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FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

Tuesday, 1 December 2020

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TUESDAY, 1 DECEMBER 2020



The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

Mr Speaker (Hon. Curtis Pitt, Mulgrave) read prayers and took the chair.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I respectfully acknowledge that we are sitting today on the land of Aboriginal people and pay my respects to elders past and present. I thank them, as First Australians, for their careful custodianship of the land over countless generations. We are very fortunate in this country to have two of the world's oldest continuing living cultures in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples whose lands, winds and waters we all now share.

PETITIONS

The Clerk presented the following e-petitions, sponsored by the honourable members indicated—

Coomera, Police Resources

Mr Crandon, from 242 petitioners, requesting the House to fast track the provision of 35 additional police officers in the Coomera Police Division [\[281\]](#).

Ormeau-Coomera, Bus Services

Mr Crandon, from 76 petitioners, requesting the House to fast track the upgrade to bus services between Ormeau Railway Station and Coomera Railway Station [\[282\]](#).

Coomera Railway Station, Park-and-Ride

Mr Crandon, from 86 petitioners, requesting the House to fast track the business cases for the Coomera Railway Station park 'n' ride [\[283\]](#).

Ormeau-Pimpama, Bus Services

Mr Crandon, from 61 petitioners, requesting the House to fast track the provision of a regular daily bus service to enable people to connect to the transport hub of Ormeau and the nearby Pimpama shopping precinct [\[284\]](#).

M1, Exit 49

Mr Crandon, from 254 petitioners, requesting the House to undertake improvements to Exit 49 of the M1 at Pimpama as part of the COVID-19 Economic Recovery plan [\[285\]](#).

Pimpama Railway Station, Construction

Mr Crandon, from 108 petitioners, requesting the House to fast track the construction of the Pimpama Railway Station [\[286\]](#).

M1, Exit 41

Mr Crandon, from 74 petitioners, requesting the House to undertake improvements to Exit 41 of the M1 as part of the COVID-19 Economic Recovery plan [\[287\]](#).

Beenleigh-Ormeau, Bus Services

Mr Crandon, from 56 petitioners, requesting the House to fast track the essential upgrade to bus services between Beenleigh Railway Station and Ormeau Railway Station [\[288\]](#).

Petitions received.

TABLED PAPERS

PAPERS TABLED DURING THE RECESS (SO 31)

The Clerk informed the House that the following papers, received during the recess, were tabled on the dates indicated—

27 November 2020—

[263](#) Auditor-General Report 8: 2020-21—Regulating firearms

[264](#) Response from the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning (Hon. Dr Miles), to an ePetition (3401-20) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 402 petitioners, requesting the House to appoint a Financial Controller to the Cassowary Coast Regional Council or appoint an Interim Administrator to ensure the council carries out its responsibilities in compliance with the relevant legislation

- [265](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly from the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities (Hon. Furner) pursuant to section 56A of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, regarding the Agricultural Chemicals Distribution Control Regulation 1998 and the Sugar Industry Regulation 2010
- [266](#) Economics and Governance Committee: Report No. 47, 56th Parliament—Inquiry into the feasibility of introducing expenditure caps for Queensland local government elections, government response
- [267](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly from the Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement (Hon. de Brenni) pursuant to section 56A of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, regarding the Building Regulation 2006
- [268](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly from the Treasurer and Minister for Investment (Hon. Dick) pursuant to section 56A of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, regarding the Petroleum and Gas (Royalty) Regulation 2004
- [269](#) Response from the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services (Hon. Ryan), to an ePetition (3385-20) sponsored by the member for Broadwater, Mr Crisafulli, from 850 petitioners, requesting the House to relocate the Broadwater Police Beat resources from the Coomera Police District to the Runaway Bay Police District and increase the permanent police staffing allocation for the Northern Gold Coast
- [270](#) Response from the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services (Hon. Ryan), to an ePetition (3388-20) sponsored by the member for Hinchinbrook, Mr Dametto, from 787 petitioners, requesting the House to accept the recommendation of the Queensland Ombudsman and add Senior Sergeant Michael Isles to the Police Honour Roll and to enable consideration on merit of other serving police officers whose loss of life can be attributed to suicide being added to the Police Honour Roll
- [271](#) Response from the Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services (Hon. Ryan), to an ePetition (3397-20) sponsored by the Clerk under provisions of Standing Order 119(4) from 317 petitioners, requesting the House to follow up and make public the results of the investigation into an accident that occurred in Townsville on Thursday 30 January 2020 at 7.45 am in which a motorcycle rider was killed

30 November 2020—

- [272](#) Economics and Governance Committee: Report No. 1, 57th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 17 June 2020 and 14 July 2020
- [273](#) Transport and Resources Committee: Report No. 1, 57th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 10 July 2020 and 5 October 2020
- [274](#) Office of the Work Health and Safety Prosecutor—Annual Report 2019-20
- [275](#) Queensland Government: 2019-20 Report on State Finances of the Queensland Government—30 June 2020
- [276](#) Report to the Legislative Assembly from the Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts (Hon. Enoch) pursuant to section 56A of the Statutory Instruments Act 1992, regarding the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Regulation 2009
- [277](#) Health and Environment Committee: Report No. 1, 57th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled on 14 July 2020
- [278](#) State Development and Regional Industries Committee: Report No. 1, 57th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled between 7 July 2020 and 3 August 2020
- [279](#) Legal Affairs and Safety Committee: Report No. 1, 57th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled on 14 July 2020
- [280](#) Queensland Government: The Queensland Plan Annual Progress Report 2019-20

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS (SO 32)

SPEAKER'S PAPER

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

Speaker of the Legislative Assembly (Hon. Pitt)—

- [289](#) Oaths or Affirmations of Allegiance taken by members of the 57th Parliament

MEMBER'S PAPER

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

Member for Coomera (Mr Crandon)—

- [290](#) Nonconforming petition regarding the reinstatement of the bus route to service Lewani Palms Over 50's Resort at Goldmine Road

REPORT BY THE CLERK

The following report was tabled by the Clerk—

- [291](#) Report of clerical errors detailing amendments to Standing and Sessional Orders and the Record of Proceedings, made by the Clerk, viz—

Sessional Order 1—Days and Hours of Sitting and Order of Business—

At Tuesday '11.55am'—

Omit, Insert—

'11.35am'.

Sessional Orders—

References to 'Sessional Order 2B'—

Replace—

'Sessional Order 4'.

Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly, Schedule 6—

'Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for Prevention and Family and Domestic Violence'—

Omit, Insert—

'Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence'.

Record of Proceedings, 26 November 2020 proof, pp 147-148—

'Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for Prevention and Family and Domestic Violence'—

Omit, Insert—

'Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence'.

Record of Proceedings, 26 November 2020 proof, p 149—

'Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs (Children and Youth Justice):

3pm—4:45pm'

Omit, Insert—

'Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs (Children and Youth Justice):

3.30pm—4:45pm'

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Coronavirus, Queensland Border



Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.33 am): Today is very special. Families are back in each other's arms, and we pray another of COVID's cruelties is put behind us. As we speak, the final scene of *Love Actually* is being recreated in our airports complete with the soundtrack. Happy tears are flowing and, most importantly, everyone is safe.

I am informed traffic on the M1 is flowing well but patience will be required as concrete barriers are removed later today. I want to thank our police, fire and armed services who have helped keep Queensland safe. Since the start of the pandemic more than one million vehicles have been stopped, nearly 21,000 people have been turned away, 631,000 passengers have been processed at airports and 46,200 people have been processed through hotel quarantine. It is unfortunate we are not yet able to add travellers from Adelaide, but Dr Young will reassess that in the coming week.

It has indeed been a long, hard year. Thanks to the hard work and sacrifice of every single Queenslanders, we will end it with more to hope for than to fear. Today, Queensland has again recorded no new COVID cases. It is our 77th day without community transfer or, as my niece would prefer, 77 donuts. We have further eased restrictions, increasing the number allowed to gather outdoors from 50 to 100.

Yesterday, arts minister Leeanne Enoch announced another Queensland first: *Shrek The Musical* will be the first Australian theatre production to perform to a full house.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Do not start, member for Kawana. It is too tempting.

Mr Bleijie: Plenty of people could play the donkey over there!

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Kawana. Unless it is a flying, talking donkey I do not want to hear about it.

Ms PALASZCZUK: *Shrek The Musical* will be the first Australian theatre production to perform to a full house.

Each day also brings more encouraging news of a vaccine. Today, with our budget, we firmly chart the course back to economic recovery. There is one number, however, that we should never forget. When the pandemic was at its worst, 28,500 Queenslanders volunteered to be part of our wonderful Care Army. They are the kind of people we have in this state. That is what gives me hope for a better year ahead.

Budget

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.36 am): This afternoon, the Treasurer will bring down his first budget and our sixth. It will continue the task we have been doing this year: planning and delivering Queensland's economic recovery and growth after COVID-19. It will confirm that jobs—existing ones and new ones—will be protected and increased in the year ahead. Our budget process and timetable were made clear to the people of Queensland. We said we would bring down a COVID-19 fiscal and economic review before the election and then a full budget after that if we were fortunate enough to be re-elected and in line with national cabinet's decisions. That is exactly what we are doing. There are no surprises here.

Our budget builds on the momentum from our economic recovery plan and will frame the delivery of our election commitments. Our economic recovery plan is working. The budget will detail that 160,000 jobs are expected to be created in Queensland over the year to the June quarter 2021. This is great news. Many of these jobs will come from building the schools, roads and hospitals our state needs.

The budget will be delivering the 6,100 more teachers, almost 9,500 more health staff and the over 2,000 more police we have promised. There will be funding to progress projects and programs throughout the state: in Cairns, the marine precinct and a film studio; in Townsville, Drive IT and the Lansdown industrial precinct; in the north-west, CopperString and a drone-testing facility; in Mackay, the Harrup Park redevelopment and a manufacturing hub; in Rockhampton, a new cardiac theatre and training centre of excellence at CQU; in Maryborough, train manufacturing; on the Sunshine Coast, the stadium; and on the Gold Coast, the second M1—just to name a few.

This budget is possible because we have weathered the COVID economic storm because our health response in this state has been so strong. Once again, I congratulate the Deputy Premier for his outstanding work leading that health response. I know the new health minister, Yvette D'Ath, will do an excellent job as well. Our border decisions have helped. By keeping borders closed when we needed to, we kept community transmission under control and kept our local economy going. Now, reopening to New South Wales and Victoria at the right time will see more economic activity. In addition, as the Treasurer has pointed out, our balance sheet is stronger than those of our competitors. Our finances are better because of our fiscal strategy. That will be seen in today's budget figures.

It has been a long year but we are not finished yet. We remain focused on the job that voters have assigned us to do. Today's budget will create and support jobs, back businesses, build infrastructure, provide services and prepare us for the year ahead.

My government is also accountable to Queenslanders by clearly setting out—and tabling—our objectives. In our third term, our objectives build on the platform provided in *Unite & recover: Queensland's economic recovery plan*. The priorities are: safeguarding our health, supporting increased jobs, backing small business, building Queensland, growing our regions, investing in skills, backing our frontline services and protecting the environment.

In accordance with the Financial Accountability Act 2009, I table the government's statement of objectives for the community—unite and recover.

Tabled paper: Queensland Government Unite & Recover: Document titled 'Statement of the Queensland's Government's objectives for the community' [292].

Renewable Energy

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.39 am): On this side of the House we know that renewables mean jobs. That is why my government has a 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2030. Today I am proud to announce that, for the first time in history, Queensland has reached more than 20 per cent renewable generation.

Since being elected, we have committed to 44 renewable energy projects throughout the state, worth around \$8.5 billion to our economy and creating 7,000 construction jobs—projects like the Mount Emerald Wind Farm in the state's far north, creating 150 construction jobs and pumping 180 megawatts of energy into the grid; Lilyvale Solar Farm in Central Queensland, supporting 200 construction jobs and generating 100 megawatts of energy; and the Clermont Solar Farm in the Mackay Isaac Whitsunday region, creating 150 local jobs and generating 75 megawatts of energy.

There is plenty more where that came from. We have 30,000 megawatts worth of projects in the pipeline including 36 projects in the Far North, 27 in Central Queensland and 33 in the Mackay Isaac Whitsunday region. These projects are backed up with our \$500 million Queensland Renewable Energy Fund to directly invest in renewable energy generation, as well as \$145 million to open up new renewable zones.

Investing in renewables not only makes environmental sense but also makes economic sense, with Queensland now having the lowest power prices on the east coast of Australia. Now we are seeing new work progress to turn our solar and wind energy into exportable hydrogen. We will continue to partner with the private sector to rebuild our economy, create jobs for Queenslanders and achieve our target of 50 per cent renewable energy in the next decade.

Coronavirus, Queensland Border

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning) (9.41 am): Today is a great day—the day we have been waiting for, the day that our borders open to all of New South Wales and Victoria. Queensland's economic recovery is taking off today, and with that will come more jobs for Queenslanders.

Today over 6,000 people are expected to travel through Brisbane Airport. On Easter Sunday this year there were just 31 arrivals at Brisbane Airport—not 31 flights but 31 people. For a while now we have had Queensland all to ourselves. Now we are ready to welcome our southern neighbours who have done a fantastic job also suppressing the virus in their states. Queensland is good to go for summer.

Virgin has said that they will have over 38,000 seats from Victoria and 65,000 seats from New South Wales by Christmas. Qantas and Jetstar will add more than 1,200 extra return flights into Queensland from New South Wales and Victoria in the lead-up to Christmas. Some travel agents are reporting that bookings for Queensland holidays are up by 300 per cent. Accommodation providers in some parts of Queensland have seen inquiries go through the roof. One Gold Coast hotel has reportedly diverted 30 staff from their usual duties just to answer the phones.

Family and friends visiting from New South Wales and Victoria are expected to inject billions of dollars into the Queensland economy—more businesses open and more people in work all thanks to our fantastic health response. Today truly is a momentous day for Queensland. Our border barriers are down. Let us hope we never have to see them again.

Water Security

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning) (9.43 am): Queenslanders have always been among the best in the world when it comes to battling natural disasters. We have pulled together this year to fight bushfires and a once-in-a-century pandemic. The Bureau of Meteorology recently confirmed that Australia is expected to experience above average rainfall with an increased risk of widespread flooding throughout summer. As always, Queensland is expected to bear the brunt of it. While the extra rain will be welcome news for Queensland's farmers, we must all be prepared for the risks associated with increased rainfall.

With the increased risk of widespread rainfall and flooding, the safety of Queensland's dams is critical. I can advise the House that Queensland is well prepared. Our dams are capable of safely enduring significant floods. Each dam has an emergency action plan and Queensland's major dams have also been working with local disaster management groups to carry out preparatory exercises.

Sunwater and Seqwater have continued to invest in major dam upgrades to ensure they remain safe. In South-East Queensland the major storages of Wivenhoe, Somerset and North Pine dams are all operating with reduced supply levels to increase their overall level of safety for the coming wet season. The water grid is moving water around to where it is needed now. For example, water is being pumped from Wivenhoe Dam to Toowoomba to ensure demand can continue to be met. If we do not receive the rain we are expecting to, we are well prepared for that too. We are prepared for all scenarios—rain, hail or shine.

Coronavirus, Queensland Border

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (9.44 am): Today is historic. After 250 days, Queensland's borders are open again to most of the nation. This has been a marathon community safety effort, especially by our police and emergency service personnel. At one o'clock this morning police shut down their border checkpoints.

Our police and emergency service personnel, including our Queensland Fire and Emergency Services officers and volunteers and staff from the Department of Transport and Main Roads, have been working hard to keep all Queenslanders safe by maintaining these strong border controls. The

results speak for themselves: Queensland has had no community transmission for months. That is largely because of the work police and other agencies have done at our borders, at our airports and in our quarantine hotels. Mr Speaker, you do not have to look far to see what happens when you get any of those things wrong. The work of our police and other agencies has been supported wonderfully by the people of Queensland.

Queenslanders have done the right thing. Now, because of everyone's good work, we are open again. Once again, the wonders of Queensland are open for all to enjoy, with the exception for the moment of people from South Australia. I am sure that in due course they will be welcomed back as well.

Bushfires

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (9.46 am): There are always new challenges. The heatwave currently sweeping across large parts of Queensland is sparking very high fire dangers. It is a challenge for our firefighters and Rural Fire Service volunteers, but they are up to the task. They are using every means at their disposal.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services stepped in as the lead agency to support the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service in their firefighting efforts on 27 November last Friday on Fraser Island. As a result, there are now more than 75 Queensland Fire and Emergency Services personnel on site actively engaged in firefighting. They are supported by 21 firefighting aircraft and more than 30 fire trucks.

The large air tanker, the LAT, has been deployed to the island and conducted two further drops yesterday to strengthen containment lines. In fact, I have been advised that almost one million litres of water and gel have been dropped on Fraser Island in the last few days alone. More drops are occurring across the affected area today and until the fire is put out. The LAT has regularly been used to contain this fire. I commend the firefighting efforts to date.

Fraser Island is one of about 30 bushfires burning across the state. The Fraser Island fire is the biggest and it is probably the most challenging environment as well. The fire has burnt more than 80,000 hectares on the island. I have had further talks this morning with fire authorities and have flagged that I will be speaking with the Inspector-General Emergency Management to ensure that all possible reviews can be done to make sure that we continue to learn from natural disasters and our response to it.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Kawana is warned under the standing orders.

Mr RYAN: Our Queensland Fire and Emergency Services is recognised as world-class and they are nation leading in so many ways. They will stop at nothing to protect people and property from natural disasters.

Coronavirus, Health Services

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (9.48 am): I am pleased to advise the House, as the Premier and the Deputy Premier have done today, that again we have had no new cases in the past 24 hours. We now have only 10 active cases and all of those individuals are in hospital. A total of 3,678 tests have been conducted in the past 24 hours. Again, I remind and encourage people if they are feeling unwell and have any symptoms that relate to COVID, even mild symptoms, to go and get tested.

This is against the very sad backdrop of more than 1.46 million coronavirus deaths globally. To put that into perspective, there have been over 63 million positive cases around the world. In the United States, in states like New York and New Jersey almost one-third of those positive cases have died. Almost one in three people who have tested positive in those states has died. I encourage Queenslanders to continue to do the right thing: wash your hands; continue to physically distance; check in at venues; and get tested if you are unwell.

I will now turn to an Australian health care first: this government's commitment to a \$265 million investment in seven satellite hospitals in South-East Queensland. I am pleased to advise the House that service planning is already underway to ensure that the right services are provided to the

community at the right place and at the right time. Our new satellite hospitals will provide the people of the south-east corner with public health facilities close to home from Brisbane to Ipswich and Tugun in the furthest corner of South-East Queensland. This is critical considering the growth we are experiencing in South-East Queensland and which we expect in coming years. Most importantly, as we seek to recover from the global pandemic these hospitals will create up to 768 jobs in total during construction. As well as Tugun the new facilities will be located in Brisbane south near the QEII, Pine Rivers to service the outer Brisbane north area, and Bribie Island, Caboolture, Ipswich and the Redlands.

These satellite hospitals will provide services tailored to the needs of their local communities. They can provide ambulatory and simple day therapy services such as renal dialysis, chemotherapy, complex wound management and urgent care for minor injuries and illness. They can also include outpatient services and community based health services such as child and youth health services and aged and frail care services. These hospitals will incorporate nursing and midwifery and allied health and GPs, with virtual health appointments for quick access to medical consultations. They will also provide virtual health opportunities, including a range of rapid access consults, care coordination, remote monitoring and patient literacy services. Not only will they deliver care close to home; they will also take pressure off nearby major hospitals. The Palaszczuk government's continuing investment in health will see our state-of-the-art public health system continue to innovate and adapt to our growing population and its complex health needs.

