledge the Clerk of the Parliament, Neil Laurie, and also the manager of the committee office, Stephen Finnimore, for not only the work that they did in supporting us as we travelled around Queensland but also the technical advice that they were able to provide. I am sure that all members of the committee found that invaluable. In the same vein I also want to acknowledge and thank those who took the time to make written submissions and appear before the committee when we travelled across the length and breadth of Queensland and particularly those more than 1,000 Queenslanders who took the time to fill out the survey. I touched earlier on the fact that these bills would pass with bipartisan support, and I think that that is absolutely critical when we consider the significant change that we are making with respect to the parliamentary term and system in Queensland. The last time that this was considered there was not bipartisan support and I think that that was quite significant in the failure of that referendum to pass. I honestly hope that, working together, as we talk to Queenslanders in our own electorates after these bills pass we will be able to make sure that overwhelmingly the people of Queensland vote yes when the opportunity comes.

One of the things that was touched on earlier this week when the Leader of the House moved a motion with respect to the committee system, and also touched on by the member for Coomera, is the committee system. Members of this House who have looked at the report will note that there were some

recommendations made with respect to the committee system. Madam Deputy Speaker, as you would know, when it comes to a couple of recommendations that our committee makes it is not unusual for me to occasionally be slightly a lone wolf. During our deliberations with respect to the entrenchment of the committee system, I had some concerns—and I note that it was a recommendation of the Clerk. My concern was always that it makes the question a particularly complex one. When we are looking for Queenslanders to overwhelmingly support this change, I think we need to do all that we can to make sure that it is easy for people to understand what it is that we are doing. I acknowledge that the CLA—again, in a bipartisan fashion—will have a look at the ways in which we can improve the committee system.

I think we also need to educate people about what the committee system is and what it does. As we were travelling across the state we saw that a lot of people really did not understand what it is that we do outside of some of the public hearings and inquiries. I think that there is a significant lack of knowledge among some voters about the serious work that committees do in terms of the analysis of legislation, the recommendations that we can make and the amendments that come out of recommendations that committees make. There is a significant amount of work that committees do as a check and balance. I hope that, when the CLA considers it, one of the things that it looks at is how we can make sure that Queenslanders understand the work that we do.

One of the great things that I think we will see come out of a fixed parliamentary term—and particularly a fixed four-year term—is not only greater certainty for business and the people of Queensland but also, irrespective of whatever side of politics is in government, I think we would all agree that will it lead to better government and much better planning. With three-year unfixed terms, particularly for new governments, usually they spend the first 12 months trying to find their feet, then spend some time governing and then, of course, that leads up to the next election and they spend their time electioneering, politicking and waiting for the opportune moment to call an election that suits them. In the past decade we have seen that the average term of parliament has been two years and nine months. That length of time continues to get shorter and shorter. I am sure that the people of Queensland will appreciate not only the better government and planning that we will see come out of four-year terms but also the cost efficiencies that come out of having fewer elections in a 10-year period.

I would like to acknowledge the Attorney-General and the shadow Attorney-General for their agreement to make amendments with respect to the Referendums Act. This issue was not something that the committee had considered until it held a public briefing with the Electoral Commission. Certainly, the members of the committee were shocked to realise that, although there are provisions in the Electoral Act that allow postal voting and pre-poll voting and certain assisted voting, those provisions did not exist within the Referendums Act. That had potential significant implications with respect to someone's ability to pre-poll or lodge a postal vote in the upcoming referendum. I would like to acknowledge the work of the Electoral Commission and thank it in advance for the work that it will do with respect to a yes and a no case and also with respect to managing and running a referendum.

I will end my comments there. I simply say that I hope that all members will be able to support this change. Again, I acknowledge my good friend and colleague the member for Mansfield and congratulate him on leading the charge for what is a quite significant and historic change in this state. I commend the bills to the House.

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (11.43 am): As a member of the Finance and Administration Committee, I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the inquiry into the introduction of four-year terms for the Queensland parliament. On 15 September 2015, the government instigated an inquiry into four-year terms of parliament. On 17 September 2015, Ian Walker MP, the member for Mansfield and shadow Attorney-General and shadow minister for justice and industrial relations and the arts introduced two private members bills to the House: the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill and the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Referendum Bill 2015.

The committee consulted widely in its examination of the bills. Public forums were held in Brisbane, Toowoomba, the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast, Mount Isa, Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Emerald and Maryborough. Public hearings and briefings were held with key stakeholders, constitutional academics and professionals and the Electoral Commission of Queensland. After hearing all of the submissions, the committee made 12 recommendations in its report.

In 1999, the various local government acts were amended to extend the terms of local government authorities from three-year to four-year terms. This commenced in 2000, with local government elections being held on the last Saturday in March every fourth year. It should be noted

that the Local Government Association of Queensland is supportive of four-year terms, both for local government and state government, stating that it gives stability of governance and a longer time frame to implement planning and policies as well as a reduction in the cost of elections.

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland supports the move to four-year terms, stating—

CCIQ believes that a three year term is not a sufficient time to allow the State Government to facilitate good economic planning for both the private and public sectors; undertake effective planning of the parliamentary timetable; or to concentrate on policy and program delivery without the distraction of imminent elections.

The CCIQ added that over the past five state elections the average term of parliament has been only two years and nine months. The CCIQ said further that, in its view—

... longer parliamentary terms have the potential to enhance business confidence and business investment, by eliminating uncertainties created by frequent elections and subsequent shifts in government policy or attitudes to towards certain projects.

Many in the business community held similar views, indicating that in election periods many put their business planning and strategy or major purchases on hold.

The cost of elections and the cost savings achieved by having fewer elections were another two issues that were raised. The Electoral Commission of Queensland reported that the last state election cost approximately \$24 million. It noted that there would be significant cost savings delivered in the long run, simply because the elections would be further apart. Although many submitters noted that Queensland remains the only state or territory to have three-year elected terms, it was remarked upon consistently by many that there is no upper house or house of review in Queensland.

The Clerk of the Parliament, Neil Laurie, stated at a public hearing—

... I am a slow convert to four-year terms ... Being a unicameral parliament without an upper house I felt that four-year terms was a bridge too far.

I am a convert to four-year terms, however. After being here for over 20 years I can see that three years is insufficient time for governments to come into power, plan, implement policies et cetera.

Mr Laurie stated further—

However ... if we are going to go to four-year terms we do need to enhance our safeguards and enhance our accountability.

Although Mr Laurie acknowledged that the parliament had made changes to improve accountability through the committee system and the estimates process, these processes can be disposed of by a simple change to legislation or a resolution of the House. It is possible for an incoming government at some time in the future to abolish the committee system by an act of parliament in its first sitting week. Mr Laurie suggested that there were two options to safeguard the committee process: one being constitutional entrenchment, which would require a provision being included in the bill that is to be placed before the people for referendum; or, secondly, a statutory requirement to enhance the current provisions relating to portfolio committees contained in the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001. Professor of Law at the University of Queensland, Professor Graeme Orr, affirmed that mechanisms are needed to check the great licence of the executive in this state.

These options were discussed at length by the committee and are included in recommendations 9 and 10 of the report. The committee's view is that the committee system should be the subject of a full review during the term of the 55th Parliament in order to ensure that Queensland has the strongest and most appropriate committee system in place to accompany the extension of parliamentary terms.

By far the main concern expressed by members of the public with the proposal to extend the four-year term was the fact that Queensland does not have an upper house to review legislation. The Motor Trades Association of Queensland summed up the position of the majority of submitters regarding fixed terms, stating—

Four year fixed terms would have the advantage of mitigating the uncertainty about the election date, allow stakeholders to 'wrap-up' policy and regulatory requirements with Departments or Agencies; allow business to better prepare for the election hiatus and provide policy certainty for a longer timeframe.

Many of the advocates of four-year terms note that any extension would be a futile exercise without providing for a fixed term as politics would still remain in the equation and the premier of the day would be free to call an election at any time.

The date set for a general election was an important matter and the committee considered substantial evidence and advice. The local government elections are held on the last Saturday in March so the committee were mindful not to clash with this date. The committee received very strong feedback from stakeholders attending forums in North Queensland that March be excluded from consideration

due to the high risk of rain, flooding and cyclones. A number of submitters suggested that it may be more practical to hold elections in the latter half of the year after the state budget. The committee agreed with this sentiment and after taking into account school holidays it was recommended that a general election be held on the last Saturday in October every fourth year.

Some submitters expressed concern as to whether there was any provision to dismiss a dysfunctional, corrupt government mid term. In exceptional circumstances, such as the arising of a constitutional crisis, where the premier has lost the confidence of the party or where there has been a serious breach of constitutional convention or where the Governor has formed the opinion that the government or its ministers have acted illegally, the Governor may exercise their discretionary powers and dissolve the parliament. Should such a circumstance occur it would cause a disruption to the four-year fixed term as an event of that nature could happen at any time throughout the calendar year. In the event of an irregular election being held, the committee suggests that the term following the irregular election be a shorter term—that is, a term of three years and however many months needed to restore the following election to the fixed date, being the last Saturday in October.

Whilst the committee has not suggested the actual wording of a question, the committee is of the view that the question should be simple and uncomplicated and only deal with the extension to four-year fixed terms. The committee took considerable advice on when a referendum should be held, whether in conjunction with the upcoming local government elections or a stand-alone date. The committee was advised that under the Commonwealth Electoral Act no state referendum or vote could be held on the same day as a Senate or House of Representatives election, therefore the federal election is not an option.

The committee considers that amendments to the Referendums Act 1997 should be initiated as the voting public expects to be able to pre-poll and postal vote and both of these options are becoming more popular with every election. As members can see, the more the committee investigated the change to four-year terms the more of these compatibility issues we uncovered. Some of these issues were outside the scope and the authority of the committee but are issues that the House will need to address if this referendum is to be put to the people. Some of these amendments will need to be implemented before the referendum and some can be completed afterwards.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all members of the Finance and Administration Committee. The task of assessing four-year fixed parliamentary terms was a large and onerous one and without the bipartisan support and collaborative work done by the committee this would not have been achieved.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! I acknowledge in the gallery today Mr Dale Shuttleworth who is the former member for Ferny Grove.

 **Mr PEGG** (Stretton—ALP) (11.53 pm): I rise in this cognate debate to speak strongly in favour of four-year fixed terms in Queensland. As the Premier said, it is an historic moment for Queensland if indeed these bills are passed and the referendum is, in fact, agreed to. I was part of the committee that held public forums right across Queensland. We held forums in a number of metropolitan and regional areas of this great state, including Brisbane, Toowoomba, the Gold and Sunshine coasts, Mount Isa, Townsville, Cairns, Mackay, Emerald and Maryborough. As some of the speakers and members of the committee alluded to earlier, there were a couple of minor hitches with travel arrangements and, in fact, we had to reschedule the Townsville forum. I think it was very important that we did include Townsville. I can see the member for Townsville nodding. As someone who represents a seat in Brisbane and has lived in my local area for over half of my life, I was born in the great city of Townsville and did my schooling in Rockhampton. I think it was very important that the committee held forums in regional areas. Despite some issues with the travel arrangements that have been alluded to by some of my colleagues, it did mean we got to spend a night in the great city of Mount Isa which was very good to do as well.

We consulted widely. The committee received 45 written submissions and we also had an online survey which was completed by 1,047 people. I thank my fellow committee members—it was a tight schedule for the forums—the committee secretariat, the Clerk of the Parliament and, most importantly of all, all the members of the public who came along and participated in the community forums. It was great to see. I commend all the local MPs, particularly in the regional areas, who came along and participated and encouraged community members to get involved; former MPs, both state and federal, who came along and participated; councillors and former councillors; and we also had a mayor as well. It was great to see that level of participation, debate and consultation. Although there were some disagreements between the people attending those community forums, that debate happened, in my view, in the right spirit and in the spirit that these debates should occur.

Of course, the reason we have to have a referendum on this issue is due to changes made to the constitution in 1934 that the three-year period for elections cannot be changed without the approval of the electorate by referendum. Effectively, from 1934 we have had a situation which fixes three-year terms and that cannot be changed without a referendum. The member for Broadwater talked about the importance of bipartisanship. There was a referendum on this issue in 1991. There was a proposal to extend the term to four years and that was put to the people. It was not a proposal to have a fixed four-year term, but it was a proposal to have a four-year term. Unfortunately, that question was narrowly defeated by 808,112 votes—or 51 per cent—to 771,103, which was 48.9 per cent. As the member for Broadwater in my view correctly identified, the reason for that defeat was due to the lack of bipartisan support. The support for four-year terms has been something that the Labor side of politics has supported for many years and it is great to see that over 24 years we now have a situation where the Liberal National Party—

Mr Crandon interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Coomera should not be interjecting if he is not in his chair.

Mr PEGG: I do want to congratulate the member for Coomera for being a part of that change and supporting four-year terms. It is an historic moment for the LNP to be giving their support. We have a situation in Queensland where for some time there has been fixed four-year terms in local government elections. Those changes were introduced back in 1999. Since 2000 local government elections have been held on a fixed day, which has been the last Saturday in March. We did hear from the LGAQ during the course of our public hearing and the LGAQ said—

Four-year terms have been in place for local governments since the 2000 local government election and there has certainly been no public commentary in terms of the issue of the concerns in relation to that four-year term, nor have there been any issues raised by councils in relation to the four-year terms

We also received feedback from councillors and former councillors about the issue of fixed four-year terms and it was interesting because at the time of the introduction of those fixed four-year terms for local government elections there was some debate about the merits of that change and whether or not that was a good thing. The overwhelming feedback we did receive from councillors, former councillors and indeed from the LGAQ is that those concerns have dissipated and, in fact, there seems to be nobody wanting to turn back the clock in terms of the fixed four-year terms for local government. It shows that fixed four-year terms can work in Queensland and, in fact, have been working for 15 years.

When we talk about the history of this debate, it is important to look at other jurisdictions. Queensland and the Commonwealth have unfixed three-year terms. In New South Wales, fixed four-year terms have been in place since 1981. Victoria has had four-year fixed terms since 2003. South Australia has had four-year fixed terms since 2002. Western Australia has had four-year fixed terms since 2001. Tasmania has had four-year terms since 1972, but they remain unfixed. The ACT has fixed four-year terms and our friends in the Northern Territory have fixed four-year terms, as well. Given the fact that a lot of jurisdictions adopted this change back in the eighties, 2015 is definitely the time to look at making this change and to ask the public for their support for such a change.

Indeed, during the inquiry process we found a lot of community support for the change and strong feedback, which was reflected in the results of the public survey. The majority of respondents, 74.12 per cent, supported increasing the maximum term to four years. There are clear advantages of a fixed four-year term, including improved governance and economic management of the state, reduced cost by holding fewer elections and it will also allow for better planning, not only for community members and government but also for the Queensland Electoral Commission. At the last election, one of my concerns was about the adequacy of the prepoll locations. A number of my colleagues across the chamber have raised that, as well. Hopefully, the introduction of fixed four-year terms will enable better planning for everybody: for community, for business, for government and for the Electoral Commission. In an era when many things are becoming increasingly uncertain, it would be great to have the certainty of election dates.

A majority of submitters to the inquiry supported the concept of a fixed term. It provides more certainty, it reduces political manipulation of election dates and it removes any uncertainty that people may have in terms of future planning. This is an historic moment as we pass a bill in favour of four-year terms. I really hope that the consensus and bipartisanship displayed today and during the committee process continues when the referendum takes place. I hope the referendum is passed and that we have fixed four-year terms in Queensland. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (12.02 pm): It is with great pleasure and a sense of profound optimism that I rise in the House today to speak on the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill. For me, this bill is a culmination of a long-awaited constitutional opportunity and is one of the most important issues from my time and role in the Queensland parliament. The bill reflects a journey that began for me three years ago in 2012 with the Hon. Tim Mulherin, the former member for Mackay, Curtis Pitt, the current Treasurer and others in the overwhelmingly minor opposition at that time. That journey was to try to bring about better governance with more certainty for the Queensland public and business community, as well as less pain and suffering for all Queenslanders in relation to the plethora of elections they are forced to participate in by the rules of this country on freedom of choice. I worked with those members to further the common purpose of delivering better governance for the state of Queensland. Unfortunately, because of their extremely small representation numbers in the House and the prospect that they may have been in opposition for quite a while, their decisions with their administrative party representatives precluded advancement of the process at that particular time. I understand their reluctance and concern in being in opposition for periods of four years, rather than three years. That has been the crux of the problem since Premier Bligh flirted with the prospect of four-year terms in her reign.

As fortune would have it, a very unexpected and extremely close result in the 2015 state election has given rise to the perfect opportunity to deliver better governance for Queensland for the future and less political pain for the citizens of Queensland. Indeed, it was the confusion surrounding the 2012 state and Brisbane council elections that highlighted the need for the Queensland public and business community to have surety as to when a government will call an election. All other states bar Tasmania are operating under a four-year term of government, with Queensland local governments also having fixed four-year terms. It only makes good common sense that the Queensland state parliament operates with the same length of term.

I remember well in Queensland when local governments shifted from three-year terms to four-year terms, starting in the year 2000. The naysayers to extending those terms in local government ran the same negative populist arguments that we hear today about these proposed changes for state government: it is too long to have a bad council, they cried; it is just politicians seeking longer terms for themselves, they cried. Yet look where it is today. All of the citizens of Queensland are comfortable with their councils having four-year terms and I certainly do not hear any outcry about next March elections being for a four-year term. So it shall be for state governance, once the people of Queensland get over the hump of what will be seen as a major change to the status quo. Change in politics is always the most difficult outcome to achieve, so I am particularly pleased that it will be the people of Queensland themselves who have the ultimate say on moving to fixed four-year term commissions for their politicians.

I have heard arguments that Queensland, as a unicameral governing house, should be cautious regarding this proposal and I reject that scaremongering completely, as the Queensland parliament does have a well regulated and conscientious parliamentary committee system that operates as a strong watchdog for the Queensland public. As part of ensuring that parliamentary oversight continues to exist regardless of the strength of the government executive in the years to come, we are looking at ways of enshrining the parliamentary committee system in the governance of Queensland. That will be the subject of further investigations being carried out by the Committee of the Legislative Assembly. I note that the Leader of the House is going to make further mention of that today.

At this point in the Queensland parliamentary history, the House is almost evenly balanced in terms of the two major parties, so it is the perfect time to consider this major change to the electoral period when neither side of the major parties can claim an electoral advantage. Our current Queensland parliamentary term is for three years. However, it is more often than not that our governments rely on political opportunity to call them at just two years and nine months, which is very familiar for us on this side, of course. If the referendum for four-year terms is successful, one of the enormous positive outcomes is that certainty of judgement day of political performance will be set in concrete. The political opportunism of calling elections at the premier's whim will be a relic of the past. Governments will be accountable on a set day in October for their political performance over the previous four years and no opportunities for calling an election for poll-driven purposes emanating from favourable or unfavourable outside events that could be taken advantage of will be entertained.

In my view, a corollary benefit of an October election date is that, should there be new incoming governments, they will have nine months to ready themselves for a new budget in keeping with their political beliefs, which is the most important role that any new government undertakes. I think it goes without saying that the current electoral cycle can be categorised by the first 12 months of a new

government becoming familiar with the job at hand, the second 12 months providing a productive outcome-driven agenda and the last 12 months of a three-year term being on red alert for an election that may be called at any politically opportune moment by the Premier and the government. If we move to a four-year term, we will have at least a doubling of the productive period of government by another year, with the hoped outcome of a considerably increased amount of productive outcomes in the year leading up to the October election day. It is not surprising then that public policy outcomes are often derived for short-term political gain, capturing the attention of the media at the expense of benefits to the Queensland public. It is the Queensland public, upon the introduction of a four-year fixed term, that will benefit and see the gains of public policy outcomes—outcomes directed more at benefitting those whom we are elected to serve.

Clarity for the Queensland public in the processes and procedures of politics will also be gained through the adoption of a four-year fixed term. It is clarity that will increase confidence not only in the actions of their current government but also in the economic, investment and job creation environments within our great state.

The Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill will have a further stabilising effect on business confidence with current surveys indicating that 78 per cent of Queenslanders view elections and the election campaign period as containing a negative impact on the Queensland economy. Fixed terms would allow Queensland businesses to approach major project and investment decisions with confidence in whom they would be dealing with as well as a guaranteed tenure for the implementation of policies and projects that facilitate economic growth.

I can assure the House that I am well aware from a business point of view how a possible change in government in Queensland may affect a multitude of business decisions. A fixed four-year term will allow business that small amount of extra time to be able to deal with one government of a philosophical persuasion they are comfortable to work with. In closing, I call on all members of parliament to support the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill.

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (12.11 pm): It is with great pleasure that I rise to support this legislation, as it will be amended, to introduce fixed four-year terms for the Queensland parliament. The length of parliamentary terms in Queensland has long been a subject of debate. We have heard that in a number of contributions to this cognate debate today.

This legislation would bring Queensland into line with the rest of Australia and, it has been argued by many people, provide the community and business with a greater level of certainty. I am not always an advocate of bringing us into line with other states. There are good reasons why Queensland is different. We have seen a constitutional evolution in this state since we were granted self-government in 1859. This evolution must be responsive to the needs of Queensland and Queensland people, not just be in line for the sake of being in line, to coin a phrase.

The time is right for fixed four-year terms. I think it is very important to reiterate that point to the Queensland community. Ultimately, this will be their choice. That is what we are facilitating today. We are facilitating a choice for the people of Queensland. This is not the choice of those of us in this chamber. This is about facilitating a choice for the people of Queensland in terms of our constitutional arrangements going forward. My argument to the people of Queensland would be that having fixed four-year terms for the Legislative Assembly of Queensland would be a great step forward and would improve our constitutional arrangements and the democratic system we enjoy.

If we look at the time from when Queensland separated from New South Wales in 1859, we see that members elected to this chamber in 1860 were elected for five years. They were five-year terms. These terms were drawn from the constitutional arrangements in place under the Westminster system in the British parliament. Those arrangements were deemed to not be acceptable to the people of Queensland and we saw a constitutional change occur in 1890 which made them three-year terms.

There have been all sorts of other constitutional changes happen and a range of other issues need to be dealt with. We cannot afford to deal with all constitutional matters en bloc. We have to have ongoing evolution.

I appreciate that there may have been some concerns expressed by people through the committee process and more generally in the community. People have said, 'Going to four-year terms is okay as long as we have all these other things.' I have seen that prosecuted by some quarters in the media today, particularly some quarters, I would suggest, to my left.

Mr Dickson: Only just.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: There are not a lot of people who would say that. If we had an all-or-nothing approach we would still have five-year terms and adult suffrage. I do not think the idea that we can only do constitutional reform in an everything or nothing way is acceptable. The people of Queensland deserve better than that. That is what we are offering them—better than that.

This is not our decision. This is us facilitating a decision by the people of Queensland. That is the case because we saw this entrenched in the Queensland Constitution in 1934 in response to concerns and understandings about the evolution of our Constitution at the time of the abolition of the Legislative Council. This matter is entrenched in the Constitution. It is therefore a requirement that the people of Queensland have their say on this matter by way of a referendum.

I acknowledge the work done by the committee in making suggested improvements to the member for Mansfield's bills. I think those improvements are important to note. Those improvements are about ensuring that this referendum can be held at a convenient time and opportunity and one that keeps it in line with other voting opportunities in this state. It has been widely foreshadowed that the government is proposing to hold that referendum on the same day as the local government elections—that is, 19 March.

I note that there are some from local government who are expressing concerns about that. I encourage them to have a greater level of confidence in the people of Queensland and have a greater level of confidence in their electors that they have the ability to, as they say, walk and chew gum at the same time. I have absolute confidence in Queenslanders. They are people who have the ability to understand the distinction between issues. I think there should be greater respect given to electors in Queensland.

I appreciate that, as a consequence of the timing of the holding of that referendum, there are other concerns and issues that people have. They want to get an understanding and a line of sight about what needs to occur to reassure people about our pathway of constitutional reform. This evolution is not singular; it is continuous.

I note that in recent years we have seen the evolution of our parliamentary committee system. I note the recommendation from the committee that we need to entrench our committee system constitutionally. I have some significant concerns about that in practical terms. The government has provided a response to the committee's recommendations. We have seen the decision by this House to refer the matters relating to the committee system and a committee system review to the Committee of the Legislative Assembly.

I can advise, by way of information to all members of the House, of the determinations made by the Committee of the Legislative Assembly at its meeting today. Subsequent to the referral of the inquiry into the strengthening and entrenchment of the parliamentary committee system to the Committee of the Legislative Assembly, the committee has resolved to call for submissions. The closing date for submissions will be Friday, 29 January 2016, with a public hearing to be held on Tuesday, 9 February 2016. The committee is due to report, as the House is already aware, by Thursday, 25 February 2016. It is important to note that that is occurring as part of, as I say, the ongoing evolution of our Constitution and our constitutional arrangements.

In commenting in particular on the need to make the distinction between this referendum and decisions that the people of Queensland have made in the past about extending to four-year terms, this opportunity is quite distinct because it is about fixed four-year terms. A number of members have expressed comments about the lack of certainty that arises in the context of the Premier having the prerogative to go to the Governor at any time during a three-year term. That is a problem with the current constitutional arrangements.

Madam Deputy Speaker Farmer, I ask that you pass on to the Speaker my appreciation for him having put this issue on the agenda. I do appreciate the member for Mansfield's role in making this come to fruition in the way in which he has worked very closely with the Attorney-General and in the way in which the Leader of the Opposition and the Premier have worked together to make sure this occurs. I am very happy that the Palaszczuk Labor government is reaching across the aisle to make this happen.

The passing of the bills today in this final sitting week ensures that the referendum can be held, as I say, on 19 March. It is a great way to end the year on a bipartisan note, and it will send a powerful message to the people of Queensland that this parliament can work together to deliver what the community wants. I ask the people of Queensland to also support this constitutional reform. As I reiterate, what we are doing with this legislation today is not making this decision on behalf of the people of Queensland. We are facilitating them to make their decision about how they see our Constitution will continue to evolve.