Senior School Students

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (9.49 am): It goes without saying that for everyone across the world this has been a year like no other, but spare a thought for our year 12 students of 2020. This group was the first full cohort to do prep, the first group of year 7s to go to high school, the first cohort to study the new QCE system and the first recent year 12s to go through a global health pandemic. The new QCE system has been the biggest reform to Queensland's senior schooling in decades, but if anyone was going to deal with this change during a global health pandemic it was this group of incredible students.

Let's not forget that during term 2 these students learned from home for three weeks, all while preparing for the first ever external exams. Many of them missed out on familiar rites of passage such as formals, sporting competitions and schoolies, but as ever this group of nearly 50,000 senior students took it all in their stride. Of course we reacted quickly to ensure that no student would be disadvantaged by reducing the number of assessments required to be completed from four to three, and our great health response—led by the Premier—meant that end-of-year formals and graduations were able to go ahead.

I also want to pay tribute to the teachers who helped get them through this difficult year, particularly those who assisted with the marking of the new external exams. This was an entirely different process to years gone by. For example, tens of thousands of English essays needed to be double marked by nearly 400 teachers. That is more than 30 million words that needed to be examined over the course of a few weeks. I want to thank the Queensland Curriculum Assessment Authority for their years of work in preparing for this change. The QCAA provided 670 face-to-face workshops as well as online professional learning opportunities to more than 21,500 teachers, and our investment in this was well received.

Mr Speaker, I could not be more proud of our seniors. While it may not have been the year they hoped for, I am sure it will be one they will never forget. Best wishes to all students in the next chapter of your lives. Whether that includes tertiary study, TAFE, a trade, work or training, we in this House wish you all the very best.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Tourism Industry

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Tourism Industry Development and Innovation and Minister for Sport) (9.54 am): While celebrating the opening of the border today to greater Sydney and Victoria, we should also acknowledge the great effort of Queenslanders in kickstarting the economic recovery of our state's tourism industry. Thank you to the Queenslanders who packed a bag and rallied for a great holiday experience at home here in our vast and diverse state. Before the border reopening, our Good to Go campaign had already generated \$1.5 billion for tourism

as Queenslanders flocked to spoil themselves in many of Australia's favourite holiday destinations and support local businesses. Queensland is 'good to go' because of our strong action on the borders, keeping Queenslanders safe from COVID.

While Queenslanders ought to be congratulated on taking that well-earned holiday, the Palaszczuk government's \$15 million Aviation Recovery Fund has been another important contributor to the tourism industry's recovery plan. Together with the announcement of the re-opening of the border to New South Wales and Victoria, Australia's airlines are giving our Good to Go campaign the lift-off that we want. Brisbane's inaugural non-quarantine flight touched down in the early hours of this morning, the first of some 113,000 inbound seats this week alone into the capital. This is an increase in capacity of 30 per cent on last week. Mr Speaker, 213,000 inbound seats will fly into Queensland airports this week, up 48,500 seats on the week before, including: 26,000 seats into Cairns, up by 24 per cent; Proserpine, a 39 per cent increase; Gold Coast seats are up 203 per cent; seats into the Sunshine Coast are up by 208 per cent; and this week there has been a 29 per cent boost in the number of seats landing on Hamilton Island alone. Queensland is good to go for flights, jobs and the fast-tracking of our economy.

Youth Justice

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (9.56 am): As a government we are committed to ensuring our community is safe and that every child and young person in Queensland is given the opportunity to be the best they can be. Our approach is evidence based, with a record investment in youth justice. Results are encouraging but there is no silver bullet for the very small number of young people who are high-risk offenders. We make no apologies for building 33 per cent more detention centre beds to keep communities safe while at the same time investing in therapeutic approaches to stop offending.

As Minister for Children and Youth Justice, I look forward to working with communities, families, young people, frontline workers and service providers to hold young offenders to account and keep our communities safe. It is important that we do this while ensuring young people have access to early intervention programs that will reconnect them with the education, culture, their families and the health services needed to prevent them from committing crimes and help them transition into the community as productive members of society.

A couple of weeks ago I took the opportunity to visit frontline staff from youth justice and child safety to hear firsthand about the important work they do. I met members of the Townsville co-responder team who are doing fantastic work on the ground to reduce youth crime. It is great to see police and youth justice workers rostered together 24/7 to stop offending. I also met with youth detention workers at the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre along with my colleague the member for Townsville, Scott Stewart, and frontline child safety and youth justice staff in Townsville and Brisbane. They work in challenging environments with young people from very traumatic backgrounds. Importantly, it was encouraging to hear examples of young people returning to training and employment.

Staff are dedicated and committed to doing all they can to keep the community safe and give these young people a chance at a better life. They are backed up by this government, which has delivered more than half a billion dollars of investment in youth justice reform. This has meant new early intervention programs and programs that connect young people to the right services. As a result, the number of young people committing offences in this state has gone down. We have seen a 30 per cent drop across the state since 2010 and a 23 per cent drop in 2019-20.

What we are left with is a hardcore group of repeat offenders—the 10 per cent who commit almost half of youth crime in Queensland. The whole of government—police, youth justice, child safety, health and education—is focused on that 10 per cent of repeat offenders. In order to keep our communities safe, we will keep working together across government and the community. Everyone has a role to play.

Single-Use Plastics; Fraser Island, Bushfire

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs) (9.59 am): It is the last straw for single-use plastics. The Palaszczuk government is getting on with the job, and this week we will reintroduce legislation to deliver on our commitment to Queenslanders to ban single-use plastic items. When it comes to protecting our environment and the jobs that depend on it, the Palaszczuk government has a strong track record. We banned single-use plastic bags, we introduced the highly successful Containers for Change program, and now we are taking the next important step of banning single-use plastics like straws and stirrers.

Importantly, we have consulted broadly to ensure that these changes reflect what Queenslanders want. In March 2020 we asked Queenslanders to decide the future of single-use plastics. The overwhelming majority were in favour of a ban, with 94 per cent of the 20,000 responders supporting the proposal to ban single-use plastic items. During the election campaign, our government committed to undertaking further consultation with the community and businesses about the inclusion of polystyrene containers in the ban. I am pleased to report to the House that consultation got underway this week on this important issue and will remain open until 15 January 2021. We want to allow businesses and the hospitality industry time to source appropriate products and for further consultation to occur. Importantly, this bill recognises the needs of the vulnerable members of the community. The bill has carefully considered the needs of people with a disability and those in aged care and health sectors by providing exemptions.

Queensland leads the country when it comes to protecting our environment. When it comes to tackling the issue of reducing plastics, the Palaszczuk government gets a big tick from WWF Australia, acknowledging that Queensland has raced ahead into first place with our action on single-use plastics. The Palaszczuk government is getting on with the job of reducing the devastating impact of plastic waste on marine life and the environment.

While I am on my feet, I would like to add to the update provided by the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services about the serious fire burning on K'gari. QFES and QPWS are on the ground working day and night to contain this fire and I want to commend their efforts. Our top priority remains the preservation of life and property, as well as protecting this World Heritage listed icon. I have been in regular contact with the Mayor of Fraser Coast and I have spoken with him this morning. I will continue to ensure that the community is kept up to date as this emergency response continues.

Coronavirus, Land Rent Relief

 **Hon. SJ STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources) (10.02 am): As Queensland embarks on its road to recovery post COVID-19, we need to make sure our businesses revive and thrive again. Last week I stood in this House and talked about the many ways the Palaszczuk government is providing relief for our resources sector, but we are also providing relief in other areas of my portfolio to make sure we help out those who are doing it tough where we can. That is why the Palaszczuk government has provided farmers, businesses and tourism operators with over \$50 million in land rental relief since the COVID-19 pandemic commenced. This means around 6,000 farmers, businesses, tourism operators and community and sports clubs on state owned land will not have to pay rent until early 2021.

This means that a grazier in Emerald in Central Queensland with land size of around 5,000 hectares will save nearly \$10,000—money that could be used for more hay or lick. It also means a community sports club in Rockhampton will have saved around \$16,000. This is money that can be spent on the community's benefit, such as going towards uniforms, training equipment and many other things. In the industry that has been hit the hardest by the pandemic—tourism—a tourism operator in Cairns will have saved around \$87,000 in rent since the start of the COVID pandemic.

Many operators advised that there was a downturn in their business during the summer bushfires and with the COVID-19 pandemic following and that their vacancy rates have been well below normal revenue for all of 2020 to date. So far, more than 72 tourism businesses operating on state owned land and islands have been provided with land rent relief, saving a total of more than \$5.5 million.

It has been great to see so many Queenslanders supporting each other during these tough times, with many taking their families and discovering some of the natural beauty we have right here on our doorstep. In my electorate of Townsville, we have the magnificent Magnetic Island. I have spoken to operators there who have told me that the Palaszczuk government's COVID-19 relief measures, combined with a resurgence of in-state travellers, have kept many tourism operators afloat during these tough times. I might add, Mr Speaker, that if you have never been to explore Maggie Island, I suggest you do yourself a favour and check it out—you will not be disappointed. We will come through this if Queenslanders continue to back Queenslanders, as the Palaszczuk government is backing our employers.

Mount Lindesay Highway

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (10.05 am): I regularly update this House on upgrades we are delivering to the Bruce Highway and the M1—projects that play a central role in the Palaszczuk Labor government's record investments in road and transport. Those

upgrades support thousands of jobs at a time when new jobs are needed most. Our investment in better roads is cutting travel times and making the state's busiest highways safer for hundreds of thousands of Queensland motorists.

However, today I would like to speak on the progress the Palaszczuk Labor government has made on a highway in one of our most important population growth areas—the Mount Lindesay Highway, which runs between Browns Plain and Jimboomba. It services emerging communities, like Flagstone and Yarrabilba, and more established rural communities, like Beaudesert and beyond. The Mount Lindesay Highway is also a nationally significant freight route, connecting Queensland to our southern neighbours and ensuring the trucking industry keeps goods on Queensland shelves. Since entering this House, the member for Logan has tirelessly championed the cause to widen the Mount Lindesay Highway to four lanes to make safety on it a priority for our government.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr BAILEY: It is so good to see so much support for the member for Logan from the opposition. That is great to see. Working with my department, the member for Logan developed a plan that will deliver these much needed upgrades over the coming decade.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BAILEY: Investment, not cuts—that is what we do on this side. The Palaszczuk Labor government has backed that plan with more than \$175 million to build upgrades. Five upgrades on the highway worth almost \$70 million have been completed since 2018. Just last week, work finished on the \$20 million upgrade between Rosia Road and Stoney Camp Road. As members would expect, the member for Logan was one of the first people out there to celebrate it. I note that the member for Scenic Rim has also been an enthusiastic supporter of the Palaszczuk Labor government achievements in his local media. I thank the member for Scenic Rim for his support of our achievements. It is always good to see bipartisan support.

Thanks to the advocacy of the Palaszczuk Labor government, the federal government now recognises the Mount Lindesay Highway as a nationally important highway, meaning upgrades will be majority funded by the federal government moving forward. We will continue to work collaboratively with the federal government to deliver more upgrades and more jobs. Next year, work will start on a \$75 million upgrade to four lane the highway between Stoney Camp Road and Chambers Flat Road, supporting 80 new jobs. There is also \$73 million to duplicate the highway to four lanes between Johanna Street and South Street in Jimboomba, which means a further 70 jobs.

We took a 10-year vision to the community to make the major highway they use every day less congested and safer. Three years on, they can see we have stuck to our commitment and that we will continue to create jobs and deliver the upgrades that are needed to support their growing communities.

Small Business

 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (10.08 am): Backing small business and increasing our capabilities so that we can give Queenslanders the right training to get the right skills for the right jobs in the COVID and post-COVID economy—these are key planks of the Queensland economic recovery plan which the Palaszczuk Labor government announced in August this year and which the Premier reiterated just this morning in the Queensland government's objectives for the community. We have made significant investment in these areas already, and we will continue to do so as we respond to the challenges ahead of us.

I particularly want to update the House today on the commitments this government has made to supporting small business going forward. We know that small business represents 97 per cent of businesses statewide and that they employ 44 per cent of all private sector workers—that is almost one million Queenslanders. They are the heart and hub of our local communities, they are our neighbours, our friends and our family members, they create jobs and they make our communities strong. From when they were first hit so hard by COVID, this government has responded—including with \$196 million in grants, supporting almost 20,000 businesses; a \$1 billion no-interest loan scheme, supporting 7,000 businesses and 86,000 Queensland jobs; \$950 million in payroll tax relief; and the establishment of a small business commissioner.

We know that there is uncertainty and challenge ahead for small business, which is why during the election we announced an additional \$140 million over three years and a Big Plans for Small Business package including \$100 million from the Backing Queensland Business Investment Fund, \$30 million to increase skills and capability including our \$25 million growth package focusing on priority

industry sectors, \$10 million to make it easier to do business in Queensland including the permanent appointment of a small business commissioner, and targeted engagement strategies and a reinvigorated Small Business Advisory Council.

I wasted no time in getting started in my portfolio. Some of my first calls and meetings were with Stephen Tait from CCIQ and the Small Business Commissioner. I was at CCIQ last Friday hooking up on a Zoom meeting with chambers of commerce from around the state to hear what they had to say. I thank them for their great feedback. I am looking forward to meeting with the Small Business Commissioner and the small business industry round table again in the next couple of weeks for the same purpose.

Before I finish, I want to ask our fabulous new member for Caloundra to pass on my best wishes to Chris at Three Restaurant Bar and Grill in Caloundra. He was the first small business owner I met as the Minister for Small Business. He is a very grateful recipient of our COVID-19 Small Business Adaptation Grant. In fact, he said he is doing the best ever.

I say to all small businesses across Queensland: you are our priority and we will continue reaching out to you as we unite and recover.

Weather Events, Recovery Assistance

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algera—ALP) (Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts) (10.11 am): This year has been like no other when it comes to testing the resilience of Queenslanders and our ability to respond to disasters. Whether it be the bushfires at the beginning of the year or the onset of COVID-19 and the necessary restrictions that were put in place to keep us all safe, Queenslanders have demonstrated over and over that we are stronger when we stick together.

We were again tested at the end of October when severe hail storms hit parts of South-East Queensland. Hail up to the size of cricket balls fell in some areas of South-East Queensland, smashing through roofs, ceilings and windows. The aftermath of this disaster has been difficult for many residents, particularly as it has come during an already challenging year.

The Queensland government has once again been there to support the recovery of individuals and families that were affected by these storms. Our hardworking community recovery and housing staff and ready reserves worked alongside representatives from partner agencies including the Red Cross, Lifeline, WMCA and Salvation Army to provide the support. This was the first severe weather event we had experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic and we successfully provided face-to-face assistance in a COVID-safe way that complied with the health advice.

More than \$1.1 million was provided to more than 5,300 affected Queenslanders through our Community Recovery Grants. Additionally, our community recovery hotline continues to provide assistance over the phone and has now responded to more than 1,400 calls over the past four weeks.

Our state is currently experiencing a La Nina weather pattern and we could face more severe weather events in the months to come. I encourage all Queenslanders to be prepared for any severe weather events we may face. Visit the Get Ready Queensland website and follow the easy steps to prepare for the season ahead.

The Queensland government and our partner agencies stand ready to respond to our communities in their time of need, the same way that Queenslanders have stuck together through the impacts of natural disasters in the past and the more recent COVID-19 challenges. As the Premier has said many times: Queensland, we are stronger together.

COMMITTEES

Membership

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (10.13 am), by leave, without notice: I move—

That—

1. In accordance with section 81A(1) of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 the member for Hill (Mr Knuth) be appointed to the Committee of the Legislative Assembly as the representative of the crossbench, chosen by the crossbench as their nominee.
2. In accordance with sessional order 3(1)(d) the member for Noosa (Ms Bolton) be appointed to the Business Committee as the crossbench member, nominated by the crossbench.

I table a letter advising of the nominations.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 27 November 2020, from the member for Traegar, Mr Robbie Katter MP, advising the member for Hill, Mr Shane Knuth MP, as the crossbench representative on the Committee of the Legislative Assembly and the member for Noosa, Ms Sandy Bolton MP, as the representative on the Business Committee [293].

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Report

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (10.14 am): I lay upon the table of the House report No. 1 for the Education, Employment and Training Committee entitled *Subordinate legislation tabled on 14 July 2020*.

Tabled paper: Education, Employment and Training Committee: Report No. 1, 57th Parliament—Subordinate legislation tabled on 14 July 2020 [294].

I commend our report to the House.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, question time will conclude today at 11.14 am.

Debt

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (10.14 am): My question is to the Premier. Labor promised to limit debt increases to \$4 billion, but Treasurer Dick yesterday revealed new debt will be significantly more. Can the Premier explain this broken promise?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. What we took to the people of Queensland is what we will deliver. We said that there will be deficits, and yesterday I was very proud to say that our debt will be a lot, lot, lot lower than New South Wales and Victoria.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Ms PALASZCZUK: There is not much longer to go. At two o'clock he will be here, and the member will be able to listen to it all. I want to commend the Treasurer for ensuring that our debt is a lot, lot lower than New South Wales and Victoria. However, there is going to be a challenge for the Leader of the Opposition because we saw during the election campaign the opposition was going to return to surplus. The great economic managers were going to return to surplus. Yes, remember that. It took them kicking and screaming to finally release their costings. What were they going to do? They were going to borrow. However, to get that surplus what would they have to do?

Mr Harper: Cut jobs.

Ms PALASZCZUK: They would have to cut jobs. I take that interjection from the member for Thuringowa. They would have to cut jobs, they would have to sack, they would have to cut services. Of course, we know that old chestnut from the LNP because the member for Clayfield is back, selling our assets.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Ms PALASZCZUK: There they are; they are all back together.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a level where I simply cannot hear the Premier. At this stage, members, I give a word of note: please keep it down.

Ms PALASZCZUK: They are all back together there.

Mr Dick: The band's back together.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The member for Clayfield—the band is back together. The member for Kawana is there, the member for Everton is still there. It is like a little cabinet reunion from the Newman days, and we know what is in their DNA. The Leader of the Opposition might pretend there is a new broom, but it is not. It is the same broom. The Leader of the Opposition is still part of the same old LNP.

Mr Crisafulli: Didn't sell the assets.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Theodore, you are warned under the standing orders. The member for Southern Downs is also warned under the standing orders.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The big test for the Leader of the Opposition is going to be on Thursday. How are they going to get to their surplus? I am looking forward to hearing that.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. It is on standing order 118(b), relevance. The question was with respect to the Premier's budget and it seems that she has not got past 15 seconds of her own budget. She does not want to talk about her own budget.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The more things change, the more they stay the same. Thursday is the day that we will hear from the Leader of the Opposition how he is going to take the opposition to surplus. I am looking forward to that. That is the chance for the LNP.

Budget, Bushfires

Mr CRISAFULLI: My question is to the Minister for the Environment. In the last budget Labor underspent national park management by nearly \$14 million. Will today's budget rectify these failures given nearly half of Fraser Island is burning?

Ms SCANLON: I thank the honourable member for the question. As I said in my ministerial statement, our focus at the moment is on making sure we can contain the fire on Fraser Island while also protecting property and lives. To date we have had—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members to my left, I have made it clear that if the minister is being responsive to the question asked you will cease the interjections so we can hear the answer.