 **Mr DICKSON** (Buderim—LNP) (12.21 pm): I rise to speak to the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015 and also the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Referendum Bill 2015. These bills were introduced by the shadow Attorney-General, Ian Walker, and they would provide, rather sensibly, for the establishment of fixed four-year terms of parliament in Queensland following a successful vote at a future statewide referendum.

Three-year terms have been in place in Queensland since 1890. In 1934, it was determined that the maximum three-year term of parliament was entrenched and could not be removed without a referendum. In February 2000, the Queensland Constitutional Reform Committee recommended the maximum term be extended to four years, with no dissolution in the first three years, barring the usual convention of the government of the day losing votes of confidence or supply.

Fixed four-year terms for local governments commenced in Queensland in 2000, and, out of the nine state, territory and Commonwealth jurisdictions, only Queensland and the Commonwealth did not have fixed four-year terms. With Queensland premiers being able to call an election at any time, the average length of the past four terms has been two years and nine months. A recent CCIQ Pulse Survey found that 78 per cent of businesses consider there to be a negative or significantly negative impact on the Queensland economy as a result of a state election and election campaign period. So, considering all, the introduction of these bills is not before time.

There are a number of significant advantages in having fixed four-year terms of the Queensland government. I believe it will allow for better governance and better policy-making, with four-year terms providing more opportunity to plan and look ahead, rather than a focus on short-term political gain. It will—rather mercifully, I might add—do away with the constant speculation as to when the election date may be, and it will put all political parties on an even keel, with no advantage for the incumbent in choosing an election date. Importantly, it will provide more certainty and more confidence in government—which will drive investment, economic confidence and job creation in our state.

Extending the Queensland parliamentary term to four years without introducing a fixed term component is unlikely to achieve the certainty and confidence that the Queensland economy requires, because we would never see a four-year term unless the terms are fixed, as premiers would continue to call elections when political opportunity comes knocking. I welcome the recommendation of the Finance and Administration Committee for a referendum on this issue. The committee calls on the state parliament to pass these two bills that would enable the change, with a general election to be held on the last Saturday of October, three years after the dissolution of this term of parliament, due by January 2018. Fixed four-year terms would then start after that.

The committee's online survey found that 74 per cent of the 1,047 respondents voted in favour of four-year terms, with about 68 per cent in favour of fixed four-year terms. It is also worth noting that the committee found that the move to four-year terms would save taxpayers, with the 2015 state election costing more than \$24 million. I believe that the introduction of four-year fixed terms will have a positive effect on Queensland, providing stability, discouraging short-termism and preventing the manipulation of election dates for political advantage. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (12.25 pm): The KAP will not be supporting four-year fixed terms and the referendum to be held in March. We do acknowledge the gesture. We do acknowledge the fact that there is a cost factor and also that it would secure business confidence. I really do not have faith in big government, particularly when it comes to the asset sales that we saw under the Bligh government and the arrogance that we have seen. I do not think that Queenslanders could have gone through another year like that last year of the Bligh government—it was toxic. We saw massive seats lost in a massive landslide against that government. I would not like to be promoting four-year terms when it comes to that Bligh era.

Also, I do not think that we could have put up with another year of the Newman government declaring war on everyone and smashing through legislation. We might say that we have faith in the committee system, but I do not even have faith in the committee system. I do have to say that in a hung parliament things are a little more balanced, but I do have grave concerns for when we do have a majority government. We do not have an upper house to be able to scrutinise legislation like every other state right across Australia. I think this is a very important factor.

My constituents have grave concerns. They do not trust government, particularly big government—a big majority government. In regard to the committee system, yes, there has to be a little bit more work done on the committee system, but I believe that it plays second fiddle with regard to having an upper house. We will not be supporting this bill.

 **Mr FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (12.27 pm): I rise to support the bills before the chamber this afternoon. I do so on the basis of my experience particularly as a previous senator. I do appreciate the fact that we have a unicameral House in Queensland. Having a fixed term arrangement provides certainty for government, it provides certainty for business and it provides certainty for the community and our constituents that we represent.

As I travel around my seat of Ferny Grove and talk to small businesses about the certainty that this bill would bring about, they are on the same page. They understand the purpose of what is behind having certainty in terms of having fixed term arrangements for a period of four years. Also, I find that local councils—generally the one body of government in our country that is the beneficiary or recipient of funds as a result of what is generally passed down from federal government to state to local—also prefer fixed term arrangements. I also understand, Madam Deputy Speaker Farmer, that during your committee's inquiry—a committee that you chair—that was some of the evidence that you received. I was fortunate to attend the Brisbane hearing where there were a number of citizens who appeared before the committee and gave evidence supporting this as well.

No doubt there were some people who held concerns about the situation of locking in a period of time, but I think in this day and age when you provide certainty, whether it be to local councils or to communities or to businesses in particular, that gives them a period of planning—they can plan ahead and work out how they can budget around those sorts of things. Madam Deputy Speaker, I am sure you hear as much as I do, particularly in the years when there seem to be election after election—and has been the case in some terms, when there has been a federal, state and local authority election in the same year—when people just throw their hands up and say, 'I am sick and tired of going to elections.' This will put in place a practice where people can plan their life ahead, knowing full well there will be a set date for an election in a certain year. They will be able to plan to take their children away on holidays and so on. They can plan ahead to make sure that their lives are not disrupted. That is what this is all about: putting some practice in place to ensure that people can plan well in advance.

On that note, I am proud to stand in the chamber this afternoon and support the passage of this bill. I commend the committee for the work it has done. The work that you were involved in, Madam Deputy Speaker, is very commendable when you consider the places you went to. I understand you travelled vast areas of the state, many occasions travelling by bus to hear the views of every Queenslanders or those who were able to appear before the committee. That is highly commendable. Sometimes I wonder, Madam Deputy Speaker, how you, as chair of the committee, have the time and the ability to travel to those locations. I commend you and the other members of the committee who made that effort.

Mr Crandon: We all went, too.

Mr FURNER: I did say the committee members. I am including you by making that statement. I would not forget you from the equation. Once again, this legislation is about providing certainty and confidence not only for our communities but also for local authorities, government and councils to plan ahead.

I want to go the reasoning behind why the committee selected a date in October. What I heard in the evidence in the Brisbane hearing was the uncertainty and the concern of the wet season. We know the way that climate change is going there is always uncertainty about what sort of wet season will be ahead of us. It was very commonsensical of the committee to select the date in October so it is not in the wet season up north—so there are not circumstances like there were this year in January when the election was held and I believe, based on anecdotal evidence, people in remote areas of Far North Queensland had difficulty pre-polling and voting on election day.

I commend the committee on making that decision and for taking into consideration the people up north. I am sure the member for Dalrymple would agree that we always need to consider people in our remote areas. We always need to ensure that they are considered in everything we do in this chamber.

Mr Knuth: Because you care.

Mr FURNER: I do care. As a born and bred Queenslanders—born and bred in the south-east corner—I have travelled this state extensively and many other states around the country, and I always have in the back of my mind the hardship and the remoteness faced by people who live in remote areas like you. It is always important that we, as parliamentarians in this House, have that in the forefront of our minds when we make decisions, particularly in a decentralised state the size of Queensland. We need to make sure that their consideration is well thought of in advance.

This bill certainly provides that. The selection of that date in October is well away from the wet season, unless there is a dramatic shift in climate change in the future, but I cannot see that in the decades ahead of us where hopefully that pattern of seasonal wet seasons will come through on a regular basis. We will keep the state election away from what may have been in this case difficult circumstances for people in remote areas of Northern Queensland in terms of exercising their democratic right in having a say on who and how this parliament operates.

In conclusion, I support this bill. It is great to have bipartisan support, on probably the final opportunity that we have in this House this year, in making a change that in my opinion is something we should have done many years ago. Nevertheless, this is the occasion and this is the chance that we get to decide on that. I commend the bill to the House.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! Before I call the member for Logan, I would like to acknowledge in the gallery today, invited by the member for Stretton, Mrs Li Hong Ma, the Deputy Mayor of Liaocheng, and her delegation and Mr Michael Ma, Secretary-General of the Queensland Chinese United Council.

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (12.35 pm): I also acknowledge the team from Liaocheng and acknowledge the member for Stretton, who I know is very committed to extending relationships between this great state and the Chinese people. You are very welcome in this place and I hope you have a great experience.

I rise to support this legislation to introduce fixed four-year terms into the Queensland parliament, and I note the amendments circulated by the Attorney-General. It is not the first time that four-year terms have been spoken about in this parliament, although it is my first time to speak about four-year terms which so many others have considered before in this place. Across the country we have seen states move to four-year terms, and people have even expressed that the Commonwealth would function better with four-year terms. However, we know that the Commonwealth is restricted by the Constitution, but this would be a stepping stone to once again testing the proposition of whether four-year terms are better for developing government policy.

We know that business confidence and consumer confidence are very important to the growth of a modern democratic society. We need to build certain and concrete policies upon which businesses and individuals who want to start businesses can begin to build, construct and know with certainty the direction of the state. Four-year terms give a longer period in which to get that consistency. We saw already the destructive nature of some bills in this place where we saw those not following the government policy did not build consumer confidence, and we wish to do more to build consumer confidence and to build certainty for investment, especially international trade and investment. That is why I think four-year terms are a sensible constitutional evolution which would bring more stability to our government.

The member for Dalrymple has expressed some concerns. He posited if we had four-year terms how destructive the former Newman government would have been in its last year. It is very important that these concerns are aired. However, I have to say to the member for Dalrymple that if we based everything on trying to prevent the Newman government we would have no government whatsoever. We would just abolish this place in the hope that we would never again get the Newman government. I think we need to proceed with more confidence. I also remind the member for Dalrymple that I think the people of Queensland were pretty sensible. They made that change and they expressed their voice and views clearly. They are the ultimate accountability mechanism. I think we need more confidence. I hope that the LNP government of the last term was a one-off.

We have complex policies that we must address in this place. When I think of educational policies, the Advance Queensland agenda is one that will take many years to develop. Governments need to be committed and to focus on the long term. I see the Minister for Education following this debate keenly, because she knows that in education changes do not happen overnight. You must build steadily into the curriculum, especially when we are doing STEM education to further enhance that.

I also know in health that, if we put forward a program like the one we have done with the nursing numbers guarantee, we need to see the results of that working over time. A healthier Queensland will not come in a short period of time; instead it takes years of work and consistency and that is what this government aims to do.

I only rose to speak briefly. I wish to acknowledge the concerns of others. I know that governments that are focused on the good of Queensland will be able to achieve much more in the program they put forward as part of a four-year consistent and stable process. That is why I endorse the bill, as amended, to the House.

 **Mr WALKER** (Mansfield—LNP) (12.39 pm), in reply: The issues have been well and truly canvassed during the debate. I particularly appreciate the contribution from all of those who have taken a bipartisan position on this important issue. I want to acknowledge the situation that the member for Dalrymple put before us—that the Katter party is not able to support this bill. I am disappointed about that. I think the arguments the member raised have been dealt with adequately in the debate and in the committee's consideration. Although I am disappointed that the Katter party cannot join the bipartisan spirit of the debate—although it would then be the tripartisan spirit—it will be good to have a contradicter out there when we take this matter to the Queensland people. That will certainly allow for a proper debate to be held.

There are three points I want to make in conclusion. The first is that my original bill I brought before the parliament was in fact the discussion draft that we in the LNP had put out for discussion earlier this year. In that spirit, it was put in not as a final document but as one which we were very glad to receive responses on from the community as the committee looked at this matter. We were therefore also happy to take on board the amendments that have now come through as a result of the committee's suggestion, and they are the amendments which the government will move today. I think that has been a good process—a discussion draft moving through to what is now a final bill that will receive the support of at least the two larger parties in this House. That is a great process which deserves the endorsement and congratulations of the committee in particular, as has been mentioned by a number of members.

The second point I want to go to is the issues that have been raised about the committee structure. I think this is important. The member for Condamine particularly mentioned that and I think the Leader of the House mentioned it. The Leader of the House gave us an assurance—which is a good assurance to hear—that the Committee of the Legislative Assembly will deal with those matters by the time a likely referendum is held. I hope that we can go to the people with a model for how the committee system may work under a four-year arrangement.

The reason that neither we on this side nor those on the government's side have taken up the committee's recommendation in respect of entrenchment of the committee position is quite a simple one—that is, that system needs to be flexible both in the issues that arise in policy debate from time to time and in the way in which the numbers in this House are structured. If we entrenched it in a very detailed way, such that you had to go back to a referendum to change it, that would be awkward. If on the other hand we said, 'We'll just put a little bit in so it does not mean anything,' that in turn becomes something that is futile. So I think the correct decision has been made—that really needs a separate examination. The Committee of the Legislative Assembly can do that quite properly and I look forward to their report in late February of next year.

The final point that needs to be made is this. We now have a proposition on the table for a fixed four-year term—brought in by the LNP, supported by the government but, above all, needing the approval of the Queensland people at a referendum. That is the appropriate thing—in the end this matter, which is fundamental to our system of government, will be decided by the people of Queensland. It is great that we can finish the year with this important proposal passing through the House and ready to go to the people of Queensland in 2016. I commend the bill to the House.

Division: Question put—That the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill be now read a second time.

Resolved in the affirmative under standing order 106.

Bill read a second time.

Division: Question put—That the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Referendum Bill be read a second time.

Resolved in the affirmative under standing order 106.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—



Mrs D'ATH (12.54 pm): I move the following amendment—

1

After clause 1

Page 4, after line 6—

insert—

1A Commencement

- (1) This Act commences on the date of the instrument by which the Governor summons the Legislative Assembly after the next general election.
- (2) In this section—

next general election means the first election for the members of the Legislative Assembly held after the date of assent of this Act.

I table the explanatory notes to my amendments.

Tabled paper: Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill 2015, explanatory notes to Hon. Yvette D'Ath's amendments [1866].

The first amendment inserts in the bill a new commencement provision to provide that the bill commences on the date of the instrument by which the Governor summons the next Legislative Assembly.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—



Mrs D'ATH (12.55 pm): I move the following amendment—

2

After clause 2

Page 4, after line 10—

insert—

2A Amendment of s 3 (Object)

- (1) Section 3, note, '*Constitution Act Amendment Act 1890*, section 2'—
omit.
- (2) Section 3, note, 'sections 3 and 4'—
omit, insert—
section 3

These are minor amendments to the object of the Constitution of Queensland 2001. As a consequence of the proposed repeal of the Constitution Act Amendment Act 1890, there is an omission of section 4 of the Constitution Act Amendment Act 1934.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 3—



Mrs D'ATH (12.55 pm): I move the following amendment—

3

Clause 3 (Amendment of s 15 (Summoning, proroguing and dissolving the Legislative Assembly))

Page 4, lines 17 to 19—

omit, insert—

- (3) The Governor may dissolve the Legislative Assembly, by proclamation or otherwise, under part 2A.

This amendment slightly redrafts the amendment to section 15 of the Constitution of Queensland 2001 to remove the words 'but only' as these words are considered unnecessary.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 3, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 4, as read, agreed to.

Clause 5—



Mrs D'ATH (12.56 pm): I move the following amendment—

4

Clause 5 (Amendment of s 17 (Continuation of Legislative Assembly despite end of Sovereign's reign))

Page 5, lines 4 to 6—

omit, insert—

- Section 17, 'under section 15(2)'—
omit, insert—
by the Governor

This amends section 17 of the Constitution of Queensland 2001 to refer generally to dissolution by the Governor rather than cross-reference another provision.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 5, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 6—



Mrs D'ATH (12.57 pm): I move the following amendment—

5 Clause 6 (Insertion of new ch 2, pt 2A)

Page 5, line 10 to page 10, line 19—

omit, insert—

Part 2A Duration of the Legislative Assembly

19A Definitions for this part

In this part—

Assembly means the Legislative Assembly.

extraordinary general election means a general election held after the dissolution of the Assembly—

- (a) under section 19E; or
- (b) following an exercise of the Governor's reserve powers under established constitutional conventions.

general election means an election for the members of the Assembly.

Leader of the Opposition means the member recognised in the Assembly as the Leader of the Opposition.

normal dissolution day see section 19C(1).

normal polling day see section 19B(1).

ordinary general election means a general election other than an extraordinary general election.

postponed polling day see section 19B(3).

19B Polling day for ordinary general election

- (1) The **normal polling day** for an ordinary general election is the last Saturday in October in the following year—
 - (a) if the last general election was an ordinary general election—the fourth calendar year after the calendar year in which the last general election was held;
 - (b) if the last general election was an extraordinary general election—the third calendar year after the calendar year in which the last general election was held.
- (2) Each ordinary general election must be held on the normal polling day unless the Governor orders a postponement under subsection (3).
- (3) The Governor may at any time, by proclamation, order the polling day for an ordinary general election to be postponed to a Saturday not more than 35 days after the normal polling day (the **postponed polling day**) if—
 - (a) there are exceptional circumstances; and

Examples of exceptional circumstances—

 - 1 An election for members of the House of Representatives or the Senate of the Commonwealth Parliament is to be held on the normal polling day.
 - 2 A natural disaster has affected such a wide area of the State that the conduct of an election on the normal polling day would be impracticable.
 - (b) the Premier recommends, and the Leader of the Opposition agrees to, the postponement.
- (4) For the purpose of deciding the postponed polling day under subsection (3), the stated number of days includes—
 - (a) the normal polling day; and
 - (b) the postponed polling day itself.
- (5) Subsection (3) does not affect the operation of any provision of another Act about adjourning a poll at a place because of an emergency.

19C Normal dissolution day

- (1) The day that is 26 days before the normal polling day is the **normal dissolution day**.
- (2) On the normal dissolution day, the Governor must dissolve the Assembly and issue a writ for a general election.
- (3) Subsection (2) applies unless the Governor has already dissolved the Assembly under this part or has postponed dissolution under section 19D.
- (4) For the purpose of deciding the normal dissolution day under subsection (1), the stated number of days includes—
 - (a) the normal polling day; and
 - (b) the normal dissolution day itself.

19D Postponed dissolution

- (1) The Governor may, by proclamation, postpone the dissolution of the Assembly and the issue of a writ for a general election if—
 - (a) the Governor has ordered the postponement of the polling day under section 19B(3); and
 - (b) the Premier recommends, and the Leader of the Opposition agrees to, the postponement.
- (2) The dissolution may not be postponed to a day later than—
 - (a) the day that is 26 days before the postponed polling day; or
 - (b) the day on which the Assembly would expire under section 19H.
- (3) The proclamation must state—
 - (a) the day to which the dissolution has been postponed; and
 - (b) that the Assembly is dissolved on that day.
- (4) On the day the Assembly is dissolved, the Governor must issue a writ for a general election.

19E Extraordinary dissolution

- (1) The Governor may dissolve the Assembly and issue a writ for a general election if, before the normal dissolution day—
 - (a) each of the following happens—
 - (i) a no confidence motion is passed, or a confidence motion is defeated, in the Assembly;
 - (ii) a confidence motion is not passed in the Assembly within 8 days after the passage or defeat of the motion mentioned in subparagraph (i);
 - (iii) the Governor considers no government can be formed that will command the confidence of a majority of the Assembly; or
 - (b) the Assembly rejects a Bill for an ordinary annual appropriation Act; or
 - (c) the Assembly fails to pass a Bill for an ordinary annual appropriation Act before the day notified by the Governor, by a message given to the Assembly, that the appropriation is required.

- (2) In this section—

confidence motion means a motion in the form 'That this House has confidence in the government'.

no confidence motion means a motion in the form 'That this House has no confidence in the government'.

ordinary annual appropriation Act means an Act that appropriates an amount from the consolidated fund for departments of government for a financial year.

19F Writ for extraordinary general election

- (1) A writ for an extraordinary general election must state the polling day for the election.
- (2) The stated polling day must be a Saturday not less than 26 days and not more than 40 days after the day of the issue of the writ.
- (3) For the purpose of deciding the polling day under subsection (2), the stated number of days includes—
 - (a) the day of issue of the writ; and
 - (b) the polling day itself.

19G Reserve powers not affected

This part does not affect the exercise of the Governor's reserve powers under established constitutional conventions.

19H Expiry of Assembly

- (1) The Assembly expires on the day that is 4 years from the day the writ for the general election was returned for the Assembly if the Governor has not already dissolved the Assembly under this part.
- (2) If the Assembly expires, the Governor must immediately issue a writ for a general election.

19I Special procedure for amending or repealing this part

- (1) This section applies in relation to a Bill for an Act amending or repealing a provision of this part (including this section).
- (2) The Bill may be presented to the Governor for assent only if the Bill—
 - (a) has first been passed by the Assembly; and
 - (b) has then been approved by a majority of electors who vote at a referendum—
 - (i) held on a Saturday at least 2 months after the Bill is passed by the Assembly; and
 - (ii) otherwise held in the way prescribed by an Act.
- (3) The Bill has no effect as an Act if assented to after presentation in contravention of subsection (2).

Amendment No. 5 replaces clause 6 of the bill. This inserts part 2A headed 'Duration of the Legislative Assembly' and is the main part of the bill which provides for fixed four-year terms and the extraordinary circumstances in which the Assembly could be resolved early. Many of the amendments to clause 6 are in response to the committee's recommendations and also maximise the readability of the provisions. Although this amendment replaces clause 6 entirely, aspects of the current clause in the bill are included in some form without substantial change in this replacement clause.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 6, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 7—



Mrs D'ATH (12.58 pm): I move the following amendment—

6 Clause 7 (Insertion of new ch 9, pt 3)

Page 10, line 27 to page 11, line 14—

omit, insert—

94A Last general election

For the purposes of chapter 2, part 2A, the last general election held before the commencement of that part is taken to have been an extraordinary general election.

This amendment amends clause 7 of the bill. It provides a simplified transitional provision and implements recommendation 6 of the Finance and Administration Committee's report.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 7, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 8 and 9, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—



Mrs D'ATH (12.59 pm): I move the following amendment—

7 After clause 9

Page 11, after line 21—

insert—

9A Amendment of preamble

Preamble, from 'And whereas, pursuant to an Act'—

omit.

This amendment inserts a new clause 9A into the bill. This new clause makes consequential amendments to the preamble of the Constitution Act Amendment Act 1934.

Amendment agreed to.

Clauses 10 and 11, as read, agreed to.

Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Referendum Bill

Insertion of new clause—



Mrs D'ATH (1.00 pm): I move the following amendment—

1 Before clause 1

Page 4, before line 2—

insert—

Part 1 Preliminary

I table the explanatory notes to my amendments.

Tabled paper: Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Referendum Bill 2015, explanatory notes to Hon. Yvette D'Ath's amendments [1867].

I will speak to amendments Nos 1 and 2. These are minor technical amendments to insert new headings into the bill which take account of the other proposed amendments to the resultant act and the Referendums Act.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—



Mrs D'ATH (1.01 pm): I move the following amendment—

2 Before clause 2

Page 4, before line 5—

insert—

Part 2 Submitting Bill to electors for voting

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2, as read, agreed to.

Clause 3—



Mrs D'ATH (1.01 pm): I move the following amendment—

3 Clause 3 (How vote is to be taken)

Page 4, lines 14 to 24—

omit, insert—

3 How vote is taken

For the purpose of section 2, a referendum is to be held under the *Referendums Act 1997*.

This amendment replaces clause 3, which provides for how the vote is taken. This is because it is considered undesirable and unnecessary to include subclauses which impose legal requirements related to matters provided for under the Constitution Act Amendment Act 1934, and these have been omitted.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 3, as amended, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—



Mrs D'ATH (1.02 pm): I seek leave to move an amendment outside the long title.

Leave granted.

Mrs D'ATH: I move the following amendment—

4 After clause 3

Page 4, after line 24—

insert—

Part 3 Amendment of Acts

Division 1 Amendment of this Act

4 Act amended

This division amends this Act.

5 Amendment of long title

Long title, from 'and to amend'—
omit.

Division 2 Amendment of Referendums Act 1997**6 Act amended**

This division amends the *Referendums Act 1997*.

7 Amendment of s 3 (Function of the commission)

Section 3, editor's note—

omit, insert—

Note—

See the *Electoral Act 1992*, section 7(1)(j).

8 Amendment of s 6 (Form and content of writs)

Section 6(2)(d), '91'—

omit, insert—

84

9 Amendment of s 8 (Commission to publish writ and prepare for referendum)

Section 8(b), before 'commissioner'—

insert—

electoral

10 Amendment of s 11 (When must an argument in favour of or against the Bill or question be published)

(1) Section 11(1)(b)—

omit, insert—

(b) authorised under subsection (2); and

(2) Section 11—

insert—

(1A) The argument must be authorised by—

(a) for an argument in favour of the Bill or an argument against the Bill, if all the members voting voted for the Bill—a majority of the members who wish to forward the argument to the commission; or

(b) for an argument in favour of the Bill, if paragraph (a) does not apply—a majority of the members who voted for the Bill and wish to forward the argument to the commission; or

(c) for an argument against the Bill, if paragraph (a) does not apply—a majority of the members who voted against the Bill and wish to forward the argument to the commission.

(3) Section 11(2)(b)—

omit, insert—

(b) authorised under subsection (4); and

(4) Section 11—

insert—

(3) The argument must be authorised by—

(a) for an argument in favour of a 'yes' answer or a 'no' answer to the question, if all the members voting voted in favour of the 'yes' answer—a majority of the members who wish to forward the argument to the commission; or

(b) for an argument in favour of a 'yes' answer to the question, if paragraph (a) does not apply—a majority of the members who voted in favour of the 'yes' answer and wish to forward the argument to the commission; or

(c) for an argument in favour of a 'no' answer to the question, if paragraph (a) does not apply—a majority of the members who voted against the 'yes' answer and wish to forward the argument to the commission.

(5) Section 11(1A) to (3)—

renumber as section 11(2) to (4).