Ms SCANLON: To date, we have undertaken a number of initiatives. We have applied significant resources to K'gari. We have put in place more than 75 personnel and 30 appliances along with aerial support. Previous mitigation measures involved 13,000 hectares per year of the island being burned—more than the recommended five per cent outlined by the royal commission. We have exceeded the recommended percentage. K'gari has also been allocated \$400,000 for road and track maintenance, including maintenance on fire lines. Four planned burns have been completed this fire season by QPWS and the Rural Fire Service—in the townships of Orchid Beach and Happy Valley and at Ocean Lake south and Kingfisher Bay Resort. We have also substantially increased our investment—by \$16 million over four years, commencing in the 2019-20 financial year—with \$2.6 million per year ongoing to provide improved capability for management.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms SCANLON: This is very serious, and those opposite clearly are not taking the matter seriously. There is \$2.6 million per year ongoing to provide improved capability for bushfire management in Queensland's parks and forests in response to warming and variable climate. This is in comparison to those opposite. The now Leader of the Opposition was a member of the Newman government, which slashed \$10 million from the salaries of QPWS staff.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! This is not assisting the House. The level of interjections is too high, members. I will commence warning members if they do not desist.

Ms SCANLON: Some \$10 million of QPWS salaries were cut by the Newman government.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. The member for Nanango is warned under the standing orders. Simply moments ago I warned the House.

Ms SCANLON: That is 60 fewer rangers who can protect these areas and undertake fire management. I will not be lectured to by those opposite, given their track record. Rates of burning were lower under the LNP in comparison to us. We will continue to work with Fire and Emergency Services to protect this natural icon and to make sure we protect lives and households in those surrounding areas.

(Time expired)

Mr SPEAKER: The members for Gregory, Mudgeeraba and Gympie are warned under the standing orders.

Regional Queensland, Infrastructure

Mr TANTARI: My question is of the Premier and Minister for Trade. Will the Premier update the House on regional projects that are underway and what more to expect from today's budget?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Hervey Bay for the question. I know that the member for Hervey Bay is also extremely interested in what is happening on K'gari at the moment. There are a whole lot of people there trying to do everything they possibly can. I can also advise that our LAT was used twice yesterday—the large air tanker based in Bundaberg that was commissioned under this government. I make it very clear that we would not have the LAT if those opposite were in office, because this government took the decision to increase our aerial firefighting forces.

Today will be a record day for investment across Queensland. Over the next four years we will see the largest infrastructure spend in over a decade. Infrastructure means jobs. We want to see more jobs across Queensland. A lot of this infrastructure spend will be happening outside the south-east—right across the length and breadth of regional Queensland.

In Hervey Bay and Maryborough and on the Fraser Coast there are upgrades to Hervey Bay State High School and Hervey Bay Hospital, and construction of a new acute mental health inpatient unit at Hervey Bay Hospital is set to start this week. In the Wide Bay region, train manufacturing will be happening in Maryborough. That means jobs all around the Maryborough region, including Hervey Bay and even up to Bundaberg.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Those opposite may laugh, but manufacturing means jobs in this state; infrastructure means jobs in this state. The people of Queensland backed our strong Unite and Recover economic recovery plan to deliver jobs across Queensland.

We will deliver another \$400 million for Works for Queensland—one of the signature projects of this government, enabling local councils to get local people employed quickly and delivering much needed local infrastructure to their communities. In Cairns, workers are currently installing mechanical chillers at the Cairns Convention Centre as part of the \$175 million expansion. With tourism increasing, that will be vital in the months and years ahead. In Townsville, workers are building a rock wall as part of the \$193 million upgrade of the port. In Mackay, the Bruce Highway is being widened as part of the northern access upgrade. In the Whitsundays, concrete is being poured at the site of the \$54.5 million Shute Harbour redevelopment. Then there is the new Proserpine Entertainment Centre, which the Treasurer and I were able to inspect when we were last in the Whitsundays. This budget is about jobs, jobs and more jobs.

(Time expired)

Coal Industry, Royalties

Mr JANETZKI: My question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer tell the House whether coal royalties in the budget have declined, as Labor promised they would?

Mr DICK: I am already having fun on budget day! I thank the member for Toowoomba South for his question. The question perhaps should not be directed to me but to all of our international trading partners who are suffering because of COVID-19 because they did not have the effective health response to COVID-19 that Queensland had.

Mr Crisafulli: Coal royalties was the question.

Mr DICK: You do not have to wait long, member for Toowoomba South: in about three hours—

Mr SPEAKER: Direct your comments through the chair, Minister.

Mr DICK: In about three hours you will get the details. The reason the Queensland economy is recovering faster than others is our effective health response. Strong borders means a strong economy. I will be delivering some details about that to honourable members a bit later.

Our commodity markets have been impacted by the impact of COVID-19. Global uncertainty is one of the biggest challenges our state will face over the next four years. It will take us time. A very traumatic injury has been sustained by the Queensland economy because of a virus that has ravaged the world. That has impacted on a range of industries. Our coal, mining and resources industries have been the heroes of the hour. They have helped sustain the Queensland economy. The resources sector in particular put together probably the most effective COVID-safe plan of any industry in the country.

We did not stop mining coal. We did not stop mining bauxite. We did not stop mining those precious metals in the north-west of our state that will deliver the new economy—those new economy minerals that will go into electric vehicles and that will help generate renewable power. Those resources were mined from our state for the people of our state to deliver for our economy. I put on the record of the House my great thanks to the resources industry for what it has done. We will continue to strongly support resources.

It is no surprise that there will be an impact on royalties. Looking at the commodity markets around the world, both volume and price have decreased. That will impact on our revenue, but we will not transfer that to hardworking Queenslanders' households and businesses. There will be no increase in taxes or no new taxes in the budget to offset that. Rather, we will borrow to pay for our deficits, which is what we said consistently during the election campaign, and we will deliver on our promises. It will be a no-surprises budget and it will deliver on our promises to the people of our state.

Wellcamp Entertainment Precinct

Mr MADDEN: My question is of the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning. Will the Deputy Premier update the House on the Palaszczuk government's plan to supercharge the Darling Downs economic recovery with the Wellcamp Entertainment Precinct?

Dr MILES: I thank the member for Ipswich West for his question. Everyone in this House knows what the member for Ipswich West stands for—in fact, it is what everyone on this side of the House stands for—and that is more jobs for Queenslanders in every part of Queensland. That is why we are very pleased to be supporting the Wellcamp Entertainment Precinct.

The Wagners' Wellcamp Entertainment Precinct project is a \$175 million project that will bring jobs to the Darling Downs region. It incorporates a motorsport facility—something that I know the member for Kurwongbah will be excited to hear, as well as the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, as they are big motorsports fans—a driver training facility and a 40,000-seat performing arts complex. Supporting it is part of our economic plan for Queensland to get more people into jobs and it will make Toowoomba an even bigger drawcard, bringing in the kinds of visitors that create jobs.

In fact, in construction alone there will be 130 jobs for people building the Wellcamp Entertainment Precinct and then when it is hosting major events up to 2,500 jobs will be created. That is what we on this side of the House stand for—job-creating projects, getting Queenslanders into jobs. We do not need our executive to have a meeting to discuss what we stand for. That is the first dot point on the LNP executive's meeting this week. It says 'defining what the party stands for, what is our *raison d'être*'?

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order under standing order 118(b) relating to relevance. The minister was asked by one of his own members about the Wellcamp Entertainment Precinct and the minister has strayed off the question asked.

Mr SPEAKER: Deputy Premier, I believe it was a fairly direct question.

Dr MILES: Thank you, Mr Speaker, because I was addressing the question with regard to what we on this side of the House stand for, and that of course is jobs for Queenslanders. For those on the other side of the House their executive has to have a meeting, and it is not good enough to ask the question in English; it also has to repeat the question in French. If you have to ask yourself what you stand for in French, you are doing it all wrong.

Right those opposite are to wonder what it is they stand for. Do they stand for health? We know that they do not. They questioned the health advice. We would be on a second wave right now if we listened to them. Do they stand for women? They only have five of those, so we know it is not women that they stand for. They do not stand for Brisbane. They have even less members from Brisbane than they have women. They do not stand for the state's north. There is no-one over there north of the poor member for Burdekin. In fact the only thing they stand for is electing more Greens party members to this place.

Mr SPEAKER: Asseyez-vous.

Coal Industry

Mr WEIR: My question is to the Minister for Resources. Labor said that it supported other materials because Labor claimed markets were moving away from coal. Can the minister advise whether the government is replacing coal?

Mr STEWART: I thank the member for his question because the Palaszczuk government supports the resource sector for the royalties and the jobs it generates, particularly in regional Queensland where I come from. Under the Palaszczuk government's watch, \$21 billion has been invested in, or committed to, resource projects—

Mr Crisafulli interjected.

Mr Mander interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. I have been pretty tolerant this morning. Leader of the Opposition, you are warned under the standing orders, as is the member for Everton.

Mr STEWART: Under the Palaszczuk government's watch, \$21 billion has been invested in, or committed to, resource projects creating 8,000 jobs. The resource sector is worth \$34.3 billion to Queensland and employs almost 73,000 workers. This is why we supported the resource sector through the COVID pandemic. The Palaszczuk government softened the blow by taking strong action to secure our borders and our resource communities when the pandemic reached our shores.

Queensland will be a coal exporter for years to come which means that coalmining and jobs will be part of our economy for the foreseeable future. Queensland is naturally blessed with the world's highest quality metallurgical coal which the world needs to make steel. Our commitment to the resource sector is clear. This government has approved more than 290 mining leases over the past five years, but let us look at the LNP record when it was in government. It did nothing in government while exploration investment fell off the cliff in Queensland. It opposed Labor's exploration concessions to safeguard the industry in the future and we heard that consultation with industry was non-existent. It also increased the coal royalties and took no action to secure gas for the domestic market. We on this side of the House stand for jobs and we stand for jobs in the resource sector.

Queensland Economy

Mr HUNT: My question is to the Treasurer and Minister for Investment. Will the Treasurer update the House on how the Palaszczuk government's 2020 budget will support the economy to outperform the nation, and is the Treasurer aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr DICK: I thank the member for Caloundra for his question and welcome him to the House. I know he will do an outstanding job representing that community, standing up for the Sunshine Coast for the first time. The budget the government will release later today will be a budget of no surprises. It will be a budget that delivers on our election commitments to the people of Queensland. It will also be a budget that shows that, under the leadership of our Premier, the Queensland economy will be one of the strongest performing economies in the nation, and the reason for that is simple—our strong and effective management of the health response to COVID-19. As a consequence, we will see debt lower than Victoria and New South Wales.

Since last Thursday—I was asked about alternative approaches—we have seen the Leader of the Opposition rolling out his so-called economic policy response. The Leader of the Opposition, full of fury, said, 'There must be a target for unemployment. There must be a target,' and then when asked what his unemployment target was he said, 'I don't know. I don't have one.' The member for Everton knows about train wreck press conferences, but even the member for Everton would be shaking his head. Let us think about the member for Nanango. I know what the member for Nanango is thinking: 'They all think it's easy. They all think they can do it.' Last week we saw the Leader of the Opposition saying, 'You've got to have an unemployment target,' and then he said, when asked what his unemployment target was, 'To be the best.' That is what he said: 'I want to be school captain. I want to be the best.' Here you go, Leader of the Opposition. Here you go.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, put your comments through the chair.

Mr DICK: He also said you cannot have operating surpluses—seriously; you cannot have operating deficits.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DICK: No borrowings for operational purposes. Scott Morrison, Gladys Berejiklian, Steven Marshall and Peter Gutwein are all Liberal leaders who know that in a COVID crisis you need to keep the front line strong. You do not cut; you borrow to back in the front line. Here is telling the Leader of the Opposition how we are the best: lower debt than New South Wales and Victoria—the only state in the country other than Western Australia to project positive economic growth this financial year, and we do not have the benefit of record iron ore prices—and of course the No. 1 health response in Australia to COVID-19. That is the best, and that is the Palaszczuk Labor government.

Patient Online Portal

Ms BATES: My question is to the Minister for Health. Two elections ago Labor promised a new patient online portal. It still has not been delivered. When will the minister treat this broken health promise?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for Mudgeeraba for her question. As I was saying last week, we should be very proud of our health system in Queensland. We have a state-of-the-art public health system in Queensland, not just renowned nationally but internationally, in the way we support and provide treatment to people right across this great state. We will continue to invest—record investment, in fact—in our health system.

The budget that the Treasurer will hand down today will show another record investment in the health system in Queensland. We will continue to ensure that not just in South-East Queensland but right across this vast state we are delivering the services that are needed and we are supporting the staff in delivering those services. That includes the resources that they need because it is important that we continue to innovate and that we continue to find new ways to deliver services. I want to again acknowledge the work of the Deputy Premier when he was health minister and also frontline health staff, because every single health worker in Queensland plays an important role in delivering services. When we talk about innovation we should also acknowledge that the public health system, our hospitals and services—

An opposition member: Is a mess!

Mrs D'ATH: I will take that interjection. To say our health system is a mess is appalling.

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, members to my right!

Mrs D'ATH: It is appalling to attack our hospitals, our health services, our doctors and, of course, criticise the Chief Health Officer, which they continue to do, and the advice that this government gets—in fact, advice that is now recognised as world leading.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order under standing order 118(b) on relevance. As a courtesy I have allowed two minutes for a piece of paper to be delivered to the health minister. The question was about the patient online portal that was promised two elections ago that has not been delivered. It was quite specific and that is what we asked about.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister for Health, it was a reasonably direct question. If you could come back to the question as asked.

Mrs D'ATH: I am happy to get back to the member in relation to the online portal.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members to my left, a point of order was raised to seek greater relevance from the minister. The minister is now responding to the question and there are continued interjections. You cannot have it both ways.

Mrs D'ATH: I am happy to get back to the member on the question. I do not automatically take comments by the member as accurate because those opposite have been known to exaggerate a little bit from time to time when they ask their questions.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I ask the minister whether she is taking that pursuant to standing order 113(3), the answer to the honourable member's question to be delivered within a sitting day.

Mr SPEAKER: Member, are you taking that on notice under the standing orders?

Mrs D'ATH: No. I have advised the member I will get back to her in relation to her question and I will do so.

Ms Bates interjected.

Ms Fentiman interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Waterford will cease her interjections. The member for Mudgeeraba is already on a warning. Please leave the chamber for one hour.

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: I do not need any assistance from those to my right.

Whereupon the honourable member for Mudgeeraba withdrew from the chamber at 10.43 am.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, do you have anything further to add?

Mrs D'ATH: I do want to add that there have certainly been delays in a number of initiatives across the health service because of COVID, because of the redirection of resources.

Opposition members interjected.

Mrs D'ATH: Those opposite still seem to have their heads in the sand when it comes to COVID and the global health pandemic. It is extraordinary that they still do not get what this virus is actually doing.

Mr SPEAKER: The member's time has expired.

(Time expired)

Coronavirus, Health Directions

Mr HEALY: My question is to the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services. Will the minister update the House on the status of Queensland's current COVID public health directions and border restrictions?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. It is a pleasure to continue to talk about our great health system in this state. I know how constituents in the tourism and hospitality sector in the Far North will appreciate the ongoing safe easing of restrictions and the opening of our borders. I welcome the comments made by the minister for tourism earlier today of the volume of people now going not just into Cairns but right across this great state enjoying our open borders. Of course, some are Queenslanders coming back but many are tourists wanting to visit family and also to holiday in this great state and we welcome them.

From 1 am Queensland was open to Greater Sydney and Victoria. In fact, we are open to all of Australia other than Adelaide which is working hard to manage its current community COVID cluster. I understand that there were celebrations this morning at the Cairns airport as the first flights came in, as well as celebrations here in South-East Queensland. Businesses in Cairns and right across Queensland have already been operating in a much more open economy than businesses interstate because Queensland has followed the health advice. We have been able to flatten the curve and open our economy.

In Cairns a cafe or restaurant owner can have one customer per two square metres indoors. In New South Wales that same cafe could only have half as many customers: one per four square metres. In Queensland every guest at a wedding can dance but in Victoria and Tasmania no-one at all can dance. Live music is back. Outdoor carols by candlelight are back. Food festivals are back. We hosted the State of Origin at Suncorp with a full house. We lead the nation in the number of people we can have at public and private gatherings, at sporting and outdoor events all because of our strong health response. Yesterday we announced that people can have a gathering of 100 people in public outdoor areas and stand together in photos because we followed the health advice. If we had listened to those opposite and their demands we would have opened our borders to Victoria just as that second wave hit. This would have potentially decimated our economy, particularly our tourism industry, including tourism and hospitality operators in Cairns and the Gold Coast—the constituents of the member for Broadwater.

As I was saying before, Anthony Fauci, who is the head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease and White House Coronavirus Task Force has said that Australia is the model in managing the pandemic. He said, 'What Australia has done is the proof of the pudding.' He also said—

It's clear that countries and states that do not embrace restrictions do not blunt the curve as well as those that do. The epitome of that has been the success of Australia.

Queensland has led the way in that success. Again, we have zero cases today, 77 days without community transmission and 10 active cases.

Rockhampton, Rehabilitation Centre

Mr MOLHOEK: My question is to the Minister for Health. More than three years ago Labor promised to build a new rehabilitation centre in Rockhampton. It still has not been delivered. When will the minister deliver this broken health promise?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. I understand it is under construction. I am happy to give an update to the member. I know that those opposite are trying for their typical gotcha moment by going through individual cases and where are they at.

Opposition members interjected.

Mrs D'ATH: I am happy to outline every single project that the Palaszczuk government has undertaken in the health sector in Queensland and outline for those opposite every single project that we have committed to in the most recent election that we will be delivering over the next four years. It is record investment in infrastructure, which creates jobs, and record investment in nurses and doctors and front-line workers. That is in stark contrast to what those opposite did. There were no new hospitals and we know what they did in relation to our front-line workers right across government but in particular in our hospitals. They sacked doctors and nurses, but that's right: they all went voluntarily!

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order under standing order 118(b) on relevance. The question was quite direct in relation to a broken promise about a rehabilitation centre in Rockhampton. That is all that was mentioned in the question.

Mr SPEAKER: I am giving the Minister for Health some latitude given that the question itself referenced a so-called broken promise. It is up to the minister to provide some voracity to the statement.

Mrs D'ATH: I understand that local members have been heavily involved in and consulted on the development of this site, so I hope the member has not been misleading in his question. I will check that, but I do hope that the member has not been misleading in his question by claiming that it is a broken promise when it is underway and there has been consultation locally.

It is this side of the House that understands the value of workers and not just the capital infrastructure that goes on in our communities. Today people still talk about the devastation of losing their jobs in the health sector. I remember the LNP's Redcliffe candidate saying, 'No, no, no. Everyone went voluntarily. They were really happy.' I have not yet met one of those happy nurses or doctors. I have heard of parents who could not feed their kids and were leaving this state to try to find alternate work because of the job cuts. It was the Palaszczuk government that rebuilt the health system and the health workforce in Queensland, which has put us in the best possible position to manage COVID.

Ms Palaszczuk interjected.

Mrs D'ATH: I take that interjection from the Premier. The LNP closed the Barrett centre, so they have no credibility whatsoever in this space. It is Labor governments that invest. It is Labor governments that understand the importance of investing in health. It is Labor that has enabled us to manage COVID because we restored the workforce in Queensland.

COVID-19 Marine Tourism Rebate

Ms LAUGA: My question is of the Minister for Tourism Industry Development and Innovation and Minister for Sport. Will the minister update the House on the status of the COVID-19 Marine Tourism Rebate program?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I thank the member for Keppel for her question. I acknowledge the important role that her region plays in the diversity of our state's spectacular tourism product. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a tremendous impact on Queensland's tourism industry and, in particular, on marine tourism businesses, but we are powering towards economic recovery. We know that the closure of the international border has hit marine tourism businesses hard and that it could be some time before we see international tourists back on our shores. Where once operators were taking reef tours every day of the week, many have trimmed back their operations to one or two trips a weekend, depending on customer demand. In my time as minister I have had some good conversations with operators in that space.

In September the Palaszczuk government announced the \$2 million COVID-19 Marine Tourism Rebate program to help tour boat operators with the cost of berthing fees at privately owned marinas. The rebate reimburses up to \$20,000 in fees for marine tourism operators for the 2020-21 financial year. We have listened to industry feedback and we have extended the rebate program. While the opposition stands in front of reef boats in Cairns talking down the industry as a sea of misery and demanding more reviews, the Palaszczuk government is already taking action. We are responding to the issues raised by people in the community.

The program will now include more local government areas along the whole of the Great Barrier Reef. In areas such as the member's electorate of Keppel operators will be able to access the rebate. So far more than 132 marine tourism businesses in the Whitsundays, the Douglas and Livingstone shires, Mackay and Townsville have already applied for the rebate, as well as operators in the member's electorate. The government is standing shoulder to shoulder with operators to help them recover from the impacts of COVID and to support the reef tourism industry's 64,000 jobs. It is a very important part of the tourism industry and a very important part of the great diversity of product that we provide to the rest of the country now and will once again provide to the rest of the world in the future.

With borders reopening today to Victoria and Greater Sydney and holiday bookings inspired by the Good to Go campaign already going through the roof, all the signs are there for a great recovery and for a bumper season on the Great Barrier Reef this summer. I look forward to continuing to work with operators who are operating under very challenging circumstances that have absolutely damaged and undercut their business model. I look forward to continuing to work with them to help them return to the best possible prosperity with the best opportunities.

(Time expired)

JobKeeper

Mr MICKELBERG: My question is to the Minister for Employment and Small Business. During the last sitting the Premier said that Labor's economic recovery plan had restored all jobs lost to COVID. Can the minister say how many Queensland jobs are today reliant on JobKeeper?

Ms FARMER: I thank the member for the question. I am very happy to answer any question that the member throws at me, but I am not sure if he realises that JobKeeper is a federal government initiative. I was going to raise this if I was asked a question by the member this week, because I know that the Leader of the Opposition had made a comment in the past week or two about being really conscious that JobKeeper was about to cease in March of next year and he was really worried about the effect on small businesses. I was hoping that the Leader of the Opposition would ring the Prime Minister and say, 'Mate, there are going to be a few problems here. What are your plans?' Maybe he could answer the question of the member for Buderim at the same time.

While I am on my feet I take this opportunity to talk about what we are doing to create jobs in Queensland. I for one am really looking forward to this afternoon when the Treasurer hands down the budget. It is fantastic news that Queensland is the only state to have restored all of the jobs lost during the COVID pandemic, which over the past two months means 1,000 jobs a day and 500 jobs on top of that. In my portfolio there are a couple of things that are really critical to creating jobs, such as supporting small business. One million Queenslanders are employed by small businesses. Was there a small business policy from the LNP during the election? No! Was there a skills and training policy from the LNP during the election?

Mr Mickelberg interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Buderim is warned under the standing orders.

Ms FARMER: We know that if we are going to get people into jobs we need to have the right training to give people the right skills to go into the right jobs for the future. During the election campaign the only thing that they talked about in relation to skills and training was putting together their skills task force. We know what that did the last time they were in government: they used it to cut and sack and sell—

(Time expired)

Education Sector

Ms RICHARDS: My question is of the Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing. Will the minister outline how the Palaszczuk government's record investment in education is being recognised across the country?

Ms GRACE: I thank the member for Redlands for the question. I welcome her as the new chair of the Education, Employment and Training Committee. It is great to have her on board. She knows how important education is. I congratulate her wholeheartedly.

Last week the Australian Education Awards 2020 were held and guess which state scooped the pool?

Government members: Queensland.

Ms GRACE: You are right. If your answer was Queensland, you are right. I congratulate Marsden State High School, in the electorate of Waterford, that was crowned Australia's top secondary school while the principal, Andrew Peach, was named the country's top public school leader. I congratulate them on a job well done. That is a truly outstanding award to have won. I also acknowledge Maryborough State High School, in the electorate of Maryborough, and Beenleigh State School, in the electorate of Macalister, which picked up excellence awards on the night. Congratulations on the great work they do in their schools every day. I congratulate all the winners and finalists from the Queensland education system. They certainly did us proud.

Another winner was the Department of Education's youth engagement team which won the Innovation in Learning Environment Design award. What an incredible award to have won. It was for their work in developing FlexiSpaces. For those who do not know, FlexiSpaces is a first-of-its-kind model in Australia that allows schools to create a physical space within the school campus to offer a more flexible learning experience. They promote inclusion and incorporate evidence based design principles that respond directly to the learning needs of each of their students. Many members of this House will know the program well as we have rolled it out in schools right across the state. To be acknowledged as the winner of this innovation award in recognition of what it is achieving for those students who are often disengaged in learning is truly a wonderful achievement for the Department of Education.

This just shows that when government invests in programs it does make a difference. When government invests in new school infrastructure to have those spaces in schools and invests in more teachers and more teacher aides we reap the rewards in both the short and long term. Australia is recognising what Queensland is doing in education. We are very proud of this.

We went to the election with a clear plan to ensure our education system remains world class and continues to be enhanced. That is what we are achieving. Unfortunately, once again, the member for Kawana had to be locked away because those opposite knew that if they put him out front they were going to lose the election. Let me tell members that again it did not work. I welcome the member for Moggill as the opposition spokesman on education.

(Time expired)

Julia Creek Hospital

Mr KATTER: My question is to the Minister for Health. The Julia Creek Hospital has been downgraded, removing critical care services and forcing old people to leave town due to a lack of available staff and an increased reliance on contract workers. Will the minister acknowledge this state has inadequate measures in place to prevent this type of crisis occurring and immediately meet with me and other stakeholders to resolve this issue?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. I am more than happy to meet with him. I understand that he had already made a request for this and we were organising a meeting with him this week.

I am aware of the issue at Julia Creek. We know that there have been difficulties—as with a lot of regional areas—attracting and retaining staff. I know that what occurred at Julia Creek was specifically impacted by the South Australian cluster and the quarantine arrangements for getting staff out to Julia Creek. Arrangements have been made by Queensland Health to ensure services are being delivered to people by moving them to other areas, including Mount Isa.

We are working as quickly as we can to source the additional staff for those services. We know it is difficult when these things happen. We are absolutely committed to seeing the support there. As the member would know, we invested in new facilities out there. That shows our commitment to see these regional and remote communities get state-of-the-art facilities. We need to attract and retain staff. That is why it is important that we do what we can to attract and train staff from the regions to go back and work in their communities because they are much more likely to want to stay in their communities in the first place. We will continue that commitment.

I am more than happy to meet with the member this week to discuss this issue and see what else can be done. We are working as quickly as possible to resolve the staff shortage issue at Julia Creek.

Reef Assist Program

Ms LUI: My question is of the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs. Will the minister update the House on the Palaszczuk government's Reef Assist program?

Ms SCANLON: I thank the member for Cook for her question. Of course, the Palaszczuk government is committed to protecting the Great Barrier Reef and the jobs that rely on it. We know the Great Barrier Reef—the World Heritage listed icon—supports around 60,000 jobs and produces \$6 billion for our local economy each year. Since 2015 we have been proud to provide \$400 million to protect this important asset.

In June we announced the \$10 million Reef Assist program, which has now commenced. I am pleased to report to the House that it has created 130 regional jobs, delivering 11 environmental projects in the Burdekin and Mackay-Whitsunday region as well as the Wet Tropics. One project is being led by Jaragun Ecoservices. It has been keen to start its project and get off the ground ahead of the wet season. It is supporting eight traditional owners who have already received training to work on country in the Russell River catchment.

In the meantime, what we have from the LNP is a trashing of our efforts to improve reef water quality by supporting a politically motivated Senate inquiry. Despite their best efforts, the inquiry has actually come back with a committee report backing in the science and evidence that our government relied on as well as unequivocally rejecting the LNP's and One Nation's proposed office of science and quality assurance, or, as I like to call it, the office of alternative theories for those opposite with tinfoil hats.

If only their focus on trying to discredit clear evidence and science could be channelled into something constructive like tackling global warming. We know that climate change is the biggest threat facing the Great Barrier Reef. There is only a small window for us to act. This is something that I know the member for Cook is particularly passionate about—representing the vulnerable First Nation people of the Torres Strait who, as she has spoken of previously, have had water come into their homes as a result of rising sea levels.

During this term of government we have committed to developing a climate action plan—something that I will be focusing on—which will lay out how we will reach our targets over the next decade. While the states are certainly leading the way in this space, the federal LNP is still very much dragging their feet. We saw that at the G20 summit held recently. The *Climate transparency report* released last week found that Australia is only one of four countries in the G20 without a national policy to increase renewable energy. Our key trading partners, including China, Japan, South Korea and the UK, have all committed to a net zero emission target by 2050. It is frankly embarrassing that Australia still has not. If the opposition are serious about being a constructive opposition then they should be lobbying their federal colleagues to take real national climate action. Anything less shows the LNP are exactly what they were last time—the same old, tired LNP.

School Students, Free Meals

Mr BERKMAN: My question is to the Minister for Education. Foodbank tells us one in five Queensland kids come to school without breakfast, one in seven go without lunch and now the latest HILDA data shows our child poverty rate is the second highest in the country. Will the government follow the lead of Victoria and New South Wales and create a free school meals program to make sure every Queensland kid can learn on a full stomach?

Ms GRACE: I thank the member for Maiwar for the question. I notice that their election commitment was that they were going to feed, I think it was, every schoolchild two meals a day—breakfast and lunch. I think they were going to do it on a great budget of 20 cents per kid. It would be interesting to know exactly how they intended to feed everyone. I think someone in the Greens really struggles with numbers. They had a little bit of a problem assessing how many kids go to school and what they would need to spend to provide a nutritious meal for kids. You cannot do it with 20 to 25 cents per child, which is about the amount they were allocating.

Having said that, of course we want children to go to school with a full belly so that they can learn well. Unfortunately, there are areas around Queensland where some kids go to school without a hearty breakfast. I am very pleased to say that schools around the state have breakfast programs for children because it is very hard to teach a child who is hungry. We are proud that we have expanded our breakfast program, in conjunction with the department of communities and the local schools. I have seen many of them in action when I have toured around schools right across this great state. We do it on a bit more than 20 cents per kid. They get a fairly substantial breakfast and then they can start their day. We continually expand this program based on need. It is a program that is working wonders for children right throughout the state and it is one that we are very proud of.

I am not sure exactly what New South Wales and Victoria are doing in relation to school meals. I am not aware that they are implementing free meals for every child in their state. I would have to check that. Here in Queensland we do what is necessary. We do what is best for students and we do what is best for families. If families can feed their children and enjoy their time in the mornings around the breakfast table, I do not want to interfere with that. I actually think that that is a wonderful time of the day for families to come together. Where they do not and where children need assistance, let me tell

the member for Maiwar that schools provide a wonderful breakfast program and they also provide programs if children do not come to school with lunches. Those programs are expanded continuously. Those schools do a fantastic job. I credit the schools around the state and the tuckshop mums and dads for doing a fantastic job. Well done.

Foster and Kinship Care

Ms BOYD: My question is to the Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs. Will the minister advise of the impact of the Palaszczuk government's foster and kinship care recruitment campaign and whether efforts are being made to target potential carers from diverse communities?

Ms LINARD: I thank the member for the question. I know she is very keen for an update on a program that can deliver real outcomes for people in her community of Pine Rivers. The expression 'a heart as big as Phar Lap's' refers to the 6.35-kilogram organ that resided in the chest of the mighty racehorse. We use the expression when we talk about a person's capacity for compassion, for kindness, for bravery and for love. That is a hefty heart—6.35 kilograms.

In Queensland we have almost 5,500 foster and kinship carers—each of whom has a heart that outraces and outpaces Phar Lap's every day of the week. That is an increase of 750 carers since 2013 and up by more than 220 since March 2019. These are the families we turn to when another is unable to care for a child safely at home.

In the past year more than 1,600 families chose to become foster or kinship carers for the first time—and for that I thank them. They take children into their care for a day or two or for their entire childhood—children who would not otherwise stand a chance. They take in children who are invariably damaged by what they have seen, by what has happened to them through chaos and confusion.

Of the more than 10,000 children and young people we have in care, about 4,500 are in foster care and about 4,600 are in kinship care. For the ninth consecutive quarter, the proportion of children in care who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander has remained relatively stable at 43 per cent. This is a reversal of the 2012-13 trend of growing over-representation of those children in the child protection system.

Our government continues to invest in the safety of Queensland children. Between 2017 and 2019, the department delivered the first two years of a four-year \$2.6 million foster carer recruitment campaign in partnership with Queensland Foster and Kinship Care. Unfortunately, the 2019-20 recruitment campaign was partially postponed due to COVID-19, and we have committed another \$600,000 for the campaign in 2020-21. However, a mini campaign held between July and September this year had a significant increase in expressions of interest. We are always looking for more carers, for more Queenslanders with big hearts.

Sugar Industry

Mr BENNETT: My question is to the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development. With just hours to go to the budget, will the government provide the funding required to save Maryborough's sugar industry and prevent three mills closing in the Wide Bay?

Mr SPEAKER: I call the minister. You have one minute to respond.

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for Burnett for his question. There is no doubt that the Palaszczuk government has always backed our farmers and our agriculture sector—in particular, the sugar industry. In this particular case, ultimately that decision is being made by a private company. Therefore, we will keep engaging with the company. We will keep engaging with the member for Maryborough as well on this particular outcome.

Mr Dick interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer will cease his interjections.

Mr FURNER: At the end of the day, the company will make its own decisions when it comes to their operations and how they conduct their business. First and foremost, companies should always ensure that their workers and the farmers are looked after in this process. I am advised that there have been decreases in the throughput of the Maryborough mill over time. The member would certainly know this in his particular area. In many cases there has been a transition from sugar to macadamias on those farms as a result.

Mr SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired. The period for question time has expired.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Further Answer to Question, Patient Online Portal

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (11.15 am): I rise to make a ministerial statement and respond to questions that were put to me in question time today—firstly, in relation to the government's commitment to deliver a patient online portal. The first thing I would say to the opposition is that I am sure that the questions put to me today were not intended to be misleading in any way in saying that we had not delivered on these things, but I will educate those opposite.

I advise them that the yourQH, the patient online portal—members can Google it—provides a secure way to connect with us and coordinate their referrals and appointments anytime and anywhere. The platform aims to improve the patient's outpatient journey through greater visibility and enhanced communication capability across specialist services.

Children's Health Queensland was the first hospital and health service to go live with the yourQH in July this year. I can advise members that it is currently under evaluation which includes getting feedback from patients who have used this new app before it is available to roll out to other hospital and health services. That is the appropriate way to do it. We have launched it at one site so far, and we are getting feedback from the patients and their families as to how that portal is working to make sure that we can roll it out in a way that works for the patients.

Further Answer to Question, Rockhampton, Rehabilitation Centre

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (11.16 am): In relation to the Rockhampton alcohol and other drug residential rehabilitation facility, the former health minister announced in September, following intensive planning and community consultation, the successful tender to design and construct a new alcohol and other drug residential rehabilitation and withdrawal management centre at Rockhampton. That was announced on 29 September and the tender had gone out that day.

I know it is warmly welcomed by the member for Keppel and also by the member for Rockhampton. The successful contractor is Woollam Constructions. Woollam Constructions have had a presence in Rockhampton since 1963. They are a well-established contractor who has delivered projects such as the Rockhampton Hospital car park and has committed to using local subcontractors and suppliers wherever possible. The project will provide 48 full-time jobs for the community while it is under construction. I can advise that construction actually commenced yesterday. For those opposite, the commitments of the Palaszczuk government continue to be delivered and will continue to be delivered in the future. We are very proud of our record in health investment.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Resumed from 26 November (see p. 116).

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the member, I remind the House that this is the member's first speech and that the member should be afforded the courtesies due on such occasions.

 **Mr SKELTON** (Nicklin—ALP) (11.18 am): I would like to begin by acknowledging the First Nation people on whose land we meet: the Turrbal people. I also acknowledge the Kabi Kabi people, whose land I am honoured to speak of in this place, and I pay my respects to their leaders past, present and emerging.

I was born an Army brat and spent my early life travelling around the country with my family and sister Cassandra as my father, Robert, served. My mother, Yvonne, also imbued in me a sense of duty and honour, so in 1995 after finishing school in Townsville I joined the Navy so that I, too, could serve my country. My naval career saw me serve as a boatswain's mate on HMAS *Swan*, HMAS *Canberra* and HMAS *Ipswich*. I later had an educational posting at the gunnery range at HMAS *Cerberus*. In 2002 I transferred to RAAF Base Amberley to train as an aviation firefighter. I then served at RAAF Base Tindal. My time in the services taught me the importance of comradeship, teamwork, improvisation and a love of, and duty to, country. During this time my wife, Rachel, and I had a young family. I have three beautiful children: Brandt, Delaney and Jamison. All three were born thousands of kilometres apart in Cairns, Frankston and Katherine respectively. I also had the good fortune of adopting Ray and Sandra Hubbard and John and Julie Aldous as parents somewhere along the way.

In 2004 I joined Aviation Rescue Firefighting and served at Townsville Airport. From 2010 until last Friday I was employed at Brisbane Airport as leading firefighter and trainer/assessor. This role saw me elected as president of the UFU Aviation Branch from 2017 to 2020. While in that role I appeared before a Senate inquiry into the provision of firefighting services at Australian airports. I also negotiated the 2018-2021 enterprise agreement for my peers. This period of time taught me tact, negotiation and the essential nature of strong unions in the workplace.

For me, unionism is a cornerstone of the Australian ethos. Mates looking out for mates and the egalitarian maxim of striving for the greater good of all is who we are as a people. Union strength is community strength. A political hero and key influencer of mine has been 'Red Ted' Theodore, the 20th premier of Queensland, who helped bring union solidarity to government in 1915. He served as treasurer from 1915 to 1919 and then as premier through two elections in 1920 and 1923, going on to become deputy leader of the federal Labor Party under James Scullin as federal treasurer. 'Red Ted' was tough as nails and suffered no nonsense from anyone in his political life. He had a vision for Queensland and he worked every day to achieve it. It is he whom we can thank for the eventual self-abolition of the archaic chamber next door, thus freeing Queensland from the yolk of pastoralist domination. In the current climate of crumbling global neoliberalism we can learn much by looking back to Theodore's competition and labour market reforms as well as his establishment of state-run enterprises.

It is my honour to represent the electors of Nicklin, which is situated in the Sunshine Coast hinterland. It stretches from Chevallum in the south through to the old railway towns of Palmwoods, Woombye, Nambour, Yandina and Cooroy in the north, and west to the rural gem of Kenilworth. Nicklin is beautiful and green—a treasure for Queensland. Only once since separation from New South Wales in 1859 has the entire region that is now known as Nicklin had Labor representation. Andrew Thompson won the seat of Wide Bay in 1918 for the TJ Ryan government and held it until 1920. Now, 100 years later, it has happened again.