- 11 Amendment of s 12 (How an argument for or against the Bill or question is distributed or published)**
- (1) Section 12(2)—
omit, insert—
- (2) Also, the commission must publish any argument forwarded to it under section 11—
- (a) at least twice before the polling day for the referendum in a newspaper circulating throughout the State, including on the day before the polling day; and
- (b) on the commission's website.
- (2) Section 12(3), 'in the same newspapers'—
omit.
- 12 Amendment of s 13 (More than 1 referendum on the same day)**
- Section 13(2), 'newspapers'—
omit, insert—
newspaper
- 13 Amendment of s 16 (Kinds of polling booths)**
- (1) Section 16(1), '2 kinds'—
omit, insert—
3 kinds
- (2) Section 16(1)—
insert—
(c) pre-poll voting offices for electoral districts.
- 14 Amendment of s 18 (Supply of ballot papers and electoral rolls)**
- (1) Section 18, heading, 'Supply of ballot'—
omit, insert—
Ballot
- (2) Section 18(2), after 'Ballot papers'—
insert—
, other than a completed ballot paper printed for an electronically assisted vote,
- (3) Section 18(3), 'If'—
omit, insert—
For ballot papers to which subsection (2) applies, if
- (4) Section 18—
insert—
(4) A completed ballot paper printed for an electronically assisted vote must be of a size or format that enables the elector's electronically assisted vote to be accurately determined.
- 15 Amendment of s 19 (Scrutineers)**
- (1) Section 19(2), after 'mobile polling booth,'—
insert—
each pre-poll voting office
- (2) Section 19(3)(b), after 'envelopes'—
insert—
, the printing of completed ballot papers for electronically assisted votes
- (3) Section 19(3)—
insert—
(c) at a place to observe any part of a procedure for making an electronically assisted vote.
- (4) Section 19(5), after 'votes,'—
insert—
including electronically assisted votes,

16 Amendment of s 21 (Who may vote)

Section 21(1)—

insert—

- (d) persons who—
 - (i) are not enrolled on the electoral roll for any electoral district but are entitled under the *Electoral Act 1992* to be enrolled on the electoral roll for an electoral district; and
 - (ii) after the cut-off day for electoral rolls for the referendum and no later than 6p.m. on the day before the polling day, give the commission or an electoral registrar for the district a notice under the *Electoral Act 1992*, section 65.

17 Amendment of s 22 (Procedure for voting)

Section 22(1), after 'who'—

insert—

makes a pre-poll ordinary vote under section 24C or who

18 Insertion of new pt 4, div 3, sdiv 1A

After section 24—

*insert—***Subdivision 1A Pre-poll ordinary voting****24A Pre-poll ordinary voting**

- (1) This section applies to an elector, other than one who must make a declaration vote under subdivision 2, who wishes to vote—
 - (a) before the polling day for a referendum; and
 - (b) other than by making a declaration vote under subdivision 2.
- (2) If there is a pre-poll voting office for the electoral district for which the elector is enrolled, the elector may make a vote under section 24C (a ***pre-poll ordinary vote***).

24B Pre-poll voting offices

- (1) The commission may declare, by gazette notice, for a referendum—
 - (a) a stated place to be a place where an elector enrolled in a stated electoral district may make a pre-poll ordinary vote (a ***pre-poll voting office*** for the electoral district); and
 - (b) the times during which electors may make a pre-poll ordinary vote at the pre-poll voting office.
- (2) The commission may, in a declaration under subsection (1) or by gazette notice under this subsection, declare that a particular pre-poll voting office located in an electoral district is also a pre-poll voting office for 1 or more other electoral districts.
- (3) If the commission makes a declaration under subsection (1) or (2), the commission may also publish the declaration in any other way the commission considers appropriate, including, for example, on the commission's website.

24C Procedure for pre-poll ordinary voting

- (1) An elector who wishes to vote during the period beginning 3 days after the cut-off day for electoral rolls for the referendum and ending at 6p.m. on the day before polling day may make a pre-poll ordinary vote by following the procedures stated in this section.
- (2) The elector is to go to a pre-poll voting office for the electoral district for which the elector is enrolled.
- (3) At the pre-poll voting office, the elector must ask the issuing officer for a ballot paper.
- (4) If the elector—
 - (a) has a ballot paper and declaration envelope for the referendum; and
 - (b) does not intend to make a declaration vote under subdivision 2;
 the elector must give the ballot paper and declaration envelope to the issuing officer.
- (5) The issuing officer must issue a ballot paper to a person if the issuing officer is satisfied the person is entitled to vote at the referendum for the electoral district.
- (6) The issuing officer may ask questions of a person requesting a ballot paper for the purpose of deciding whether the person is entitled to vote at the referendum for the electoral district.
- (7) The issuing officer must comply with section 32 if the issuing officer has asked questions under subsection (6) and suspects a person claiming to be a particular elector is not the elector.

- (8) The issuing officer must keep a record of all persons to whom the officer issues ballot papers under this section.
- (9) The issuing officer must, if a scrutineer requests it, keep a record of any objection by the scrutineer to the entitlement of a person to vote.
- (10) On being given the ballot paper, the elector must, without delay—
 - (a) go alone to an unoccupied voting compartment in the pre-poll voting office; and
 - (b) there, in private, mark a vote on the ballot paper in accordance with section 33; and
 - (c) fold the ballot paper to conceal the vote and put it in a ballot box in the pre-poll voting office; and
 - (d) leave the pre-poll voting office.

24D Help to enable electors to vote at pre-poll voting offices

- (1) Subject to subsection (2), if an elector satisfies an issuing officer that the elector can not vote without help, the elector may be accompanied in the pre-poll voting office by another person chosen by the elector.
- (2) The other person may help the elector in any of the following ways—
 - (a) acting as an interpreter;
 - (b) explaining the ballot paper and the requirements of section 33 relating to its marking;
 - (c) marking, or helping the elector to mark, the ballot paper in the way the elector wishes;
 - (d) folding the ballot paper and putting it in the ballot box.
- (3) If an elector can not enter a pre-poll voting office because of illness, disability or advanced pregnancy, but can come to a place (the **voting place**) close to the pre-poll voting office, then, subject to subsection (4)—
 - (a) the issuing officer may perform the issuing officer's functions; and
 - (b) the voter may vote;
 at the voting place as if it were the pre-poll voting office.
- (4) The issuing officer must—
 - (a) before taking any action under subsection (3), inform any scrutineers present of the proposed action; and
 - (b) ensure that, after the ballot paper is marked, it is—
 - (i) folded to conceal the vote; and
 - (ii) put into an envelope and sealed; and
 - (c) open the envelope inside the pre-poll voting office in the presence of any scrutineers and put the folded ballot paper in a ballot box.

19 Amendment of s 25 (Who may make a declaration vote)

- (1) Section 25(1)(a)—
omit, insert—
 - (a) an elector who wishes to make a declaration vote before the polling day for a referendum (an **ordinary postal voter**);
- (2) Section 25(1)(b), editor's note—
omit, insert—
Note—
See subsection (2) and the *Electoral Act 1992*, section 114(2).
- (3) Section 25(1)(c), 'subsection (4)'—
omit, insert—
subsection (3)
- (4) Section 25(1)(c), editor's note—
omit, insert—
Note—
See subsection (3) and the *Electoral Act 1992*, section 114(3).
- (5) Section 25(2)—
omit.
- (6) Section 25(3) and (4)—
renumber as section 25(2) and (3).

20 Amendment of s 26 (Who must make a declaration vote)

Section 26(d), before 'applies'—

insert—

or (d)

21 Amendment of s 30 (Making a declaration vote using posted referendum papers)

(1) Section 30(1), from 'by writing' to 'delivered'—

omit, insert—

in an approved form given

(2) Section 30(3), '6p.m. on the Thursday'—

omit, insert—

7p.m. on the Wednesday

22 Amendment of s 31 (Electoral visitor voting)

(1) Section 31(1), from 'by writing' to 'delivered'—

omit, insert—

in an approved form given

(2) Section 31(3), '6p.m. on the Thursday'—

omit, insert—

7p.m. on the Wednesday

23 Amendment of s 32 (Making a declaration vote in cases of uncertain identity)

(1) Section 32(1) and (2)—

omit, insert—

(1) If section 22(7) or 24C(7) applies for a person who is an elector or a person claiming to be an elector, the issuing officer must give the person a declaration envelope.

(2) Section 32(5)(a), '(3)(a)'—

omit, insert—

(2)(a)

(3) Section 32(5)(b), '(3)(b)'—

omit, insert—

(2)(b)

(4) Section 32(7), 'subsection (5)'—

omit, insert—

subsection (4)

(5) Section 32(3) to (9)—

renumber as section 32(2) to (8).

24 Insertion of new pt 4, div 3, sdiv 2A

After section 32—

insert—

Subdivision 2A Electronically assisted voting**32A Who may make an electronically assisted vote**

An elector may make an electronically assisted vote if—

(a) the elector can not vote without assistance because the elector has—

(i) an impairment; or

(ii) an insufficient level of literacy; or

(b) the elector can not vote at a polling booth because of an impairment; or

(c) the elector is a member of a class of elector prescribed by a regulation for this section.

Examples of a class of elector—

- an elector whose address, as shown on an electoral roll, is more than 20km by the nearest practical route from a polling booth
- an elector who will not, throughout ordinary voting hours on polling day, be within Queensland

32B Prescribed procedures for electronically assisted voting

- (1) The commission may make procedures about how an elector may make an electronically assisted vote for a referendum.
- (2) The procedures must provide for the following—
 - (a) the registration of electors who may make an electronically assisted vote for a referendum under section 32A;
 - (b) the authentication of each electronically assisted vote;
 - (c) the recording of each elector who uses electronically assisted voting;
 - (d) ensuring the secrecy of each electronically assisted vote;
 - (e) the secure transmission of each electronically assisted vote to the electoral commissioner, and secure storage of each electronically assisted vote by the commissioner, until printing;
 - (f) the printing, for scrutiny and counting, of a ballot paper for each electronically assisted vote;
 - (g) the secure delivery of each printed ballot paper to the returning officer for the appropriate electoral district or to the commission.
- (3) The procedures—
 - (a) do not take effect until approved by a regulation; and
 - (b) must be tabled in the Legislative Assembly with the regulation approving the procedures; and
 - (c) must be published on the commission's website.

32C Audit of electronically assisted voting for a referendum

- (1) The commission must appoint an independent person to audit the information technology used under the procedures for electronically assisted voting made under section 32B.
- (2) The audit must be conducted—
 - (a) at least 7 days before the cut-off day for electoral rolls for the referendum; and
 - (b) within 60 days after the polling day for the referendum.
- (3) A person appointed under subsection (1) must be an individual who is not, and has not ever been, a member of a political party.
- (4) The person appointed to conduct the audit may make recommendations to the commission to reduce or eliminate risks that could affect the security, accuracy or secrecy of electronically assisted voting.
- (5) A regulation may prescribe requirements about the conduct of an audit under this section.
- (6) In this section—

political party see the *Electoral Act 1992*, section 2.

32D Protection of information technology

- (1) A person must not disclose to another person a source code or other computer software relating to electronically assisted voting, unless the person is authorised to do so under—
 - (a) the procedures made under section 32B; or
 - (b) an agreement entered into by the person with the electoral commissioner.

Maximum penalty—40 penalty units or 6 months imprisonment.

- (2) A person must not, without reasonable excuse, destroy or interfere with a computer program, data file or electronic device used for or in connection with electronically assisted voting.

Maximum penalty—100 penalty units or 2 years imprisonment.

32E Electoral commissioner may decide electronically assisted voting is not to be used

- (1) The electoral commissioner may decide that electronically assisted voting is not to be used—
 - (a) at a particular referendum; or
 - (b) by a class of electors at a particular referendum.
- (2) The electoral commissioner's decision must be in writing and published on the commission's website.

32F Review of electronically assisted voting

- (1) On the request of the Minister following a referendum, the electoral commissioner must conduct—
 - (a) a review of the use of electronically assisted voting for the referendum; and
 - (b) an investigation into extending the use of electronically assisted voting to other electors for future referendums.
- (2) A report on the review and investigation must be given to the Minister.
- (3) The Minister must, within 14 days after receiving the report, table the report in the Legislative Assembly.

25 Amendment of s 33 (How electors must vote)

Section 33(1)—

omit, insert—

- (1) An elector must vote in accordance with—
 - (a) if the elector votes using electronically assisted voting—the procedures approved under section 32B(3); or
 - (b) otherwise—subsection (2) or (3).

26 Amendment of s 36 (Preliminary processing of declaration envelopes and ballot papers)

Section 36(2)(c), from 'the signature', first mention to 'request and'—

*omit.***27 Amendment of s 38 (Preliminary counting of ordinary votes)**

(1) Section 38(2)(b)—

omit, insert—

- (b) identify and keep in a separate parcel all declaration envelopes and all ballot papers printed for electronically assisted votes; and

(2) Section 38—

insert—

- (3) This section applies to votes received by the commission under section 36 for an electoral district—
 - (a) in the same way as it would apply if the commission's office were a polling booth for the electoral district; and
 - (b) subject to any changes prescribed by regulation and other necessary changes.
- (4) This section applies to pre-poll ordinary votes received by the commission for an electoral district—
 - (a) in the same way as it would apply if a pre-poll voting office were a polling booth for the electoral district, to the extent to which it is reasonably practicable for pre-poll ordinary votes to be counted on polling day; and
 - (b) subject to any changes prescribed by regulation and other necessary changes.