Nicklin was named after former premier Sir Frank Nicklin, who lived in Palmwoods. Dare I say that his ghost still walks the byways and laneways of the southern end of my electorate. Sir Frank was known as an honourable, hardworking and likeable man. He served his country with distinction in World War I. After 16 years in opposition he served as premier from 1957 to 1968, winning four elections. Sir Frank was the epitome of the hardworking, constituent focused MP. Even today his name is sacred in the railway towns and pineapple fields of my electorate. If I can serve my constituents as he did, then I will be sure that the towns and villages, farms and industries of Nicklin will thrive and be proud of the history of their home. Nicklin—Nambour in particular—has stagnated as the coastal strip of Maroochydore and Mooloolaba thrived. It was not so long ago that anyone who lived on the coastal plain had to visit Nambour at least once a month for any government agency; for example, the local council, dentist, doctor and hospital.

Nicklin was an agricultural food bowl with a large sugar mill that serviced thousands of acres of lush cane fields. Nicklin grew pineapples, oranges and avocados in the foothills and ranges and bred the finest dairy and beef cattle in the Obi Obi valley and Kenilworth areas. Now the sugar mill has closed and the cane farms are disappearing under the tarmac of new mushrooming suburbs. The Golden Circle cannery closed and the pineapple harvest has shrunk. State and federal government agencies have followed the population and are mostly based on the coast, while the Sunshine Coast is building new chambers in Maroochydore which will see half of the local council jobs disappear in the next year or so. The new multi-billion dollar Sunshine Coast hospital at Kawana has seen the Nambour General Hospital lose a few jobs and COVID-19 has slammed shut the doors of business; however, there are glimmers of light.

COVID-19 has taught us that we do not need to be chained to an office to be productive as tree changers are moving in ever greater numbers into the electorate, attracted by the leafy streets, good climate and relaxed lifestyle. With these new arrivals have come fresh ideas and a younger demographic which is transforming the railway towns. Now Yandina even has a Belgian beer cafe—an unthinkable proposition even five years ago. Nambour has the only other entertainment precinct zoning—although I have just heard about Wellcamp, so I cannot say that now—in Queensland apart from Fortitude Valley, and a nascent music and entertainment industry is starting to emerge from the COVID-19 strictures of social distancing and group restrictions.

Tourism is flourishing in the villages of the Blackall Range and the hinterland towns of Palmwoods, Woombye, Yandina and Cooroy, with many operators reporting a solid profitable season so far on the back of local Queenslanders supporting Queenslanders. It is all good business, I am told, as it is local families visiting and this will be repeated as time goes by.

In the railway towns, the heritage values have come under pressure as industry and unimagined development have tried to fill the streets with ugly tilt-slab anonymous monstrosities. The communities are fighting back, and heritage preservation has become a defining motif of these towns. There is a deep, rich history to Nicklin.

The 60,000 years of Aboriginal stewardship have gifted us a lush forest of the iconic bunya pines and fine water meadows of pasture. The early explorers Simpson and Eipner marvelled at the park like vistas. The early settlers came up the Mary River and across the Conondale Range, following the timeworn Aboriginal pathways. When the railways came, the towns soon grew. We must cherish our history and heritage and allow both to shape and guide our stewardship of the land.

Now, in the modern era, the demands of development and population shift are placing great pressures on the fabric of community. Jobs must be created for the new arrivals and the existing population. The community infrastructure of schools, roads, hospitals and all the good works that the people trust this Labor government to provide must match and support the growth we are seeing. This government's unite and recover blueprint will be integral to my electorate. The schools in Nicklin need urgent attention, from asbestos removal to new classrooms and teachers. It is my goal to provide the best schooling this government can provide. The constant issue of road construction and maintenance will also be a key focus.

The essential roles of community groups, historical societies, progress associations, chambers of commerce and the ilk will have my full support and be encouraged to support and foster the pride and dignity of place so essential to community cohesion. I will work with all levels of government, regardless of the politics, to promote and support robust, proud communities.

Given my background in the fire service, I will have an early focus on supporting and developing the Rural Fire Service, the State Emergency Service and their associated entities so they are fully capable, ready and trained to protect our land and people. The essential services supplied by the groups who care and advocate for the most vulnerable in our community will also have my early attention. Homelessness, mental health, and drug and alcohol services are all areas that are staffed by passionate and kind people dedicated to easing the problems we all could face at some point in our lives. They will have my support and it is my intention to devote as many resources as can be provided to diminish the wicked societal problems now so prevalent in modern Australia. We are a nation of communities, not of individuals. We must pull together, look out for the poor and needy, give a hand up where we can and bind the streets, villages and towns as cohesive, proud communities.

I have a vision for our region and its people. Nambour is zoned as a special entertainment precinct, providing us with the opportunity to make Nambour an arts and culture powerhouse. We also have gourmet produce that with marketing could be leaving the region fresh, by air, to the burgeoning markets of the world. The towns, villages, forests, mountains and watercourses make for a unique environment rich in heritage and natural beauty.

Tourism is also a part of this government's plan. The economic recovery is happening. I will always stand up for the people of Nicklin. I will always stand with my state and country. I will always stand with my party. I will fight the good fight—or, as they say in Latin and as was my campaign motto, *bonum certamen certare*.

It is with humility that I accept the honour of my life and serve in this place. The journey to here has been one of trials and tribulation, wins and losses, highs and lows. I would not be standing here if it were not for the rock-solid belief and energy of the Burnside and Nambour Labor branches, whose fervent vision of victory was not only humbling but also infectious and all consuming. Our ragtag bunch of rebels, ratbags and rascalions gave the Australian Labor Party a fighting victory for the ages. It gives me a great deal of pride to name these people who are family to me so they can be recorded in *Hansard* for posterity.

I give my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to John Campbell and Peter Shooter, whose wise counsel guided me. Their relentless corflute management saw them out every day of the campaign replacing and restoring the vandalised and stolen signs that were such an issue in my quest for office. Col Heath, Malcolm and Rad Rudd, Greg Pitman, Jim Egerton, Nadia Guterres, Alex Jutte, Marjorie Farren and many others relentlessly letterboxed day after day getting our message out and uncomplainingly staffed the pre-poll and election day booths. Our branch presidents, Maree Sullivan and Charmaine Foley, focused on pre-polling rosters, booth management and team unity, and their unquestioning loyalty to our cause was integral to our win.

The pre-poll volunteers—Naomi Szalek, who is the undisputed princess positive, Paul Dawkins, Donna Cooper and Justin Raethel—all gave till they fell. Laurence McLean, Terry Wood and the Young Labor team, the other Sunshine Coast branches, along with our branch heroes scrutineered the count

to the last vote. The Transport Workers Union and the aviation branch of the United Firefighters Union both gave support, guidance and encouragement, and for that I am most grateful. All these true believers' loyalty and passion will be my guiding motivation for the next four years. I honour my mentor, campaign director and now electorate officer, Tony Millroy. His belief in me made me think him a father. He has stated though that he would not adopt me. My sincere apologies to anyone I have missed.

Finally, I must honour our Premier for the leadership, courage and stubborn determination that saved our state from the worst ravages of COVID-19. Her leadership gave the electors of Nicklin reason to hope and to put their faith in this government. We knew we had a good chance to win when, on the first count of the pre-poll votes, my campaign director, Tony, saw a ballot with a notation on the bottom in old-fashioned beautiful copperplate script that read, 'Thank you, Annastacia, for saving our lives.' From the grateful people of Nicklin, I thank you all again.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the next member, I remind honourable members that this is the member's first speech in this place and, as such, he should be afforded the courtesies reserved for such an occasion.

 **Mr TANTARI** (Hervey Bay—ALP) (11.40 am): I rise for the first time in this place, humbled and honoured by the trust the people of the Hervey Bay electorate have placed in me and the Palaszczuk government to represent them here. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands that we meet on today, the Turrbal people, and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

It is a great honour to stand here as the fifth elected member for Hervey Bay, to serve their interests and work for their needs. I understand the enormous trust that has been given to me and I will always strive to ensure their interests are represented first in this place. I also wish to acknowledge the retiring former member, Mr Ted Sorensen, for his service to the people of the Hervey Bay electorate and I wish him and his wife, Jenny, all the very best in their retirement.

At the election, the people of the Hervey Bay electorate chose a fresh start. They chose to put their trust in our Premier and the government that she leads. In seeing through the shallow promises of those opposite, they were comfortable in the knowledge that our Premier will always put people first, that she will not be dictated to and that she will keep them safe whilst building a strong economic recovery for all Queenslanders. Whether they be from the city or the country, rural or regional, she will stand strong with them to move us all forward beyond the difficult events of this year.

Hervey Bay is an electorate that is special. It has limitless natural beauty, from its pristine waters of the Hervey Bay itself, to the unique areas of the Great Sandy Straits, to the diverse flora and fauna of K'gari—Fraser Island—the national and World Heritage listed sand island and one of the natural wonders of the world. I must note without understating it that it is going through a very challenging period right at this time. I would like to put on the record my recognition of the men and women of the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, the Rural Fire Service, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and the Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation who have been and are currently battling the ongoing fire situation there. Your work to contain and limit the damage to this natural beauty is a testament to your grit and determination to protect life and property.

The people who live in the Hervey Bay electorate, from the suburbs of Pialba, Torquay, Scarness, Kawungan, Point Vernon, Urangan, Urraween, Eli Waters, Wondunna and the townships and hamlets of River Heads, Eurong and Happy Valley, just to name a few, are fully aware that they live in one of the world's most unique locations and are proud of our diverse region. The Hervey Bay area has a rich history, one where fields were sown for cane and crops, timber was logged and sand was mined, cattle raised and fishing enjoyed. This collection of small villages became the holiday playground for the industrial town of Maryborough, just down the road. Since then, the Hervey Bay electorate has grown to become a thriving diverse community and city.

May I inform the House that many years ago members in this place often referred to Hervey Bay as a place for the newlyweds and the nearly deads, or God's waiting room. I can tell honourable members that this is well and truly not the case anymore and that myth should be expunged. The Hervey Bay electorate is now a growing regional area of around 53,000 people. Its people are drawn from all over Australia and the world. From the traditional owners, the Butchulla peoples thousands of years young, with their own dialect, laws and customs as told to them by their Moonie Jarl, to those whose time may only span weeks or months, they come from the north and the south of our great country and via perilous journeys in boats and in planes. These are the people who make our region diverse. People come to the bay to enjoy an enhanced healthy lifestyle, interacting with its natural surrounds, and to lay down foundations for their future and that of their children.

Hervey Bay is an electorate on the move, a growing and ever diverse city and region, full of growing opportunity. Why, you might ask? The answer is simple. Since the cutting of community services, the selling of public assets and the sacking of hardworking nurses, teachers and public servants by those opposite stopped five years ago, the Hervey Bay electorate has a new vigour and an excitement about the services and programs being delivered by successive Palaszczuk Labor governments, even though it pained the opposition to say so. I speak of services and projects like the \$42 million Hervey Bay accident and emergency centre at the Hervey Bay Hospital built by Labor; the \$5.4 million Hervey Bay State High School performing arts centre under construction, employing dozens of local tradies and apprentices; new multipurpose halls coming to the Urangan school communities; upgraded and enhanced roads and the removal of dangerous intersections—all delivered or being delivered by this government.

There have been countless Works for Queensland projects, tens of millions of dollars in infrastructure, like the skate parks, the rail trails, the walking and recreational facilities, the water parks and the adventure playgrounds in our magnificent botanical gardens, the upgraded bush chapel and the Orchid House and a tourism first, like swimming with some of the world's most beautiful creatures, complementing the best whale-watching experience on this planet bar none. These Palaszczuk Labor government outcomes have made Hervey Bay a dynamic place to live, work and play. Since the worst of those COVID months, the Hervey Bay electorate is again good to go for business because of the carefully managed and fully considered decisions taken by our Premier and her government, but there is still more to do.

Like all communities across the length and breadth of Queensland, the Hervey Bay electorate has its issues that need to be worked on and resolved. Like all growing regions, we need more jobs and more services; we need to continue to enhance our schools and our health services; and we need to ensure the Hervey Bay people are kept safe and cared for, no matter what their financial or personal status. This is what I was told as my team and I stood on the polling booths and at the market stalls, on the doorsteps, in the streets, at the footy games and down at the local pubs by the many hundreds and thousands of residents across the Hervey Bay electorate. Their message was clear. They said we need to clearly focus on the things that move us forward over those that tear us apart, the things that together will move Hervey Bay forward to an even brighter future.

I am seriously regional in my outlook and for this I do not apologise. Anybody who has worked with me during my days as a cleaner, a grocery store packer, a factory hand, a family small business partner and a government worker knows that I will use every opportunity to promote and argue the toss as to why a region should have a particular project, service or program equal to that of a larger city. I have spent nearly all my working life outside of major cities. I have a passion for bringing our regional cities and towns up to par with our city counterparts, and I will endlessly push for that over my time in this place.

I ran in two elections telling the fine people of Hervey Bay that if elected, I would strive to turn the Hervey Bay electorate into a centre of learning and education for the Wide Bay region. I know that it is a big ask as there are a number of factors in play in trying to deliver this vision. Some are out of state's control, like the shameful doubling of university fees on some degrees imposed by a coalition government that will make it harder, not easier, for children to complete their desired education in Hervey Bay, whilst we on this side make it easier by delivering free TAFE for those 25 years and under. The contrast is stark. That does not mean that I will not be trying. The reason I am focusing on this vision is because it is my lived experience. By returning to study at 30 years of age at TAFE as an adult learner and then studying at university, I observed how when people are given the opportunity to learn and train, the experience is transformative for them and their families. Their paths and opportunities are endless, and this goes for anyone at any age from any social or financial background.

The power of knowledge and newly learned skills is liberating for any who are able to pursue it, and I will work to make Hervey Bay the centre of educational excellence. During my time in this place as the member for Hervey Bay, I will focus on this amongst many other outcomes. I give a warning to the honourable ministers and assistant ministers: your doors may need a fresh coat of paint or varnish by the time this member is finished!

I, like many here, come to this place having had a varied life. I do not think I am the youngest first-term MP to be elected to this place but, as they say, age is but a number. By way of background, I am a proud first-generation son of an Italian migrant who came to this country at 17 with little in his pocket but a lot of hope. Can you imagine at just 17 crossing the world, in a boat for a month, to a foreign country whose language you could not speak in a driven pursuit to ensure your children did not have to suffer the ravages of a war-torn country?

My father, Pietro Tantari, better known as Peter, was a strong man, driven to succeed. He would instil in his sons a pride in the dignity of work, whatever it may be, or in education, which for him ended at age seven because of war. His ongoing learning was to master the English language through his son's learnings and to remove his own prejudices and intolerances of things that may be different from the way he was raised. What my father saw as a young man was horrific. He passed down to his sons that, no matter who you are or where you are from, we all are human and we all want the same things: a good, healthy life free from discrimination and persecution and to be able to provide for and raise our families so that, hopefully, our children get better opportunities than we ourselves had. The one lesson that stays with me today is how Dad, with Mum, built our life with bare hands and aching backs. Dad always said, 'Work hard and enjoy the rewards. Sons, you only get out what you put in.'

My mother, Lois, whom we lost only a little over two weeks ago, was the family bedrock. She would care for and provide our home, our safe haven, whilst Dad worked extraordinarily long hours. My recall of Dad at an early age was to see him come home exhausted, only to find him gone again before we woke. It was normal not to see him for lengthy periods as he tended to his work and provided as much as he could for us all. With Dad gone, Mum was the one who would often spark my interest in a social issue of the day but, because I was of such a young age, I would often wonder what she was on about. It was not until I got older and we as a family fell into some rough times that I realised why she was so animated about some old, grey-haired, white guy on a grainy black-and-white TV. How the circle turns! At least I am in colour now! It was these lived experiences that planted the seeds of understanding of how the decisions taken by people in places like this House can alter and change lives.

My political journey commenced with political actions or inactions at a national and local level. I will show my age now, but I grew up at a time when the world was experiencing a fair bit of turmoil. The issues floating at the time were raw for this country. One issue was the Vietnam War and the protests about whether our boys should go. My brother Carl was on the cusp. Fortunately, his number did not come up. Then the Whitlam-Barnard government put an end to that episode. Another of these actions was the Dismissal. My young brain could not comprehend how an elected Prime Minister could be dismissed in such a fashion. I thought it was unfair and basically undemocratic. I think this, too, planted a seed that later became an interest in how our country and states were run.

As I did not come from a family steeped in politics or from a union background, I was the first in my family to join a political party in Australia. My dad was interested in the politics of his old country but did not engage in activity here in Australia. At election time, my mum would be heard saying to her relatives, 'Labor's the only party that looked after us'—'us' meaning the working class.

When my mum and dad went through a rough personal patch, which is all too common today but which back then was something not spoken about, my mum had to seek assistance to find housing. As Mum doorknocked the then political offices, it was a Labor politician and his staff who put their hand out and made us safe. His name was Lance Barnard and his staff member was Gill James, who in her own right went on to become a long-serving Labor member for the Tasmanian House of Assembly. It was through this caring act that I knew that Labor was the party I could believe in—one that helped the down-and-out and the battler when we needed help.

My values were honed by these actions, and I knew that the values to take me through life would be fairness and equality for all—no matter your social standing, the colour of your skin or any of your preferences. I thought at the time that doing a job like that, where you actually make a real difference in people's lives, would be great. Little did I know at that time that eventually I would go on to do that role for four members of parliament. From that time on, I have always wanted to help make a difference in people's lives. I knew then, as I have over the last 30 years of membership, that the great Australian Labor Party is the party of the people, the party of my values and the party for all who need a helping hand.

I take the opportunity to thank the tireless workers who made my standing in this place a reality. They are the women and men who make up the Hervey Bay branch of the Australian Labor Party. Without discounting the work done by any of the many who helped on the stalls and the roadsides, letterboxed thousands of leaflets and generally kept the candidate on track, I would like to put on the record my sincere and deepest thanks to Ross and Loraine Olm, Bert and Carol Dawson, Rosemary Skinner, Jane Barnes and Trevor Collison. They were my ragtag bunch, my bowyang. They held me up, they gave everything and more when I needed it most over two campaigns and they supported me in some of my toughest moments. We hung tough and we made it. For that, I and the Labor movement will forever be in your debt.

There is one person I must single out: the Hervey Bay branch's unflappable secretary, Doreen Wright. With her wonderful partner, Andy, she stepped up and took over when my world started to spin rapidly. She was my manager, carer and sounding-board when I needed it most. Doreen, no words can describe your courage in this campaign. I will forever be indebted to you for your dedication to the cause and for your wise counsel.

One of the hardest challenges for a candidate to enter this place is the enormous weight that we bring to bear on our closest people, the ones we love—our family and our friends. They carry a heavy burden trying to love you when 'candidate-itis' sets in. To my sons, Ben and Sam, who will have to deal with his own lifelong challenges, I thank you for being strong whilst Dad was away for long periods over two campaigns and for continuing to step up now that I am in this place. I love you and apologise now for the lost time we will not spend together. Son, you will always be my champion and the source of my inspiration as I try to solve some of our hometown's problems.

To my beautiful daughter, Anna, born in Hervey Bay, who graduated from high school only two weeks ago: when I look into your eyes I see what you can and will be, sweetie. As I look across this chamber I know that you are inspired, as I am, by the brilliant women who sit here to represent you and your gender. Never let anyone tell you that you cannot be whatever you want to be because you are a girl. Stand up, be proud and show them all what you are made of. Watch out, world: her generation is coming. I cannot wait for their rise.

I also thank a number of other strong women who have stood up in my life and who have had to put up with my rantings and ravings and suffer from my politics over a very long time. Sue, I will always thank you for pushing me to make myself better. You hold a special place as a dear friend. Our children are the greatest gift you could have ever given. Sam, for the last number of years you have been my grounding force—the one who was there when I thought everything was turning bad. Your calmness and quiet disposition underlie a strength that has been the foundation of everything we achieved. For that I am truly grateful.

Last but by no means least, to my bros—Carl, John and Rick—to Bruce, to Paul and Trish, and to Ron and George: I would not have made it here without your support and encouragement over a long time. I would also like to thank the great Australian Labor Party, which gave me the honour and privilege of standing under the Labor flag so that I could come to this place to represent the people of the Hervey Bay electorate.

I again take this opportunity to thank the people of the Hervey Bay electorate who voted Labor, many for the first time, at the last election. Your faith in the Palaszczuk government is not taken lightly. We will strive every day to fulfil your hopes and aspirations for our great city and region, and we will deliver the services and programs that you need.

With this election over, it is now time to focus on a common goal—one where all of those from Hervey Bay work together to continue to build a fairer and more just community; one where we have a more compassionate society; one where we do not let those who fall behind stay there, where we reach back and help them to the front again; one where we put people first by keeping them safe and strong. I want to finish by quoting the inspirational words of one of the greatest talents of the modern era, Mr John Lennon, who said—

Imagine no possessions

I wonder if you can

No need for greed or hunger

A brotherhood of man

Imagine all the people sharing all the world

You may say I'm a dreamer

But I'm not the only one

I hope some day you'll join us

And the world will live as one

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the next member, I remind members that this is the member's first speech in this place and, as such, the appropriate courtesies should be afforded to the member on such an occasion.

 **Dr MacMAHON** (South Brisbane—Grn) (12.01 pm): I start by acknowledging the custodial owners of the land that we meet on today, the Jagera, Yuggera and Turrbal people, and pay respects to elders past and present. Sovereignty was never ceded and I acknowledge the struggles for land and sovereignty by the Ugarapul and Yuggera people at Deebing Creek and the Wangan and Jagalingou people in Central Western Queensland—struggles that I commit to supporting in my role inside and outside of parliament.

I have to first thank the people of South Brisbane. I look forward to fighting for you and alongside you for the next four years and beyond. South Brisbane is a rich, diverse and mobilised community and I feel so privileged to have the opportunity to represent you; to put your interests first; to fight for you before big business; to fight for our local schools, public transport, green space and push back against overdevelopment. My pledge to the people of South Brisbane is that I will be fighting for you and fighting to ensure that every Queenslanders, regardless of background or ability, gets access to the things that we need to lead a good life—homes, education, health care and community—and I look forward to what we can achieve together over the next few years, so thank you.

I want to thank my family—Sally and Phil; my siblings, Sophie, Ben and Campbell; and my surviving grandparents, Anne and Norm. With their support, I am the proud recipient of a state education and a lifetime of support for the fights and struggles that I have committed my life to, including my time in Bangladesh where my experience working with women farmers facing climate change changed my life.

I particularly want to acknowledge the ongoing inspiration of my late, great-grandmother, Ruth Miller, whose work has been acknowledged in this chamber before. In 1971 Tom Aikens, the then member for Townsville South, who was kicked out of the Labor Party for being a socialist, recognised Ruth Miller's work running a mobile clinic in Mount Isa with a particular focus on remote Aboriginal communities. Ruth was a committed republican and turned down a Queen's birthday award in the 1980s. She protested the demolition of the Bellevue Hotel by the Deen brothers just around the corner from here. I, my siblings and my cousins carry her spirit and her commitment to justice and transformative change.

I also want to acknowledge my mother, Sally Miller. Sally joins us today in the gallery. She is one of the most kind, creative and loving people that I know. The setback of a stroke in 2012 transformed our family fundamentally and the experience has highlighted for us the woeful gaps that still exist in our healthcare system, our transport system and our disability and support services. Even accessing this building is a reminder of the structural barriers that face people with disabilities. Not only these barriers but also my mother's determination have had a huge impact on my politics and have reconfirmed my commitment to a Queensland where our state's immense wealth is used for the benefit of everyday Queenslanders for access, for education, for health care, for housing, for mental health care and for publicly owned essential services that are free for everyone.

The presence of the member for Maiwar and me here is thanks to a growing movement of everyday people who are fed up with a political system that is no longer capable of meeting some of our most basic needs, a movement of everyday people who believe that, when we work together, when we connect on the issues that matter to us, we are powerful. We are more powerful than big money, we are more powerful than the big corporations and we are more powerful than the major parties.

I want to thank a team of staff and volunteers who have been driving our movement: my campaign manager, Liam, who joins us here today, and my campaign team of Elena, Eva, Sally, Declan, Csilla, Luisa and Kristin and a wide support team including Max, Nicole, Kitty, Ammar, Kirsten Lovejoy, Katinka Winston-Allom, Larissa Waters, Jonathan Sri and many more who are joining us here today.

Most importantly, thank you to the hundreds of volunteers who make up our movement and who have spent the last eight months having tens of thousands of conversations with people at the doors and on the phones delivering our powerful message of hope, and this is the message: Queensland is a wealthy state. We are rich with beautiful beaches, sunshine, farmland, rainforests. We have a rich culture and history going back at least 60,000 years and achievements in sports, science and the arts.

Of course, we are rich in mineral resources, but, unlike our beaches and sunshine, this is a wealth enjoyed only by the few at the expense of the many. In the five financial years between 2013 and 2018, 10 of the biggest mining corporations operating in Queensland made over \$128 billion in revenue and paid less than one per cent in tax, with eight of those companies paying zero dollars in tax. We have suffered a lost decade of mining revenue.

Between 2010 and 2020, mining corporations exported over \$480 billion worth of coal, minerals and LNG and only paid seven per cent royalties on that. There are mining CEOs like Mark Cutifani of Anglo American who take home \$21 million salaries but cry poor that their companies cannot afford to pay more in royalties. It is not just mining corporations. Bank misconduct has cost Australians over \$200 billion in the last five years. In Queensland that is \$38 billion that has been ripped out of the pockets of everyday Queenslanders. Meanwhile, in South Brisbane property developers have been allowed to make millions of dollars of profit off our neighbourhoods with a planning system geared towards developers rather than investment in crucial public infrastructure.

In a state as wealthy as Queensland one would expect that we would have the best funded schools, the best public transport system; one would think no child would go hungry, that no-one would be worried about having a roof over their head, that every family could afford uniforms and club sports for their kids, and that we would be a leader in climate action. From the tens of thousands of conversations we have had with everyday people right across Queensland we know that is just not the case.

Queensland is a wealthy state, but I think about the elderly woman from Dutton Park I spoke to a few months ago over the phone who wanted to move to a social housing dwelling with fewer stairs and was told there were no other housing options for her. Our social housing waiting list is now at 40,000 people, growing at a rate of 20 per cent every year.

Queensland is a wealthy state, but right now local schools and P&Cs that I have visited are fundraising for basic things like classroom resources, air conditioning or building maintenance. Our state schools are the most underfunded in the country. In South Brisbane our state schools are underfunded by \$12 million every year. Queensland is a wealthy state, but I think about the young people I have spoken to who have been out of work over the COVID period competing with at least 15 other people for every job advertised. Child poverty in Queensland is at 18 per cent, nearly the highest in the country, and the COVID crisis has exacerbated the depth of inequality in Queensland.

Queensland is a wealthy state, but we have an epidemic of mental illness. I think about the young woman in Woolloongabba who said she was looking for work and in the meantime she could not afford even the subsidised mental health sessions. She was navigating an expensive, hostile system that often passes off sadness as a personal imbalance rather than a reflection of a society that too often aligns our worth with our ability to generate profit. Queensland is a wealthy state, but there are 120 men in indefinite detention in Kangaroo Point, held in lockdown with the support of the Queensland Police Service. They are coming up to eight years of their lives being lost to a barbaric system supported by both of the major parties. Queensland is a wealthy state, but after people lost their homes in bushfires this year, fossil fuel companies have continued to have coalmines approved by both of the major parties.

These issues are not natural, inevitable or insurmountable. Poverty, inequality, deprivation, racism and climate change are structural outcomes of a system that puts the profits of the few ahead of the needs of the many, a system facilitated by politicians who have so often become deeply disconnected from everyday people. These are failings created by policies and decisions about who gets what and who makes profits; decisions about the quality of our air, our water, our climate; decisions about who gets an education, who gets a roof over their head and who can get home safely at night-time.

We in this chamber, together with our communities, social movements, unions, community groups and protest groups, have the capacity and responsibility to change that. Queensland is a wealthy state. We in this chamber have the responsibility to ensure that everyone can enjoy that wealth, the responsibility to make decisions that make sure that every Queenslander gets housing, schools, health care, food, water, clean air, time with their family and friends, and time to enjoy our beaches and rainforests. The Greens have been told that we are crazy for saying this is even possible—even by people in this chamber—but it is actually pretty simple.

It is time to take the power and wealth off the billionaires and multinational companies and give it to everyday Queenslanders. If we did that, if we made mining companies, the banks and the property developers pay their fair share, we could deliver free school breakfasts and lunches for every Queensland child; we could build 100,000 public homes across Queensland, creating thousands of jobs; we could build 200 new free GP clinics across Queensland; we could tackle overdevelopment with a planning scheme that puts people and essential infrastructure first; and we could revive manufacturing to build the solar panels, wind turbines and green steel right here in Queensland, creating thousands of jobs and achieving 100 per cent publicly owned clean energy; we could roll out a COVID economic recovery plan that puts people first.

We could do all this and more. Queensland is a wealthy state. I ask anyone in this chamber to go out and ask a regular Queenslanders what they think of the idea of making big corporations finally pay their fair share of Queensland's immense wealth, if they think that is common sense, and I would bet the answer would almost certainly be 'bloody oath it is!' The question then is if this parliament is supposed to represent the people, why are we not seeing mining royalties raised so we can fund school lunches? Why are we not making the big banks pay a modest levy to fund free public transport? Why is it that Mark Cutifani can continue to make \$21 million a year while our schools cannot afford basic amenities? It is common sense to most people.

My colleague Tom O'Grady, who joins us in the gallery and who ran as the Greens' candidate in Townsville, shared with me a story about a chef who was not planning on voting because he did not think anyone running actually cared about working people. All he wanted was support with the cost of living so he could do more for his kids. After talking through the Greens' platform, he committed to voting Greens. I think about the young nurse in East Brisbane, whom I spoke to at length about our healthcare system, who felt that free hospital parking, paid for by a bank levy, would be transformative for her colleagues and her patients.

The fact of the matter is that this parliament represents Mark Cutifani of Anglo American more than it does that young nurse in East Brisbane. Queensland is a wealthy state, but our political system funnels wealth into multinational mining corporations, and for everyday people nothing is trickling down. Both major parties take millions of dollars in big corporate donations, have secretive cash-for-access meetings and jump back and forth between roles in government and lobbying firms. Queensland is a wealthy state, but our political system is rigged.

The reality is that if we want all Queenslanders to have access to the basics that we need to live a good life we need to turn this parliament inside out. We have to make it represent everyday people again, not big corporations. That is what I am here to do. For the first time ever, Queensland has two Greens MPs who are not beholden to big corporations; two Greens MPs ready to stick up for everyday Queenslanders; two Greens MPs backed up by a movement of everyday people that is only growing.

I say to the people outside of this parliament, do not leave it up to the people in this chamber alone to make this change. The scale of change we need in Queensland to tackle poverty, inequality, climate change and the housing crisis is going to take all of us. Taking on those big corporations is going to take all of us. To make parliament represent everyday people again is going to take all of us. To take back Queensland's immense wealth for the benefit of everyday people will take all of us.

To the people of South Brisbane, to the member for Maiwar, to my colleagues in the gallery and the many people who make up this movement: from the bottom of my heart I have so much gratitude for the opportunity for the next four years to be fighting for everyday people and making these changes. Thank you.

MOTION

Order of Business



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (12.19 pm): I move—

That government business order of the day No. 1 be postponed.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Resumed from 26 November (see p. 99).

Second Reading



Hon. SM FENTIMAN (Waterford—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (12.19 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.



Mr NICHOLLS (Clayfield—LNP) (12.20 pm): Obviously new change is afoot, Mr Speaker, as you look to the member for Redcliffe to speak as the Attorney-General and get some guidance from the Clerk. It is a pleasure to be back on the opposition front bench after reflecting on the pleasures of the

freedom of the backbench. It is a pleasure to take up the cudgels as the shadow Attorney-General and shadow minister for justice in the 57th Parliament. This pleasure will only be exceeded by taking up the role of Attorney-General and minister for justice in the 58th Parliament, which I am looking forward to. I congratulate the Attorney-General on her appointment to the role. I look forward to serious debate about significant matters that will arise in the portfolio over the next four years. It is also a pleasure to be contributing to the debate on this the first bill of the 57th Parliament.

The COVID-19 Emergency Response and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 is somewhat uninspiringly named but it will have a significant impact on the lives of many and the operation of businesses in this state. With the opening of the borders to Greater Sydney and Victoria today and with the arrival of passengers on airline flights at Brisbane Airport in my electorate of Clayfield this morning, we can hope for better times ahead and a time when hopefully this legislation can be consigned to a dim past. In that vein, I hope that jobs will return to the very many people who live in my electorate and throughout Queensland and who work in the airline industry and at airports, including Brisbane Airport.

I know of many who have struggled over the past eight months as a result of the border closures: people who have had to take their kids out of school and people who have had to take up second and even third jobs to hold on to the family home, to keep the lights on and to keep their families together. I also extend my sympathy to those in the airline industry affected by the announcements made yesterday by Qantas about the loss of jobs on the ground at airports across the country, again particularly at Queensland airports. Queenslanders will be paying a heavy price as a result of government decisions made during the past eight months as those governments responded to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The LNP will not be opposing this bill. Earlier this year the LNP supported the COVID-19 Emergency Response Act and the Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020 and will continue to support that legislation, which aims to make people's lives safer and business more prosperous during what is hopefully the start of the end of this pandemic and the recovery from it. While this may not be the end of the pandemic, to misquote Churchill hopefully it is the beginning of the end. The main function of the bill is administrative in nature and aims to extend the expiry date of the emergency response act, the regulations made under the emergency response act and a range of statutory instruments that are all due to expire on 31 December this year. Those changes have provided certainty to business and community while the policy of social distancing has been in place and have facilitated the ongoing requirements of the very many facets of our day-to-day lives.

Many people live in community title schemes and have been unable to meet to carry out their normal business, which is a very important facet of day-to-day life, particularly in our cities. People have had to carry on with the business of signing documents, making wills and entering into contracts and negotiations. Whether they are having a meeting of their body corporate, signing documents or, unfortunately and regrettably, responding to domestic violence incidents, life has had to go on and this legislation has facilitated that.

As we come to the festive season and Queenslanders and, I am sure, many members in this place quite understandably look forward to Christmas holidays and time with friends and family, it would be both unfair and unreasonable to expect them to come to grips with wholesale changes that are currently in operation from the first day of the new year in 2021. Many of the changes affected under the COVID-19 Emergency Response Act and the Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Act have provided practical and sensible measures that have enabled social distancing requirements to be adhered to during this pandemic.

The objects of the bill are quite clear and they are set out in the explanatory notes. I am sure that many members will have read those in detail and taken note of them. For the benefit of those who may have skimmed the notes only briefly, the objects of the bill include extending the operation of the COVID-19 related legislation required to respond to the impact of the government's COVID-19 restrictions until 30 April 2021 or an earlier date that can be prescribed by regulation. They amend the Youth Justice Act to allow the chief executive to delegate his or her powers to qualified temporary detention centre employees in the event of a future COVID-19 outbreak.

They amend the Electoral Act to provide flexibility in the conduct of by-elections. Of course, the current provisions only took us up to 31 October. As we are going to find out in subsequent discussions in relation to this legislation, potentially there will be by-elections to fill vacancies in the office of a mayor or a councillor. The bill amends the process for filling a vacancy in the office of a mayor or councillor that arises, as so eloquently termed, during the period starting on a quadrennial election and ending on the day before the first anniversary of the election—that is, the first year of a four-year term.

The bill ensures that legislation or regulations necessary to respond to the COVID-19 emergency continue past the currently mandated 31 December end date by setting the new end date of 30 April 2021, subject to advice from the Chief Health Officer. We say that the background information of that advice should be openly and freely provided to the public. I am sure that we all hope for an earlier end date than 30 April 2021. I could say that, knowing the process of this government as we do, we might not expect either the release of the information guiding the CHO's advice or an earlier end date, but that would be unkind and uncharitable at this early stage of the parliament. Therefore, I and, indeed, Queenslanders live in hope that the government will provide the information and act swiftly to return businesses and people's lives to normal before 30 April 2021 if the advice and circumstances permit.

In considering this bill the opposition considered a four-month or earlier time frame to be acceptable and also notes that an extension beyond 30 April 2021 will require a further bill and further consideration of this parliament. In those circumstances we consider that the time frame of four months is understandable. As I say, hopefully it will be able to be terminated sooner by regulation. Let us hope another extension is not required.

I will deal with a couple of matters of particular significance in relation to this legislation. The first of those is commercial leases. In her explanatory speech the Attorney-General said that the Retail Shop Leases and Other Commercial Leases (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Regulation 2020 was made to give effect to good faith leasing principles for non-residential leases agreed by the national cabinet and establishes a process for resolving disputes. We all remember when, in late April and early May, this was a matter of some considerable significance for landlords and tenants.

The bill will preserve the rights and obligations that have accrued during the lease protection period up to 31 December 2020. I think the original period ended in September and was extended, and it has been extended to 31 December 2020. That was the period that would allow for, if you like, negotiation and a reduction in rent because of falls in turnover of tenants. It will also facilitate the conclusion of any lease disputes that may still be on foot. If anyone is unable to achieve a resolution and subsequently there is a dispute, a process has been put in place. As the legislation states, that was established by the national cabinet.

There is no doubt that many in the property industry would like to see the lease regulation come to a complete end on 31 December. There is also no doubt that this has been one of the most contentious issues for a sector that is among the largest contributors to investment and employment, not to mention economic activity and taxes, in this state. It is also a sector that provides security of income for many prudent people who invest in property in order to secure their future either as superannuants or for their family or other reasons.

The Property Council has called for the lease regulation to end completely on 31 December. For landlords, the postponement of the expiry date of part of the lease regulation will continue to impact significantly on their property rights. We cannot be under any misapprehension that this lease regulation significantly altered the private property rights of both landlords and tenants. It sought to provide government intervention into what has traditionally been, and properly so, the realm of private deals between individuals best placed to make decisions about their rights.

While accepting the government's view on this matter, we believe that this regulation has had a dramatic effect on lease covenants and the sooner normal commercial principles can return to private contracts between individual entities the better for all concerned. In the meantime, the preservation of accrued rights under the lease regulation should demand from the government sufficient resources for the expeditious resolution of any disputes and the rapid end to a significant intrusion into private property rights.