28 Amendment of s 39 (Official counting of votes)

Section 39(2)(b), after 'envelopes'—

insert—

and ballot papers printed for electronically assisted votes

29 Amendment of s 83 (Failure to post, fax or deliver documents for someone else)

(1) Section 83, heading, 'post, fax or deliver'—

omit, insert—

give, post or send

(2) Section 83(1), from 'under section 30' to 'the request'—

omit, insert—

in the approved form under section 30 or 31 to give to the commission or a returning officer, the person must promptly give the request

30 Replacement of pt 7, hdg (Referendum held in conjunction with election under Electoral Act 1992)

Part 7, heading—

omit, insert—

Part 7 Referendum held in conjunction with particular elections**Division 1 Referendum held with election under Electoral Act 1992****31 Amendment of s 88 (Extension of time)**

Section 88(1), 'section 82'—

omit, insert—

section 86

32 Amendment of s 89 (Cut-off date for electoral rolls for an election and a referendum)

(1) Section 89, 'date'—

omit, insert—

day

(2) Section 89(2), 'section'—

omit, insert—

section,

33 Amendment of s 90 (Pre-poll voting—making a declaration vote at a commission office)

Section 90, 'section 109'—

omit, insert—

section 118(1)

34 Amendment of s 92 (Mobile polling booths)

Section 92, 'section 94(4) or (6)'—

omit, insert—

section 99(4) to (8)

35 Amendment of s 94 (Applications, declarations, ballot papers and references)

(1) Section 94(a), 'sections 110(1) or 111(1)'—

omit, insert—

section 119(1) or 120(1)

(2) Section 94(b) and (c), 'section 103(3), 108, 109, 110, 111 or 112'—

omit, insert—

section 108(3), 113(3), 117, 118, 119, 120 or 121

(3) Section 94(b) and (c), after 'section 23(3),'—

insert—

24D(3),

36 Amendment of s 95 (Record of ordinary votes)

Section 95, 'section 102(8)'—

omit, insert—

section 107(8)

37 Amendment of s 96 (Adjournment at both referendum and election)

Section 96(1)(b) and (c), 'section 95'—

omit, insert—

section 100

38 Insertion of new pt 7, div 2

Part 7—

*insert—***Division 2 Referendum held with local government election****96AA Application of division**

This division applies if the polling day for a referendum is the same day as the polling day for a local government election.

96AB Definitions for division

In this division—

LGEA means *Local Government Electoral Act 2011*.**local government election** means a quadrennial election under the LGEA.

96AC Application of division 1

- (1) Division 1, other than sections 89, 90 and 94, applies in relation to the referendum and local government election as if—
- (a) a reference in the division to an election were a reference to a local government election; and
 - (b) the reference in section 88(1) to the *Electoral Act 1992*, section 86 were a reference to the LGEA, section 38; and
 - (c) a reference in section 88(2) to an electoral district or a district were a reference to a local government area or division of a local government area; and
 - (d) the reference in section 92 to a declaration or arrangement made under the *Electoral Act 1992*, section 99(4) to (8) were a reference to an arrangement under the LGEA, section 49; and
 - (e) the reference in section 93 to the *Electoral Act 1992* were a reference to the LGEA; and
 - (f) the reference in section 95 to the *Electoral Act 1992*, section 107(8) were a reference to the LGEA, section 75(6); and
 - (g) the reference in section 96(1)(b) to the returning officer were a reference to the returning officer or presiding officer under the LGEA; and
 - (h) a reference in section 96(1) to the *Electoral Act 1992*, section 100 were a reference to the LGEA, section 53; and
 - (i) a reference in section 96 to the commission were a reference to the returning officer under the LGEA.
- (2) In this section—
division, of a local government area, see the LGEA, schedule.

96AD Cut-off day for electoral rolls

- (1) If the cut-off day for electoral rolls stated in the writ for the referendum would, but for this section, be a day before the local cut-off day, the cut-off day for electoral rolls is extended to the local cut-off day.
- (2) In this section—
local cut-off day means the cut-off day for the voters rolls, under the LGEA, for the local government election.

96AE Particular applications, declarations, ballot papers and references

For the purposes of the referendum and local government election—

- (a) an application made under the LGEA, section 72(2) or 79(2) is taken to be a request under section 30(1)(and vice versa) and an application under the LGEA, section 77(2) is taken to be a request under section 31(1)(and vice versa); and
- (b) a declaration made for the election under the LGEA, section 70 is taken to be a declaration made under section 28 (and vice versa) and a declaration made for the election under the LGEA, section 72 is taken to be a declaration made under section 30 (and vice versa); and
- (c) a ballot paper given to an elector under section 28 or 30 may be enclosed in the same declaration envelope as a ballot paper given to the elector under the LGEA, section 70, 72 or 79.

96AF Holding postal ballot election

- (1) This section applies if a poll for the local government election is to be conducted by a postal ballot election under the LGEA.
- (2) An elector who must cast a postal vote under the LGEA for the local government election must cast a vote for the referendum using ballot papers posted to the elector under this section.
- (3) The commission must, as soon as practicable after the issue of the writ for the referendum, post a ballot paper and declaration envelope to each elector who is entitled to cast a vote in the postal ballot election.
- (4) For subsection (3), the ballot paper may be enclosed in the same declaration envelope as a ballot paper given to the elector under the LGEA, section 80(1) or 81(5).
- (5) Returning officers and the commission must keep a record of all ballot papers and declaration envelopes posted or given to the elector under this section.

96AG Pre-poll voting

- (1) An elector may make a pre-poll ordinary vote at a pre-polling booth in the local government area only during voting hours for the booth under the LGEA.
- (2) This section applies despite section 24C(1).

96AH Ballot papers

- (1) The ballot paper for the referendum may include, at the top of the ballot paper, the name of an electoral district.
- (2) This section applies despite section 18.

96AI Application of particular provisions of the LGEA

- (1) For the purpose of holding the referendum and local government election on the same polling day, a provision of the LGEA dealing with matters about procedures for conducting a local government election applies with necessary changes.
- (2) Subsection (1) applies subject to this Act.

39 Insertion of new pt 9, hdg and pt 9, div 1, hdg

After section 100—
insert—

Part 9 Transitional provisions**Division 1 Transitional provision for Electoral and Other Acts Amendment Act 2001****40 Insertion of new pt 9, div 2**

After section 101—
insert—

Division 2 Transitional provision for Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Referendum Act 2015**102 Application of s 11 for particular referendum**

- (1) This section applies to a referendum held for the purpose of the *Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Referendum Act 2015*, section 2.
- (2) Section 11(1)(c) applies as if the reference in the paragraph to within 4 weeks after the passage of the Bill were a reference to at least 25 days before the polling day for the referendum.

41 Amendment of sch 3 (Dictionary)

- (1) Schedule 3, definitions *cut-off day for electoral rolls* and editor's note, *deputy electoral commissioner*, *electoral commissioner* and *issuing officer* and editor's note—
omit.
- (2) Schedule 3—
insert—
cut-off day for electoral rolls see the *Electoral Act 1992*, section 2.
deputy electoral commissioner means the deputy electoral commissioner under the *Electoral Act 1992*.
electoral commissioner means the electoral commissioner under the *Electoral Act 1992*.
issuing officer see the *Electoral Act 1992*, section 2.
LGEA, for part 7, division 2, see section 96AB.
local government election, for part 7, division 2, see section 96AB.
pre-poll ordinary vote see section 24A(2).
pre-poll voting office, for an electoral district, see section 24B(1)(a).
- (3) Schedule 3, definition *assistant returning officer*, 'section 33'—
omit, insert—
section 32
- (4) Schedule 3, definition *Court of Disputed Returns*, 'section 127'—
omit, insert—
section 137
- (5) Schedule 3, definition *electoral visitor voter*, 'section 25(4)'—
omit, insert—
section 25(3)
- (6) Schedule 3, definition *institution*, 'section 3'—
omit, insert—
section 2
- (7) Schedule 3, definition *member of the commission's staff*, 'section 30'—
omit, insert—
section 29
- (8) Schedule 3, definition *ordinary postal voter*, 'section 25(2)'—
omit, insert—
section 25(1)(a)
- (9) Schedule 3, definition *polling booth*, 'or a mobile polling booth'—
omit, insert—
, a mobile polling booth or a pre-poll voting office
- (10) Schedule 3, definition *returning officer*, 'section 32'—
omit, insert—
section 31
- (11) Schedule 3, definition *special postal voter*, 'section 105'—
omit, insert—
section 114(2)

This amendment inserts a new part 3, which primarily provides for amendments to the Referendums Act 1997 to implement committee recommendations 11 and 12 and make other amendments proposed by the Electoral Commission of Queensland to facilitate the conduct of referendums in Queensland.

In line with committee recommendation 11, the amendments will provide for pre-poll voting, which is not currently available at a referendum, and provide greater access to postal voting by enabling any person who wishes to do so to make a postal vote. The amendments also address committee recommendation 12 by ensuring that both for and against arguments for a referendum bill or question can be authorised for publication by the ECQ, including where parliament unanimously supports such a bill or question.

In addition, the amendments will bring the Referendums Act into line with the Electoral Act 1992 and the Local Government Election Act 2011 by making electronically assisted voting available to voters who cannot vote without assistance because they have an impairment or insufficient literacy as well as other categories prescribed by regulation. These will ensure that voters in a referendum have access to voting methods which are currently available at state and local government elections. Specific provision is made for the conduct of referendums in conjunction with local government elections by aligning processes for the referendum with the election and enabling a referendum to be conducted by full postal ballot in local government areas which are currently approved by full postal ballot collection.

These amendments have bipartisan support, and the government wishes to thank all members of parliament for their support of these measures.

Amendment agreed to.

Third Reading (Cognate Debate)

Mr WALKER (Mansfield—LNP) (1.04 pm): I move—

That the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill, as amended, be now read a third time.

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

Resolved in the affirmative under standing order 106.

Bill read a third time.

Mr WALKER (Mansfield—LNP) (1.07 pm): I move—

That the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Referendum Bill, as amended, be now read at third time.

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

Resolved in the affirmative under standing order 106.

Bill read a third time.

Long Title (Cognate Debate)

Mr WALKER (Mansfield—LNP) (1.09 pm): I move—

That the long title of the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill be agreed to.

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (1.09 pm): I move the following amendment—

8 Long title

Long title, from 'amend the *Constitution of Queensland 2001*'—
omit, insert—

provide for fixed four-year terms for the Legislative Assembly in Queensland

This amends the long title of the bill to state that the bill is an act to provide for fixed four-year terms for the Legislative Assembly in Queensland. Should the bill be passed by the Legislative Assembly and submitted to the electors at a referendum, it is important that the long title is easy to understand and clearly states what the electors are being asked to approve.

Amendment agreed to.

Question put—That the long title of the Constitution (Fixed Term Parliament) Amendment Bill, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Mr WALKER (Mansfield—LNP) (1.10 pm): I move—

That the long title of the Constitution (Fixed Term) Parliament Referendum Bill be agreed to.

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (1.10 pm): I move the following amendment—

5 **Long title**

Long title, after '2015'—

insert—

and to amend this Act and the *Referendums Act 1997* for particular purposes

This amendment amends the long title.

Amendment agreed to.

Question put—That the long title of the Constitution (Fixed Term) Parliament Referendum Bill, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 1.11 pm to 2.30 pm.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (2.30 pm): I move—

That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 am on Tuesday, 16 February 2016.

Valedictory

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (2.30 pm): We live in a state of vast, often punishing and uncommon extremes. While I am sure that everyone here and everyone outside of this place would agree that Queensland is the best place in Australia to live, calling yourself a Queenslanders comes with a price because we are a state of dramatic contrasts. There is no greater illustration of that than the extraordinary, exceptional—almost surreal—set of events that challenged us throughout 2015.

We began 2015 with a violent event which saw parts of our state brutally lashed with wind and water. We end 2015 with almost our entire state in the grip of an equally punishing drought. Within a week of the 14 February swearing-in of my Labor government, Severe Tropical Cyclone Marcia, a category 5 event, made landfall over Central Queensland near Shoalwater Bay. Central Queensland braced itself on 20 February as Marcia then swept on to Yeppoon and Rockhampton, bringing with her devastation and heartbreak and leaving behind a damage bill of at least \$750 million.

Bureau of Meteorology forecasters began monitoring the tropical low that would become Marcia south-east of Papua New Guinea on 15 February. A tropical cyclone formation alert was issued two days later. By 19 February, Marcia had intensified into a category 2 cyclone but underwent a dramatic and rapid intensification and soon developed to carry winds of 205 kilometres per hour.

Because we are blessed with a gifted team of meteorologists in this state and because as Queenslanders we have been down this path many, many times, we were well prepared for Marcia's fury. We were able to warn Rockhampton and Yeppoon residents to take shelter. We were able to give them an honest and graphic description of what they were about to experience. Thankfully, no life was lost. However, at the height of the storm more than 60,000 homes were left without power in Yeppoon, Rockhampton and Bundaberg as Marcia moved south. The SES was called out no fewer than 3,000 times to assist Central Queenslanders.