I acknowledge that this is not solely the responsibility of the Queensland government. These were principles that were agreed at the national level. These impacts are felt not just by large property owners, but in many cases small investors and owners who have suffered substantial losses and been forced to bear the brunt of those losses, with some little sympathy from this government—not no sympathy but little sympathy.

I am sure like many in this place, I have received many inquiries and heard many stories of the anguish and personal loss suffered by many honest and good landlords who have dealt with their tenants fairly and openly. Equally, there have been cases of unreasonably hard lines taken by some landlords. That is not to be unexpected in these circumstances. This is not to favour any one side of the lease bargain. It is simply to highlight the dangers of abandoning time tested principles of commercial property leasing and the well-established principles of resolving these disputes which

inevitably arise. The truth is that while in this case necessary, government intervention in private property matters rarely delivers as consistently as good a result as a bargain freely entered into according to the needs and desires of the parties negotiating it.

I want to touch on the local government runner-up laws. The changes to the Local Government Act are being rushed through this week—changes directly attributable to the incompetence and political game playing of the Labor government. The need for this follows the sudden resignation of Margaret Strelow as the mayor of Rockhampton following adverse findings of the Councillor Conduct Tribunal.

In fulfilment of the law of unintended consequences, a former Labor member who left the party because of her unhappiness with the Labor preselection process and ran as an independent in the state election has now been caught again by Labor laws and, in a trifecta of failings, Labor was left with the prospect of 'Pineapple' being the mayor of one of Queensland's major regional cities. You seriously cannot make this stuff up! Rocky must be a great place to be a Labor Party member. First, a seemingly popular local mayor and party member gets rolled for preselection in favour of the current member. This is, of course, after a constant campaign, that all in this place remember, of white anting the previous Labor member, good old rats in the rafters, Bill Byrne. We all remember Bill, the former member for Rockhampton.

Then Mayor Strelow has an unfavourable finding made against her and decides to quit as mayor, leaving a bit of a steaming mess of Labor's own making. Then what happens? The current member for Rockhampton then calls for her to not run again, calls her actions a childish tantrum and an expensive stunt—perhaps settling an old score given that in 2017 Mayor Strelow, then running as an independent, scored 23½ per cent of the vote and the current member for Rockhampton got 31.7 per cent of the vote—while the member for Keppel goes and visits Pineapple to try to persuade him not to take up the position of mayor.

The Rocky Labor Party is in it all together all the way through. They are blueing amongst themselves. They are undermining their own mayor. They are undermining their former member. The bloke who won on 31 per cent of the primary vote does not like the mayor who left and is saying, 'Don't run again.' We have the member for Keppel out there intervening and paying a personal visit to Pineapple's shop to try to convince him not to take up the position. An hour later the then acting local government minister—the now tourism minister, I think—said, 'We will introduce retrospective legislation.'

I never thought I would say it, but bring back Schwarto. We want to see Schwarto. At least when Schwarto went in hard it was just a bit of Labour Day biffa after a few Fourex with the partner of the federal member. At least it was all out on the street there. You could see it. He had a good right hook and they all went down scrambling around on Labour Day. Maybe they are going to bring him back. Here is my prediction: he is going to put his hand up and run for mayor. He is going to forget about all the back room business of just doing the numbers and getting people in and out of the way as he pleases and actually take up the position. He is going to give up wood turning. He is no longer on the board of the QBCC. He has stepped off that I think. He is going to emerge from the swamp and take on Rockhampton. Bring back Schwarto, a person who stood up for Labor principles in this place, gave as good as he got and did not muck around in doing so. I did enjoy having Schwarto in this place. We miss him a fair bit.

That is the Labor Party in Rockhampton as far as anyone can make out. I am not sure they know what is going on. We certainly do not. It is interesting to speculate about what is going on up there. I do not know who is going to be in more danger, the current member for Rockhampton or the current member for Keppel.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Pause the clock. Member, I have given you a great deal of latitude. I bring you back to the long title of the bill. Certainly some of that information was helpful in explaining your position, but I would ask you to come back to the long title of the bill.

Mr NICHOLLS: Indeed. I am indeed grateful for your forbearance, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The bill provides that where a mayor resigns within their first 12 months of being elected, a by-election will be called. Where a councillor resigns within the first 12 months of being elected, the council they are a member of will have the option whether to conduct a by-election or impose the runner-up provisions. In effect, we are going back to what was the case before the changes made earlier this year. Those decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

The amendments retrospectively remove the amendments that were rushed through parliament earlier this year and of which the opposition was given notice of at 9 pm the night before the debate on the bill. Concerns about the impact of those rushed laws were raised by the shadow minister for local

government, the member Warrego, whom I am sure will not mind me quoting her. She may indeed reflect on her own words when she makes her contribution. She stated—

Filling the vacancy of a mayoral position during the first 12 months after a quadrennial election with a runner-up is a significant departure from the existing legislation, which states that the position must be filled by way of a by-election.

The member for Warrego goes on to ask the question—

What if the departing mayor won with 80 per cent of the vote and the next two candidates had 11 per cent and nine per cent? How could appointing a runner-up be a reflection of the electorate's wishes in those circumstances? They would be appointing somebody who won 11 per cent of the vote.

...

The full implication of these amendments has not been realised by the stakeholders or by the public.

I think that is probably true given that they were only delivered at nine o'clock at night. She continued—

This is just another rorting of the voting system by the Labor government and it is particularly undemocratic when it relates to the way that mayors can be elected.

Her words have the ring of truth about them. We know they have the ring of truth about them because the Labor Party is coming back into this place to change things back to the way they were because they got it wrong when they rushed those amendments through.

I have been in this place and around the political environment long enough to remember Labor's ongoing and continuous fiddling with and major changes to local governments. Let us not forget, it was Terry Mackenroth who first wanted to penalise councillors who sought election to either this place or the federal parliament. He effectively required them to lose their positions as councillors if they wanted to serve the public in another forum. He made no bones about it. Unlike anyone else in any other occupation, councillors had to lose their jobs. One could be a public servant and take leave and still be able to run. I absolutely had a great deal of time for Terry Mackenroth. He introduced that and he was proud to introduce it saying, 'This is a fix because I am sick of all those who come out of small councils throughout the state running for state parliament or federal parliament.'

There are no sour grapes from me. I was affected by those changes. I took the chance knowing the risks. I was happy to take on the then Labor MP for Clayfield and win the seat fair and square in 2006—and, I might say, hold it for five subsequent elections. Who knows how many councillors could have served in this place and who chose not to stand simply because of that law.

Who can forget the Beattie Labor government's complete betrayal of the local government sector in 2007 with the forced amalgamation process? There was no word of it before the 2006 election campaign. They rolled in here and presumed to say, 'There are too many local governments. We are going to reduce you all from 173 down to 87 or 89,' and there was no discussion about it. It was sprung on the councils and sprung on the LGAQ, who had engaged in a sustainability process with that very government to address the issues in relation to size and sustainability of those local authorities. It was a dark day and is a stain on that government.

Who could forget that at the time one of the most affected local government areas, yet again, was Rockhampton and the Keppel coast with the amalgamation of the Livingstone shire council and the Rockhampton council—and how well did that go! There was the forced acquisition of councils' water assets under the Beattie government and the creation again of amalgamated water bodies and a plethora of bureaucracies simply to deliver water that had been successfully delivered for decades.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. As fascinating as this trip down memory lane is, I cannot see its actual relevance to the bill before the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Member, I have been giving quite a degree of latitude. I ask you to come back to the long title of the bill.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Of course I take your direction. It will be fascinating for the member for Miller because we all remember that he cut and run from the Brisbane City Council in 2004 when he did not get the position he wanted as chair of planning.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! Again, I bring you back to the long title of the bill. I am not finding that any more relevant than the last contribution, member. I ask you to come back to the long title.

Mr NICHOLLS: Indeed.

Mr Bailey: Go easy on me, Tim.

Mr NICHOLLS: It is only my first day back in the job and the member for Miller already wants me to go easy on him. Just wait until I have had four more years in the job going hard! That will be a different kettle of fish. We have not even touched on the promises he sort of made in Clayfield which we will be coming back to at some stage as well.

Mr Deputy Speaker, to take your direction rather than taking any more interjections from the member for Miller, I come now to the point of why we are debating this particular legislation. It is a direct follow on from the changes that were made in the last term when the former minister for local government could not resist interfering in local government. In much the same manner as his rail fail and his management of the racing portfolio, he has got it wrong again—yet again. We are back in here with this legislation having to correct his mistakes. We will support the amendments under this bill, and the member for Warrego will no doubt expand further on this.

While we are here, I think it is important that we touch on a matter of wider concern that we have in relation to the process of consideration of this bill. This bill has been marked, if you like, or has been designated as urgent, requiring urgent consideration. A bill introduced on Thursday, on the first full sitting day of this parliament, is now being debated on the second full sitting day of this parliament with a short period in between. Like so many other proposed pieces of legislation that have come before the House, it has not gone through the normal committee and parliamentary scrutiny process.

Of course, particular circumstances might necessitate urgent legislation to be brought before this House without committee scrutiny. No-one disputes that. There may well be valid reasons but whether this is one of those types of legislation is, in my view, debatable. It is not as though the expiry date of 31 December has not been known for some time. It is not as though the election date was unknown. It is not as though warnings were not provided about the pitfalls of the Local Government Act changes at the time that they were brought in.

Labor is becoming more and more familiar with abusing proper parliamentary processes. In the current case the former minister tacked 229 amendments on to the amendment bill of 2019 and the opposition was given notice of those 229 amendments on the night before the bill was debated. Now, in a state of embarrassment, the government has to come back in and revert the amendments because precisely what was feared in relation to the changes made has now occurred. As I said earlier in my speech, the law of unintended consequences has come back.

There are others who have made the point in relation to the lack of scrutiny and the very real dangers to the processes in this place. On 9 September this year, the *Courier-Mail* published an article titled 'Palaszczuk Govt breaching 'spirit' of Constitution by ramming through laws without scrutiny'. It is in that article that reports were made from an expert in constitutional law claiming that the government was acting 'contrary to the spirit' of the Constitution. Those comments were made by constitutional expert Gim Del Villar QC after advice was sought by the Speaker—not by the opposition but by the Speaker—in relation to matters raised by the member for Kawana. What did Mr Del Villar QC say? He said to the Speaker—

In my view, the treatment of the CSI Bill, the Electoral Amendment Bill and the Agricultural Amendment Bill 2019 by the government and the Assembly exposes deficiencies in how section 26B of the Constitution operates.

As I said, we will not be opposing this bill, but the passage of this bill continues to raise serious questions in relation to the role of this place and the manner in which the government goes about getting its legislative agenda passed. We will continue to look at those matters and continue to hold the government to account, as we should, when it fails to give due regard to the proper process in this House.

Lastly, I would like to highlight some amendments which will be extended under this bill and which have received considerable support from key stakeholders such as the Queensland Law Society. Prior to the election, the QLS, in their call to parties, called for a commitment to evaluate the measures introduced in response to COVID to ensure that those that have a lasting benefit are retained and implemented on a permanent basis. This makes perfect sense. Sometimes it does take an emergency to move things on at a faster pace than they would otherwise do for people to see the benefits of changes that have long been talked about and long been resisted.

In this case the Law Society expressed a strong desire for facilitating the use of electronic signatures by individuals, corporations and legal practitioners in the signing of court documents, including permanently retaining the virtual execution and witnessing arrangements introduced in response to the COVID pandemic. In the interests of promoting access to justice—and I would think that the Attorney would have this firmly planted in her mind as a policy issue and something that I think, as I said earlier, we can have a serious and proper debate about—I would hope that proper

consideration is given to reviewing those benefits with a view to keeping them in place not as emergency matters but as proper policy matters to facilitate, as I said, better business after 30 April 2021.

As I indicated, we will not oppose the bill, but equally the government should not expect a free ride on similar future bills. Emergency legislation passed at the height of a pandemic is no substitute for proper legislation and policy and better legislation subject to proper committee scrutiny and the careful consideration of this place. I look forward to the debate on this bill.

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning) (12.47 pm): I rise to speak in support of the COVID-19 Emergency Response and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. My remarks today will mainly focus on the amendments relating to the local government portfolio and, in particular, those relating to mayoral and councillor vacancies.

Recent amendments in the Electoral and Other Legislation (Accountability, Integrity and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2020 provided for a process under the Local Government Act 2009 for filling vacancies. The government made an election commitment to change the process for filling vacancies that arise during the first 12 months of a local government's term. This government monitors its reforms to ensure the policy outcomes sought are achieved. Where concerns are raised, this government hears those concerns. The amendments now proposed reflect our ongoing engagement with the local government sector and the broader community on these issues. I am pleased to inform the House that the LGAQ supports the amendments we are putting forward.

The proposed change will provide for mayoral vacancies in the first 12 months of the local government's term to be filled by a by-election rather than by appointing a runner-up. Where there is a vacancy in the office of a councillor within the first 12 months of a local government's term, whether in a divided or an undivided council, the council will determine by resolution whether the vacancy is to be filled by a by-election or by the appointment of a runner-up.

In the event that the council chooses the runner-up option, the process will continue to provide for a runner-up who consents and is eligible to be appointed—that is, a first runner-up may be approached and may decline or be ineligible, in which case the second runner-up may be approached and so on. If no runner-up is eligible and consents, the vacancy is to be filled by a by-election. No changes are proposed to the method for filling vacancies that arise during the middle or final parts of a local government's term, as provided for in the recent amendments.

The bill also provides for transitional arrangements in relation to actions taken, including any appointment of a runner-up to a vacant office in the period starting 12 October 2020 and ending immediately before commencement as a result of a vacancy that arose during that period and for how vacancies that arise during this period are to be filled. These provisions will operate retrospectively. If a local government appointed a runner-up to a vacant office during the relevant period, the office is taken to be vacant and the runner-up is taken never to have been appointed. However, the bill clarifies that the transitional provision does not affect any entitlement to remuneration or other benefits accrued or accruing to the runner-up during the appointment period.

The bill provides that if the office of a mayor or councillor became vacant during this period and either had not been filled before commencement or is taken to be vacant, the new provisions apply to filling the vacant office. The local government has two months from commencement to fill the vacant office. In relation to the vacant office of a councillor, if the local government decides under the new provisions to appoint a runner-up to fill the vacancy the bill preserves any steps taken, which means they do not have to be repeated. For example, any notice provided by a local government to ECQ does not need to be repeated.

The bill also makes a minor amendment to the Local Government Electoral Act 2011 to clarify that the date fixed for a by-election must be within two months after the vacancy happens for consistency with the Local Government Act. The amendments are proposed to commence as soon as possible. Subject to passage and assent of the bill, the office of the Mayor of the Rockhampton Regional Council, which became vacant on the resignation of former councillor Margaret Strelow on 9 November 2020, will be filled by a by-election.

As members are aware, the office of the Division 10 Councillor for the Townsville City Council became vacant on the election of the member for Mundingburra, which was declared by the Electoral Commission of Queensland on 11 November 2020. Under these amendments, because this vacancy is the office of a councillor the council will have discretion to determine whether to appoint the runner-up or hold a by-election. These amendments are necessary to ensure that those communities governed by the council are represented by duly elected councillors or in line with a duly considered council

resolution. They will benefit the community by providing, in many circumstances, for an additional opportunity for persons to nominate as candidates for election to the vacant office and for electors to vote for their preferred candidate in that by-election. A runner-up for the office of councillor, if not appointed by the council, may choose to nominate as a candidate in the by-election if they remain eligible to be a councillor.

There is a clear and compelling case to urgently address the legitimate concerns raised by the community in relation to filling these vacancies. As the Attorney-General informed the House when introducing the bill, a number of mayors and councillors have raised the possibility that a candidate who only achieved a small percentage of the vote could be appointed to a vacant position. For example, at the local government election held on 28 March 2020, former councillor Strelow won the office of the mayor with approximately 70 per cent of the votes. One other candidate also ran for the office of the mayor at the election and obtained approximately 30 per cent of the vote. The member for Mundingburra won office at the local government election as the Division 10 councillor for the Townsville City Council with approximately 64 per cent of the vote. Two other candidates also ran for Division 10 at the election, attracting approximately 18 and 17 per cent of the vote respectively.

Further, the former minister for local government, racing and multicultural affairs made a statement on 10 November 2020 advising that, once the new parliament was sworn in, the Palaszczuk government would introduce and pass a bill to retrospectively amend the Local Government Act. This statement provided notice to those persons directly affected, as well as the community generally, of the proposal to make retrospective amendments. Communities across Queensland expect and deserve to have faith and trust in our democratic processes. The amendments provide clarity to councils and councillors and to the communities they serve. The bill's retrospective effect is justified, and the impact on the rights and liberties of individuals is appropriate in the circumstances.

Subject to passage and assent of the bill, the department will continue to liaise with the Rockhampton Regional Council and Townsville City Council to advise of the way forward and to offer support as required. With these amendments the Palaszczuk government delivers on its commitment to swiftly address community concerns in relation to the vacancies issue. The government anticipates allowing the parliament fulsome consideration of how council vacancies should be filled in various circumstances in the future should the need arise.

I also take this opportunity to speak in support of the bill's extension of the operation of COVID-19 related legislation in my portfolio until 30 April 2021 or an earlier date to be prescribed. The Local Government (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Regulation 2020 modifies the Local Government Act 2009 to enable investigators from the Office of the Independent Assessor to require a person to answer questions related to the conduct of a councillor by attending in person or by audio or audiovisual link or providing answers by email or other electronic means. The Office of the Independent Assessor supports the proposed new expiry date, which will assist its ongoing evidence collection throughout the pandemic.

The Economic Development (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Regulation 2020 modifies requirements under the Economic Development Act 2012 to ensure information required to be contained on registers remains available to the public. This is achieved by enabling inspection of registers at an agreed time and place in addition to inspection at specific locations during office hours. This regulation also establishes alternative provisions for public notification of development applications in priority development areas. These alternative provisions ensure that a variety of methods are available to provide suitable notice of applications to the public in response to recent local newspaper publication and circulation changes. Economic Development Queensland supports the proposed new expiry date. It ensures continuity of public access to information relevant to planning and development in priority development areas throughout the pandemic and avoids any potential failure to meet statutory requirements under the Economic Development Act 2012.

The Planning (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Regulation 2020 extends the modified requirements under the Planning Act 2016 to keep documents physically available for inspection and purchase to ensure planning and development assessment documents and information remain publicly accessible despite any health and safety restrictions that may be in place. I commend the bill to the House.

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (12.57 pm): I rise to make a contribution in relation to the COVID-19 Emergency Response and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Before I go on with my contribution in relation to how Labor has corruptly manipulated the local government voting system for their own political advantage, we have to say, 'We told you so.' I want to say a few words about former Rockhampton mayor Margaret Strelow.

Mr WHITING: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order in relation to the parliamentary language that was used during that particular contribution.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): There is no point of order.

Ms LEAHY: I wish to say a few words about former Rockhampton mayor Margaret Strelow. She was the first female mayor of Rockhampton and held the mayoral role from 2000 to 2008 and again from 2012 to 2020. The then former member of parliament Bill Byrne, as we heard earlier, retired in 2017. Labor preselection was won by the now member for Rockhampton, who defeated—

Mr BAILEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member is going through a matter of history rather than one directly associated with the bill. A preselection contest for a state seat has nothing to do with this bill. I ask her to come back to the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am listening carefully to the contribution of the member. I am looking for some relevance. I will give the member a little bit of latitude. Bear in mind that we are one minute away from lunch.