In the worst affected areas of Yeppoon, roofs were torn off and walls blown down. There was also significant structural damage in the towns of Marmor and Mount Larcom, the township of Jambin was evacuated and flooding affected communities as far south as Biloela. I visited these communities in the immediate aftermath of Marcia, and the damage and wreckage were clear. What was also clear was the abundance of our Queensland spirit. It is that spirit that allows Queenslanders to pick themselves up by their bootstraps, rebuild and get on with it. It is that spirit that extends to friends helping out friends, neighbours helping out neighbours, strangers helping out strangers. I pay tribute to that spirit. I pay tribute to those Central Queenslanders who suffered a hellish experience and then got on with it. I give thanks that no life was lost and I extend my government's ongoing sympathies to those who lost their homes and those who continue to rebuild in the wake of this terrifying experience.

If spirit has triumphed in Central Queensland, it is fair to say that it has been stretched to breaking point in many, many other parts of our state. As Marcia faded from immediate memory, our state was faced with a very different, equally tragic and equally destructive force of nature. As we gather today, more than 86 per cent of our state is officially drought declared. To put it in perspective, that means that of Queensland's 77 local governments a total of 36 councils and five part council areas are now

drought declared. This has been a catastrophic, wretched experience for communities across Queensland, particularly those in the west and the outback. The crisis has now extended into such urban areas as Townsville.

Mr Speaker, as Premier I have visited our drought-affected areas and I can tell you that the fallout from this event, particularly for our farmers and primary producers, is heartrending. Seeing families that have been on the land for generations forced to euthanase their livestock and forced into debt has also been incredibly difficult. Recent rainfalls in the west around Barcaldine and Jericho have brought some relief, but we still have a very, very long way to go. Meantime, my government has joined with the Commonwealth to provide financial relief as well as freight subsidies for fodder and water for livestock. I am proud to lead a government that provides drought declared farmers up to \$20,000 a year, increasing to \$40,000 in subsequent drought years. This funding has been essential to families in areas such as Barcaldine, Charters Towers, Cloncurry, Croydon, Goondiwindi, Paroo, the Western Downs and Mareeba. As we approach Christmas and a time of celebration for families, I would ask all members of this place—I would ask all Queenslanders—to take time to spare a thought for those families in drought-affected areas who do not have much to celebrate.

As we approach the traditional time of celebration, when families gather to enjoy each other's company and reminisce on the year that was, we should also spare a thought for those families who lost loved ones in 2015. In early May, floods claimed the lives of five people as three cars were washed away after a sudden rain event just north of Brisbane. As an east coast low dumped torrential rain across the state's south-east, the Caboolture region was inundated with 277 millimetres in just three hours, swamping hundreds of roads and causing creeks to rise rapidly. I place on record today my government's continued sympathies to the families of those lost.

In June we witnessed more tragedy as a freak accident caused an explosion to rip through the Serves You Right Cafe in Ravenshoe, injuring 25 people and killing two women. These were people going about their everyday lives, inadvertently caught up in an absolutely tragic accident. Many suffered horrific burns, and to this day they continue on their path to recovery. I send them my best wishes. To the families of those who did not survive—Nicole and Margaret—I extend the deepest sympathies of the government and the House.

Tonight at least 80 families across the country are without their mothers, killed at the hands of their partner or former partner in the past year. I ask us all to spare a thought for those families caught up in unspeakable tragedy because of the issues around domestic and family violence. It is awful, it is terrible and it is played out behind closed doors and, in Queensland this year, with the deaths of two women in the public arena. This is an unacceptable death toll. The violence that continues to happen in thousands of homes across this country and this state as we speak is the reason my government has acted swiftly and decisively to put an end to domestic and family violence. Queenslanders have joined us in our fight against domestic violence. Each and every Queenslander can rest assured that my government is in it for the long haul, because no woman, no child and no man should live with the threat of violence and intimidation in their own home. May there come a day when we no longer have to wage this battle, when domestic and family violence is no longer part of our cultural landscape.

Queenslanders went to the polls during an unspeakably hot January and clearly sent a message that they wanted a government that was about consultation, not division. They wanted a government that collaborates. They were tired of a government that seemed determined to pick fights rather than take them on a journey. That is why my government is delivering. We are delivering for our economy, delivering jobs and front-line services. We have a plan for Queensland's future at a time of economic transition for our state, and we will see it through. We are deliberately and actively steering Queensland down a new path—a path that will advance Queensland. We are a government that will always talk to Queenslanders.

We are a government that will always include Queenslanders. That is why I have spent much of 2015 on the road—meeting Queenslanders, listening to Queenslanders and treating them with the dignity and the respect they require and deserve. I thank Queenslanders from right across the state for taking time to speak with me. I thank them for their collaboration.

My government is an inclusive government. I again thank Queenslanders for having confidence in my government. In that regard, I thank each and every member of my caucus. You are doing your communities proud. You are truly representing your communities to the best of your capabilities. You are giving your communities solid, open, accountable, consultative and transparent government—and they expect nothing less.

I thank my Deputy Premier, Jackie Trad, for her counsel and her support during our first 10 months of government. I thank my Treasurer, Curtis Pitt, for his steady pair of hands and his delivery of a responsible budget that all Queenslanders can be proud of. I thank each of my cabinet colleagues—

the members of my ministry—who have performed with outstanding professionalism this year. Each of them has delivered in their portfolio areas and continue to do an outstanding job. Of course to the Leader of the House and the assistant minister, thank you for everything you have done this year.

Mr Speaker, I thank you for your true independence, wisdom and calm around this parliament during what has been a particularly challenging time. The running of this place is never without challenge, but 2015 was an exceptional case. Mr Speaker, thank you for your leadership, thank you for your professionalism, thank you for your intelligence and kindness, and thank you in particular for your fairness and your generosity of spirit. I also thank the Deputy Speaker, the member for Brisbane Central, Grace Grace, and all of the Temporary Speakers.

I thank the staff of this place and in particular Clerk Neil Laurie, Deputy Clerk Michael Ries and First Clerk Assistant Leanne Clare for their guidance and support throughout the year. I thank the Sergeant-at-Arms, Michael Watkin, and all of the parliamentary security staff for keeping everyone who works here safe. I also make special mention of our first female Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms. Liz Tavender is the first woman to perform the role in Queensland and the first woman to carry the mace into the chamber. I thank Stephen Finimore, the head of committees, for doing all the legwork on the important legislation that has been debated in this chamber. I also acknowledge the hard work of Michael Hickey, Director of Corporate and House Services; the Manager of Human Resource Services, Peter Morris; the Manager of Financial and Administrative Services, Craig Atkinson; the Manager of Information Technology Services, Mike Coburn and all of their respective officers, including executive support services, for the important contribution they have made to the smooth and efficient running of the parliament.

I also want to place on the record my appreciation and thanks to the hardworking and dedicated parliamentary attendants, so ably led by Angie, who on each sitting day, regardless of how late we sit, are here to ensure that the House ticks over and they always have a smile. Our Hansard reporters, who are ably led by Lucinda Osmond, do a wonderful job of capturing each word and sentence that is uttered in here and preserving them all for future generations. I thank the staff of the Table Office for always meeting every request with courtesy. I also thank the Chief Librarian, Katherine Brennan, and her staff along with the entire Parliamentary Counsel team, who never fail to give us their support.

Jaakko and his catering team keep us all fed while the Manager of Property Services, Darryl McCarthy, and the Gardening Services Supervisor, Chris King, keep the grounds pristine. Our cleaning supervisors—Azra and Sanja—and their staff ensure this place does not fall into a state of disrepair. I thank all of the staff. They do an outstanding job and we all thank them for the service they give day in, day out.

We do not always see eye to eye, but I must thank the media gallery, who keep Queenslanders informed of the goings-on in this chamber and beyond. In fact, I thank the media across the state in newsrooms and those out and about on the road in Townsville, Mount Isa, the Gold Coast and every place in-between for their absolute professionalism over the past year.

To my team in my Premier's office: thank you. Making the transition to government has not been without its challenges, but each of you has risen to the occasion and delivered above and beyond. Each of you have made hard sacrifices and each of you know that I am adamant that family must come first, so I thank you for frequently giving your time and acting with integrity and professionalism. In fact, I thank staff across each of my ministers' offices for their professional support to our government and I also thank my director-general, Dave Stewart, and all directors-general and the entire Public Service for the diligent way in which they carry out their work.

I must thank my electorate staff, who ensure that Inala is well served in my absences. Thanks to Mel, Charles and Matt for keeping the office ticking over. I thank the people of Inala for their continued trust and faith in me. I am so proud to serve this community, I am so proud to be part of this community and I will continue to work with you over the first term of my government.

I cannot sit down without thanking my family. Thanks to Shaun, my mother and father and sisters and my extended family for their support and advice and for their good humour. Being part of a political family is often not an easy ride, and I thank each of you for taking it in your stride.

Lastly I thank all members of parliament, including those opposite. In the end, we are all human with strengths and vulnerabilities. We each of us face significant challenges in our jobs on a daily basis. We each of us make significant sacrifices to serve our communities. We each of us frequently put our relationships, our families and our friends second so we can serve Queensland and so we can serve our communities. While we may be adversaries in this place, we share a common characteristic—our profession. We share a common goal—to serve our communities—so despite our differences we can

have an understanding of each other. I wish each member of this place a happy Christmas and a rewarding new year and hope that each of you can find some time to get away and spend time with your family and friends, just as I wish that for all Queenslanders. I look forward to a prosperous new year—a 2016 in which my government will continue to consult and collaborate and treat Queenslanders with dignity and respect and continue to steer a steady ship for each and every one of them.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

 **Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.45 pm): In rising to speak in this end of 2015 year parliamentary valedictory, I reflect upon the fact that we are able to do this—that in this state and in our country, like many other places around the world, we have the chance to be able to change the government at the ballot box and not at the point of a gun. Earlier this year there were many surprises. There were surprises for those on this side of the House and surprises for those on that side of the House. Indeed, I think that that is probably the magnificence and the majesty of democracy, because our future political prospects always rest, as they should, in the hands of the people of Queensland and they expressed their democratic view earlier this year and throughout this year we have been exercising the consequence of their democratic expression.

Many people say to me, ‘Why is it that members of parliament across the political divide can’t agree?’ It is always an interesting statistic when you go into a classroom or you speak to people about the fact that we do agree some 70 per cent or 80 per cent of the time in this place, but of course you have very few arguments about the things that you agree on. You only ever have an argument about the things that you disagree on, because if you want to argue about the things you agree on then you live in a very, very mucked up world. Indeed, only the other day I was at a Remembrance Day service in a small community in my area and I was listening to the clergy who was overseeing that particular service. He made the reflection that a number of years ago he was forced to leave a local square-dancing club that he was a part of because of the internal factions. I thought that that goes to show that the differences in the community permeate every particular level of community organisation.

I say by way of making that point that, regardless of which walk of life you come from, regardless of which organisation you are a part of, regardless of your political background, regardless of your ideology, regardless of your religion or regardless of your creed, there will always be different views and aspirations. Even within a particular side of politics you are going to have a contest of ideas as you seek to convince against a background of that ideology that your particular view is the one that should be considered as ascendant. That is the important thing about a democracy, but I just want to say that we should always consider that that is why we are in this place, because by and large we are motivated by what we believe is the right thing to do, even though there might be a different ideological basis. It is somewhat unfortunate that when people ask me as a member of parliament—indeed, no doubt which side of this parliament you are on—what drives you and what motivates you, you are inhibited. You somewhat almost feel embarrassed when you say that you want to make a difference, because for a lot of people that just sounds clichéd. But it is the reality as to why we come into this place and we should not be scared of saying that.

Mr Speaker, I acknowledge you and I acknowledge the significant role that you play and the fact that you have been elected as Speaker in this parliament as an Independent Speaker—someone who would not typically be elected to that particular high office. Indeed, Mr Speaker, we acknowledge the challenging role that you have to ensure that there is balance in this chair and that all sides and the crossbenches have a chance to be heard. I thank you very much for the role that you have played and, similarly, to the Deputy Speaker and the temporary chairs as well.

I acknowledge the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk and the assistant clerks for the role that they play in making sure that we are a little bit more informed as to the things that we may seek to do in this place, even though we seek to push the boundaries from time to time—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Both on the government and opposition side, I would say. Sometimes you get to learn the tricks of the trade in this place—not necessarily always wisely but, hopefully, mostly so.

I acknowledge the Premier and the challenges that any government would have regardless of the political circumstances of the election of a government and the issues and the demands that come on a government of the day. I acknowledge the Deputy Premier, the ministers—and the Leader of Government Business for his cooperation with the Leader of Opposition Business. During the course of this year I think there has been good cooperation in the parliament. To all of the other government members—those who serve in the various positions, whether that be on committees or otherwise—I wish them and their families a very merry and, hopefully, prosperous Christmas and new year.

To those on my side, I acknowledge my deputy, John-Paul Langbroek, for his support and also his encouragement during the course of the year. To my shadow ministers, many of whom had other agendas that they were hoping to pursue during the course of this year in government and who now have adapted to the expression of the will of the Queensland people, I believe they have adapted to their positions very well, both those who have continued in an incumbent position reflecting the reality of opposition and also those who have newly come into that position.

The whips on both sides of the House maintain a very important role. It is often an underappreciated position. In the past, I have had the responsibility of being a whip in both government and opposition, as a deputy whip and as a whip in a hung parliament, both in government and in opposition. That is not an easy thing to do. It really is not. I do not think that whips are always totally appreciated for the role that they play. As a former whip, I can say that I appreciate their role, even though their colleagues might not necessarily appreciate that from time to time.

To my entire LNP parliamentary team, I thank them very much for their support and the reality of the significant readjustment this year. Circumstances could have been different and I think that we close out the year in a much better position than we may have envisaged after 31 January this year. I thank very much all of the opposition staff for their assistance, their support, their contribution and the adjustment that they have had to make. As the Premier indicated earlier, her staff have had to make an adjustment into government. Our staff have had to make an adjustment into opposition. There are a couple of hundred who did not make an adjustment into opposition; they made an adjustment into places where we do not know. That is the reality for them as they do not have the same chance that a select few or a few others have had as they have come into opposition. So we acknowledge them and their families and wish them all the very best for Christmas.

To our own electorate staff—mine and all of those of my colleagues on this side, the crossbenches and also the members of the government—we thank them for the work that they do on our behalf. In many cases, whilst we are away they are the de facto member. I think that we need to show our appreciation for them as well.

I also acknowledge and thank our Hansard reporters who do a most remarkable job. I have heard things in this place that were incomprehensible. When I read it in *Hansard*, it reads like the Gettysburg Address. They do a magnificent job in Hansard. The late great Tom Burns once wanted to fit a 15-minute speech into five minutes and he did—at around about 400 words a minute. The poor old Hansard reporters were almost apoplectic. But they managed to get it down and it was extraordinary. Tom was a fairly fast talker, but he was a double- or triple- fast talker that night. They do an absolutely wonderful job.

I thank all of the committee staff and the secretariat for what they do. Committees are an important part of this parliament. They are part of the transparency. They are a check and balance—and they need to be. The role of those committees will continue to grow in importance, depending upon the referendum on four-year terms, which will happen next year. Committees play critically important roles.

To all of our friends—those who have supported us in finance, in IT, the switchboard, corporate and administrative services and our gardeners who keep this place so beautiful—we thank them very much for looking after us and making us feel as though this is our home away from home. The catering staff are also very cheery and also look after us. One of the things that I have noticed in this place over a long period is that that sense of discretion that should go with consuming nutrition does not always apply to members of parliament. But given the wonderful spreads and the opportunities that are provided to us by our magnificent catering staff, I really cannot blame them. I thank all in housekeeping and property services as well. A moment ago I mentioned the committee staff, but I also wish the Table Office staff, the Library and Education Services staff a great Christmas as well.

I thank the Governor of Queensland, the Hon. Paul de Jersey and his wife, Kaye, for the very energetic, very committed, very dedicated and very personal way in which they undertake their vice-regal role in Queensland. Indeed, earlier this year when the Governor was called upon in quite remarkable circumstances to maintain a sense of calm and order, I salute him for what he did as he made the only decision that, at the end of the day, he was able to make. So I wish His Excellency, Kaye and all of their family the very best and also to those who serve his needs.

I join with the Premier in acknowledging those Queenslanders who are doing it tough, whether they are doing it tough as a consequence of drought, flood or other very difficult personal circumstances. There will be many Queenslanders, probably thousands, who will not have the opportunity to enjoy a Christmas to the same extent that we hope to be able to enjoy Christmas with our friends and family. Those people who are doing it tough certainly have the thoughts, prayers and best wishes of the opposition.

Whilst we do not always necessarily agree with their representation, our friends in the fourth estate play a very important role as well. On balance, I think in recent times they have been doing a pretty good job. But they also struggle, as we do, with the reality that the world is a changing place. The way information is disseminated today is vastly different. That in itself creates challenges for them and also for us. We need to understand that, as much as we might grizzle and gripe, they are a very important arm of the accountability process. They are a check on the legislature and a check on the executive.

To all of our LNP members, to our outgoing former president Bruce McIver and Gary Spence, I thank them for their support as well. Before I touch on my own family, I ask members to spare a thought for former colleagues. Even though, on this particular occasion, we had many more former colleagues than the opposite side—and they had far more than we did in 2012—we often do not think about them and what they have been through. They are similarly dedicated to service. Some were privileged to return to this place the last time. Unfortunately, when our former colleagues lose their position in parliament there is not much empathy, there is not much thought and there is not much compassion. There is not even a paradigm that views them with any great degree of humanity. A lot of people feel as though they deserved what they got. Regardless of which side those former members are on, I do not think that is necessarily fair, because they come in here with a sense of service and contribution and they are not necessarily recognised in that way when they leave this place. Of course, there will be many of those former members who will still be undergoing some soul-searching and difficulty. Regardless of which side they are on, I ask that we spare some time for them.

I thank my wife Linda and my four children for their very, very loyal support, particularly my wife who has basically single-handedly raised our family as I have been away. I think I calculated earlier this year that I have made some 5,000 telephone calls home in the night-time in the time that I have been in this place. That does not fill me with any great sense of pride, but that is the reality of the job that I do, the separation that we have and the distances that we have to cover to serve our constituents and the people of Queensland. Those conversations with my children were always very predictable: 'How are you going?' 'Good.' 'How was school?' 'Good.' 'What did you do?' 'Nothing.' 'Then what is the point in sending you to school?' After four and a half thousand phone calls it is a bit hard to think of something new during the course of the day.

Mr Speaker, again I thank all members of parliament for their contribution in this place and take the opportunity to wish yourself, all members and all of our wonderful staff and the people of Queensland the very best during this festive season. And for those who have not enjoyed the best 2015, may 2016 be much better for them.

 **Mr KATTER** (Mount Isa—KAP) (3.00 pm): I rise to make a contribution from the crossbench. With the type of parliament that we have it has been a very interesting year for us. Firstly, I would like to say that we are very appreciative of the quality of the debate of the parliament as a whole and the way the debates have been conducted. It is rare to think of examples when it was not conducted in the spirit which is intended in this place. I do not think it has lost any of the robustness or, at times, aggression that is expected of members. I think there has been a healthy balance in the battle of ideologies, ideas and people's positions. I think there has been strong evidence of decent debate here this year which we certainly appreciate.

Recently we have spoken about rural MPs—which account for all of us on the crossbench—spending a lot of time driving, but that is not to in any way devalue the time that everyone in this House spends. We certainly do not have the mortgage on hard work just because we drive long distances. We acknowledge everyone in this House works very hard, often at substantial cost to their own personal lives and that of their families. I acknowledge that at the outset.

In relation to the government and its leadership in the last 12 months, we are very appreciative of the way the Premier has conducted her team and in particular her dealings towards us on the crossbench and those in the community. We are very appreciative of her and her leadership team and we are very grateful for that.

The contributions of the opposition leadership to debates and the way that the team has conducted itself this year has been very much appreciated and been in the spirit of this place. Further to that, the way we have been engaged by both leadership teams has been very much appreciated. It has given us the ability to engage in the debate in a meaningful manner and in almost all cases to the point where we feel we have a good understanding of the issues and what is behind the issues up for debate. I would like to think that that has helped contribute to strong, robust debate.

I would briefly like to acknowledge the precinct staff. It almost goes without saying, because since my time here the standard of service has always been exceptional. It comes as no surprise to me that many of the staff here remember when I was running around as a little kid when my dad was here. I bring that up because many of the staff have been here a long time. They are retained because they are good and they stay because they like working here. The way we treat them is probably a reflection of the way the staff treat us. I find the level of service and standard of this workplace excellent.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Mr KATTER: To my colleagues on the crossbenches, it is a funny position we are in. We often have the benefit of a bit more freedom or liberty to speak, but it also comes with its limitations. We are often flying by the seat of our pants. The effort and the work that has gone into us working together as best we can to try to get across the many issues that come before this place is very much appreciated. The latitude we are afforded in terms of committees and the various events that are on around the place that we try to get to is appreciated. I feel that we are applied a certain amount of latitude given that there can be often very heavy workloads in this area.

I quickly acknowledge our office staff. We both have terrific electorate staff and very effective office staff here in Brisbane. They have done a wonderful job for us this year. I would like to publicly thank them for that and mention in particular one staffer, Sarah Harvey, who received a letter from Peter Morris about her 10 years of service, which is something we are very proud of.

I acknowledge the media's presence here. I very much appreciate the tough moments and the interest and effort that they go to. Whilst we might not always be happy with the result, I am satisfied that they put a lot of effort and work into trying to cover the events and the activities that we have and acknowledge the very important role they play reporting in this place.

I would like to also mention the past members of the House. I think we all benefit from visits and interaction with them. A number of past members are quite happy to engage and off-load some of their quiet wisdom over the years. Many of those past members still contribute and I acknowledge that.

I have mentioned it briefly already, but I acknowledge people's families. Growing up in a political family I know the cost. Members spend much time here. To those members with families waiting for you at home, I am thankful and grateful for the time that you spend here. The public do not realise the sacrifices that you make and the cost to your personal life and family. Whatever background or political party we belong to, it has become more apparent to me now as a sitting member what the real cost of that is. It should be especially acknowledged at this time; it is a priority because it is one of the burdens that we have as a representative. With that, I wish all members a happy and holy Christmas. I hope that all members spend valuable time with family and loved ones in this break.

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (3.09 pm): I rise to make a small contribution. Robbie has basically covered everything that I would have said. However, I would say that this year we have not all had it our own way. Sometimes we need to be content with our lot. I acknowledge the opposition. There is no doubt that they have risen to the occasion, especially when it comes to robust debate in this House. I acknowledge the Premier and what she said at the time of the Ravenshoe tragedy. I thank the Premier, the government ministers and the departmental staff for their professionalism and dedication and for all the work that they did at that time. I cannot fault their response during that specific moment of tragedy in my electorate. I bring that to the attention of the House.

Today, the parliament reminds me of the battle of Flanders, back in World War I. It was close to Christmas, and the English and the Germans were in fierce battle. But on Christmas Day, candles were lit, carols were sung and a football game was played. Even though they were at war, they came together for that specific moment. This debate is our opportunity. We have been in a big battle this year, but this is an opportunity to enjoy the moment. Together, we can share this festive season.

 **Mr SPEAKER:** I join members in saying thank you. I thank all members for their contribution to the parliament. I thank our Premier, ministers and members of her government, the Leader of the Opposition and opposition members, and the crossbench members. I acknowledge the good working relationship between the Leader of the House and the Leader of Opposition Business. I thank them for their professional approach to the running of the business of the House. We have all benefitted from that. I thank members of the Committee of the Legislative Assembly for their assistance in making important decisions relating to our parliament and its precinct. I thank the Deputy Speaker, Ms Grace Grace, for her support and also the panel of temporary chairs who have done an excellent job during the year.

I too take this opportunity to thank the hardworking staff of the Parliamentary Services. I thank the Clerk, Mr Neil Laurie, for his wise advice and support throughout the year, which he provides not only to me but also to all members. Sometimes I wonder how those Chinese walls can operate, but they do operate, believe you me! I thank the Deputy Clerk, Mr Michael Ries, and the Director of Corporate Services, Mr Michael Hickey. I acknowledge their contribution to the Executive Management Group. The parliament is very fortunate to be supported by a very dedicated and committed parliamentary service, as has already been acknowledged. I also acknowledge the professionalism of the service area managers. I thank every staff member for the excellent job they do.

This year will see the departure of the supervising executive assistant in the members' executive support team, Ms Brenda Binotto. Today's unexpected Friday sitting is Brenda's last sitting day and I am informed that, ironically, it is the first sitting day she has missed in 27 years. On behalf of everyone, I thank Brenda for her dedication and diligence. I wish her well in retirement. I also note that four long-term members of our security team left the service earlier this year. I thank each of them for their service. I acknowledge the generous service of the Honorary Parliamentary Research Fellow, Dr Paul Reynolds, as he leaves us for the next phase of his retirement.

I thank the parliamentary press gallery for their reporting of the proceedings of the parliament. I acknowledge the vital role that the press gallery plays.

I join other members in thanking our electorate officers and assistant electorate officers. I am sure I speak for all members in acknowledging the vital and often difficult role played by our staff. I appreciate the diligence of my team that serves the electorate of Nicklin: Vicki, Lynelle and Paul. I also acknowledge Ms Danielle Cooper, my research and legislation officer, who works from parliament. I especially acknowledge the Speaker's Office manager, Roylene Mills, and our executive assistant, Gail Easton, for their hard work in attending to all matters involving the Speaker's Office.

Finally, I thank my wife, Jenny, for her unfailing support for me in my roles as a local member and as Speaker. Were it not for her, I would not be here. I acknowledge the important role that families and partners play in the lives of all members, as we work together for the benefit of Queensland.

I wish all members a safe and peaceful Christmas. As is the tradition, I invite members and all who are regularly and closely associated with the parliament to join me for an end-of-session function in the Speaker's Hall to—as Taylor Swift would say—shake it off! But members, there is more: I look forward to the Deputy Premier being there. Unfortunately, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is unable to be with us tonight because he has another engagement, so the member for Mermaid Beach has volunteered to step in. Members, we have the music! I am required to inform all members that Speaker's drinks will be available at the Speaker's Hall.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT



Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE (Sandgate—ALP) (Leader of the House) (3.15 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 3.15 pm.

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, Last, Lauga, Leahy, Linard, 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, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Trad, Walker, Watts, Weir, Wellington, Whiting, Williams