Ms LEAHY: There was a Labor preselection where Margaret Strelow—who is the reason why we have this legislation and these amendments in the House—was defeated. She went on to run as an independent. I wish to place on record my thanks to the mayor, Margaret Strelow, for her service to Rockhampton over a period of 16½ years and her three years as a councillor. She has been a strong advocate for her region and community. Convincingly, she received 68 per cent of the vote, which is part of the reason why we have some of these amendments here in the House.

When the original bill and the amendments to the amendments were introduced in June this year, the explanatory notes stated that these reforms would clarify and strengthen the filling of a vacancy of the office of a councillor. I also note that the amendments to the amendments did not go through the committee process, and again we have this bill which did not go through the committee process. It makes you wonder what the government is hiding.

Debate, on motion of Ms Leahy, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm.

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

Message from Governor

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Investment) (2.00 pm): I present a message from His Excellency the Governor.

Mr SPEAKER: The message from His Excellency the Governor recommends the Appropriation (Parliament) (2020-2021) Bill. The contents of the message will be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*. I table the message for the information of members.

MESSAGE

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL 2020

Constitution of Queensland 2001, section 68

I, PAUL de JERSEY AC, Governor, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a Bill intituled—

A Bill for an Act authorising the Treasurer to pay amounts from the consolidated fund for the Legislative Assembly and parliamentary service for the financial years starting 1 July 2020 and 1 July 2021

GOVERNOR

Date: 1 December 2020

Tabled paper: Message, dated 1 December 2020, from His Excellency the Governor recommending the Appropriation (Parliament) (2020-2021) Bill 2020 [\[295\]](#).

Introduction

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Investment) (2.00 pm): I present a bill for an act authorising the Treasurer to pay amounts from the Consolidated Fund for the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service for the financial years starting 1 July 2020 and 1 July 2021. I table the bill, the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights.

Tabled paper: Appropriation (Parliament) (2020-2021) Bill 2020 [\[296\]](#).

Tabled paper: Appropriation (Parliament) (2020-2021) Bill 2020, explanatory notes [\[297\]](#).

Tabled paper: Appropriation (Parliament) (2020-2021) Bill 2020, statement of compatibility with human rights [\[298\]](#).

I am pleased to introduce the Appropriation (Parliament) (2020-2021) Bill 2020. The bill provides appropriation for the 2020-21 financial year as well as interim supply for 2021-22 to allow normal operations of the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service to continue until the 2021-22 Appropriation Bill receives assent. The government remains committed to the independence of the Legislative Assembly, and this extends to the means by which public moneys are appropriated to ensure its continued functioning. We are therefore adhering to the current convention that the Legislative Assembly's appropriation be contained in a bill separate from the Appropriation Bill for the other activities of government.

The Appropriation (Parliament) (2020-2021) Bill will provide the necessary funds to ensure the continued operations of the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service. These include: advisory and information services to assist the parliament, its committees and members to fulfil their constitutional and parliamentary responsibilities; the services provided by the Parliamentary Library, Committee Office, Parliamentary Reporting Service, Chamber and Procedural Services, and Security and Attendant Services; as well as the provision of accommodation, hospitality and members' entitlements. This bill provides the necessary appropriation for the Legislative Assembly and Parliamentary Service for the 2020-21 financial year as well as interim supply for 2021-22.

Can I also say in the most extraordinary of years that I have been supported in the budget process as Treasurer by officers of the Queensland Treasury who have themselves done an extraordinary job. It is a year that they, like other Queenslanders, will never forget. It was when the Queensland Treasury became more than a policy engine room for government but a key delivery agency for critical relief to businesses and communities. Treasury officials have completed an extraordinary year by preparing a budget for the people of Queensland just 31 days after an election in the midst of a very significant machinery-of-government change. In the modern era, there has never been such a short interval between an election and a budget. I am told it may have been a bit quicker between the 1957 election and the 1957 Appropriation Bill, but this is not a time that we on this side of the House want to remember very well.

Let me say it is to the great credit of those fine public servants in the Queensland Treasury that they have set a cracking pace. There are so many officers who have participated but I particularly will name a few—the Under Treasurer, Rachel Hunter; the Deputy Under Treasurers, Leon Allen and Graham Fraine; the Acting Head of Fiscal, William Ryan; the Acting Assistant Under Treasurer, Kath Begley; and the Queensland Treasury budget office. I want to thank them for their tireless support of me and of the government, working late into the night and over the weekends. I hope they can relax and celebrate this evening, but not too much because they need to get started on estimates for next week and the 2021 budget. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Hon. CR DICK (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Investment) (2.04 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Mr SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 177, the bill is now set down for its second reading.

BUDGET PAPERS

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Investment) (2.05 pm): I table the budget papers for 2020-21.

Tabled paper: Queensland Budget 2020-21: Appropriation Bills [\[299\]](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Budget 2020-21: Budget Speech—Budget Paper No. 1 [\[300\]](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Budget 2020-21: Budget Strategy and Outlook—Budget Paper No. 2 [\[301\]](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Budget 2020-21: Capital Statement—Budget Paper No. 3 [\[302\]](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Budget 2020-21: Budget Highlights [\[303\]](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Budget 2020-21: Regional Action Plan—Creating jobs for Brisbane and Redlands [\[304\]](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Budget 2020-21: Regional Action Plan—Creating jobs for Central Queensland [\[305\]](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Budget 2020-21: Regional Action Plan—Creating jobs for the Darling Downs [\[306\]](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Budget 2020-21: Regional Action Plan—Creating jobs for Far North Queensland [\[307\]](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Budget 2020-21: Regional Action Plan—Creating jobs on the Gold Coast [\[308\]](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Budget 2020-21: Regional Action Plan—Creating jobs for Ipswich [\[309\]](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Budget 2020-21: Regional Action Plan—Creating jobs for Logan [\[310\]](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Budget 2020-21: Regional Action Plan—Creating jobs for Mackay-Whitsunday [\[311\]](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Budget 2020-21: Regional Action Plan—Creating jobs for Outback Queensland [\[312\]](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Budget 2020-21: Regional Action Plan—Creating jobs on the Sunshine Coast and Moreton Bay [\[313\]](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Budget 2020-21: Regional Action Plan—Creating jobs for Townsville [\[314\]](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Budget 2020-21: Regional Action Plan—Creating jobs for the Wide Bay [\[315\]](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Budget 2020-21: Service Delivery Statements (Volume 1) including Budget Measures [\[316\]](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Budget 2020-21: Service Delivery Statements (Volume 2) [\[317\]](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Budget 2020-21: Service Delivery Statements (Volume 3) [\[318\]](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Budget 2020-21: Service Delivery Statements (Volume 4)—Legislative Assembly of Queensland [\[319\]](#).

APPROPRIATION (2020-2021) BILL

Message from Governor

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Investment) (2.05 pm): I present a message from His Excellency the Governor.

Mr SPEAKER: The message from His Excellency the Governor recommends the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill. The contents of the message will be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*. I table the message for the information of members.

MESSAGE

APPROPRIATION (2020-2021) BILL 2020

Constitution of Queensland 2001, section 68

I, PAUL de JERSEY AC, Governor, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a Bill intituled—

A Bill for an Act authorising the Treasurer to pay amounts from the consolidated fund for departments for the financial years starting 1 July 2020 and 1 July 2021

GOVERNOR

Date: 1 December 2020

Tabled paper: Message, dated 1 December 2020, from His Excellency the Governor recommending the Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 [\[320\]](#).

Introduction

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Investment) (2.06 pm): I present a bill for an act authorising the Treasurer to pay amounts from the Consolidated Fund for departments for the financial years starting 1 July 2020 and 1 July 2021. I table the bill, the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights.

Tabled paper: Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020 [\[321\]](#).

Tabled paper: Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020, explanatory notes [\[322\]](#).

Tabled paper: Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill 2020, statement of compatibility with human rights [\[323\]](#).

2020—The year of COVID

This is a budget that delivers certainty in a year that has been anything but certain. It is a budget that builds on a health response to COVID-19 that has led the world—a health response that has been driven by the strength, tenacity and goodwill of the people of Queensland. It is fitting that the day this budget is delivered is the day Queensland reopens its borders to both New South Wales and Victoria. The strength of our rebounding domestic economy is only possible because of the strength of our health response, and that has been built on the strength and resilience of Queenslanders and Queensland businesses. As the virus continues to rampage around the world, many countries in the Northern Hemisphere face their most dire winter outside of wartime. Through the hard work of Queenslanders, the situation we face is not easy—it is not without challenge or cost—but it is a world away from the pain being felt around the globe.

Delivering on our commitments

This is a budget that delivers all of our election commitments and delivers on our plan to unite and recover for Queensland jobs. This is a budget that contains no surprises for Queenslanders. It is a budget that contains no new or increased taxes, ensuring that Queensland continues to remain a low-tax state. Queenslanders will pay an average of \$628 less in tax this financial year than other Australians.

It is a budget focused on economic recovery and sustainable fiscal repair. It is unashamedly pro business and pro growth. Most importantly, the budget focuses on delivering jobs for Queenslanders. It is a budget that charts our course through troubled waters to more prosperous, secure times ahead. It is a budget that protects the jobs of today and lays the foundations for the skilled, secure, rewarding jobs of tomorrow. It is a budget designed to give Queensland's private sector the confidence to employ and to grow.

One month ago, Queenslanders delivered their verdict on who should lead our state's economic recovery. Their verdict was a clear mandate for the delivery of our Unite and Recover Economic Recovery Plan and the vision of our government—our Labor government—led by our Premier. The budget I hand down today delivers on the commitments we made to Queenslanders in the lead-up to and during that election. We are a government that delivers on our promises to the people of Queensland.

Queensland—Moved first and moving fast

2020 demonstrated yet again that the battle hardened people of our state are always ready to face adversity head-on. Our place in the world means we are always ready to respond—calmly, carefully and confidently—to natural disasters. And so it has been with our response to the pandemic. We were the first government in the Commonwealth to declare a public health emergency in late January, a stance that meant we would always follow the health advice when it came to dealing with the pandemic. This stance protected the health of Queenslanders and allowed our economy to reopen safely.

We were also the first to move when it came to providing financial relief to businesses, with a multimillion dollar package for tourism operators and seafood exporters who were affected by the cancellation of traditional Lunar New Year events in the early days of the pandemic. We were the first jurisdiction to provide wideranging payroll tax relief, which supported more than 16,700 Queensland businesses affected by the necessary restrictions put in place to stop the spread of COVID-19. We were also the first to roll out a large-scale relief package to protect the health, jobs and businesses of Queenslanders.

Safeguarding our health

The early progress we have made with Queensland's economic recovery follows on from the globally recognised strength of our health response. It is no accident that we have been able to reopen more businesses to greater capacity than southern states.

Our health response has been enabled by Queensland's world-class health system. Over the past five years the Palaszczuk Labor government has rebuilt our state's health system—nurse by nurse, doctor by doctor, public health official by public health official. It is work that I proudly began as Queensland health minister.

Queenslanders know they can always trust this Labor government with their health and their health system. This budget will ensure our health system will be even stronger once we are past COVID-19, with a record investment of \$21.8 billion this financial year.

The budget provides \$265 million to commence delivery of seven new innovative satellite hospitals across South-East Queensland. These hospitals in Redlands, Brisbane's south side, Pine Rivers, the Gold Coast, Ipswich, Caboolture and Bribie Island will provide health care that is closer to home for tens of thousands of Queenslanders and will take pressure off emergency departments in our larger metropolitan hospitals.

As we continue to see around the world, COVID is a wicked and insidious virus that will exploit the slightest weakness in any community and in any health system. To date our response has been strong, but we cannot be complacent, especially as more Australians return home from overseas. That is why today I can announce the Palaszczuk Labor government will provide additional funding of \$360.5 million this financial year to assist with the delivery of the government's COVID-19 response plan.

That funding will be available as required by Queensland Health, the Queensland Police Service and the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. It will be available to support a range of services and activities, including fever clinics, contact tracing, 13HEALTH call centre services, in-home health care for the elderly, the cost of personal protective equipment, aeromedical services and the running of quarantine in government arranged accommodation.

This funding allocation will enable compliance with the COVID-19 public health directions including any necessary border control measures, restrictions on gatherings and limitations on the operation of businesses, if required.

As has been the case throughout this year, the strength and integrity of our health response will underpin our economic recovery from the pandemic.

Supporting jobs

Today across our state there are more Queenslanders working than there were before the pandemic struck, but the number of Queenslanders who want to work has increased higher still. Queensland's participation rate is now one percentage point above its pre-COVID rate in March 2020. While this contributes to a higher unemployment rate, it is also a sign of confidence in Queensland's economic future, as more people move here in search of work.

The federal budget projects that Queensland will see net interstate migration of 86,000 over the next four years—roughly equivalent to the net number of interstate migrants who will leave New South Wales, Western Australia and South Australia during that time. When these people get to Queensland, they will want a job. As a government, we will remain resolutely committed to helping them find one.

The federal budget also assumes a COVID-19 vaccine will only be widely available in Australia in the second half of calendar year 2021, a forecasting assumption which has been adopted by Queensland Treasury. Even if vaccines become widely available sooner, as recent reports give us cause to hope, it seems inevitable that the virus will circulate globally for some time to come, and that will have obvious impacts on international travel. That is why this budget will invest \$74 million to fast-track tourism recovery and restore tourism jobs through our Rebuilding Queensland Tourism initiative. Rebuilding Queensland Tourism includes:

- the \$20 million Queensland Tourism Activation Fund to partner with the tourism industry and councils to develop existing and new Queensland tourism experiences;
- a \$20 million events boost to attract more events for Queensland. This investment will include \$14 million for major events and \$1.5 million a year for business events;
- \$15 million to Tourism and Events Queensland for a marketing blitz to encourage travellers to experience Queensland;
- a \$15 million Regional Tourism Organisation Fund to provide a special one-off funding injection to regional tourism organisations; and
- \$4 million to deliver business capability training and futureproof the industry.

Treasury modelling assumes it may take as long as four years before the impact of COVID-19 on employment is fully offset. Driving employment growth as hard as possible will remain the single most important task of our government during the term of this parliament, and I know that every one of the 52 members of the Palaszczuk Labor government is committed to that four-year challenge. It is why protecting Queensland jobs, delivering new Queensland jobs and providing access to the skills that Queenslanders need to retain or get a job remain the core principles that underpin everything this budget seeks to achieve.

Making it for Queensland

COVID has also provided a stark reminder of the benefits of Queensland's diversified economy and of the need for our state to be more competitive, especially when it comes to manufacturing. That is why I am proud to announce that this budget will allocate \$600 million towards our \$1 billion commitment to make trains in Queensland again. For the first time in a decade, we will ensure that our state's trains carry the proudest stamp of all: Made in Queensland. We will also continue our 10-year pipeline of manufacturing work in Maryborough to refurbish and maintain the existing Queensland Rail fleet, which is also being delivered by Downer EDI.

Backing small business

On the wall of my office as Treasurer I keep two framed photos, taken decades apart, of two small business owners. Once upon a time they were called shopkeepers. The smiles of those shopkeepers, as they look out from behind the counters of their shops, are warm and welcoming. I look

at these photos most days, and the smiles of my late grandmother and late father say many things to me, including, 'We are open for business,' and, 'We are here to help you.' I can only hope that they would be proud that a son and grandson of small business now stands at the counter of the largest and most important enterprise in Queensland: delivering the state budget.

Like so many Queenslanders who own and operate small businesses, their lives in business were hard and sometimes difficult. Life lessons of risk and reward, frugality and fortitude, long hours and short weekends left an indelible impression on me. Their smiles also remind me that small business, our state's biggest employer, is the backbone of the Queensland economy.

Small business bore the brunt of the COVID-19 downturn, especially through the early months of the pandemic. That is why our government backed Queensland small businesses—with \$1 billion in 12-month interest-free loans, with more than \$1.3 billion in payroll tax and land tax relief, and with close to \$200 million in grants to nearly 20,000 small Queensland businesses.

As our economic recovery continues, the Palaszczuk Labor government recognises the vital role small business will play in growing jobs. We recognise the role that government must play to stimulate growth and drive economic confidence for small business. That is why this budget delivers \$140 million for our Big Plans for Small Business Strategy. This investment includes \$100 million from our \$500 million Backing Queensland Business Investment Fund, dedicated to investing in small to medium sized businesses that have significant growth potential and will create jobs. Through our world-class investment manager, the Queensland Investment Corporation, this investment will enable small to medium sized businesses to grow into new markets and drive jobs growth in Queensland. The budget also provides \$30 million to increase the skills and capabilities of our small businesses through a focus on priority industry sectors, market development and mentoring.

Building Queensland

The Palaszczuk government is focused on stimulating growth in the private sector to foster job creation and is determined to directly support jobs through the delivery of infrastructure that Queenslanders deserve, no matter where they live across our vast state. That means building the schools, the hospitals and the bridges, roads and tunnels that our growing state will need in the future. I am pleased to announce today that over the next four years the value of the Palaszczuk Labor government's capital works and infrastructure program will be \$56 billion, which is a record spend over the past decade.

Growing our regions

As has been the consistent position of this government, the bulk of our capital spend will occur outside Greater Brisbane. Regional Queensland has once again demonstrated its resilience and ingenuity during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is the strength of sectors such as agriculture and the mining of coal and other minerals that has protected our economy from some of the worst effects of the COVID-19 downturn.

Our government knows how important the ongoing growth of Queensland's regions is to our continued economic prosperity. Whether it is the Cairns Marine Precinct, the Wellcamp Regional Entertainment Precinct, the Olive Downs metallurgical coal mine in the Bowen Basin, the strategic stake we intend to take in the Dalrymple Bay Coal Terminal and its potential expansion, or the DriveIT NQ Motorsport Precinct in Townsville, our government is committed to backing regional projects that will drive private sector jobs growth. By creating skilled job opportunities in these regional centres we will support more investment and boost economic prosperity for all Queenslanders.

Investing in skills

Across regional Queensland, the surge in renewable energy production and our focus on traditional and advanced manufacturing industries will mean the creation of rewarding, secure jobs, but we will need a workforce with the skills to take on those jobs. That is why this budget invests so heavily in the future skills requirements of all Queenslanders to take advantage of those future opportunities.

We are investing \$1 billion over four years through our Great Schools Great Future commitment. That includes \$394 million for new classrooms and administration buildings, \$235 million for new or upgraded school halls and \$100 million for infrastructure renewal.

The budget allocates \$45 million to build and upgrade training facilities for at-school training across Queensland. Those training opportunities will be tailored to meet the needs and opportunities of regional Queensland. That means welding and metalwork training at Cloncurry State School, to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the North West Minerals Province; it means a new aquaculture research facility at Rockhampton State High School, to give school leavers a boost into the jobs available in this growing sector; it means training for defence industry jobs at Glenala State High

School, near Rheinmetall's Military Vehicle Centre of Excellence; and it means training specific to the emerging hydrogen industry at Gladstone State High School, an industry that has the potential to fuel manufacturing and export opportunities for years to come.

Our program of free TAFE and free apprenticeships for Queenslanders under 21 has been such a success we will extend it to all Queenslanders under 25. That \$21 million initiative will create free training opportunities for thousands more young Queenslanders in priority areas including: health services, hospitality, engineering, aged and disability support, and early childhood education. Historically, young Queenslanders have been keen participants in our labour force. By providing free TAFE to under-25s, we will help more of our young people to be job ready.

Today I can announce that we are investing a further \$200 million in the skills of the future, with a suite of initiatives including: \$32.4 million over two years for the TAFE Priority Skills Fund, \$25 million over two years for pre-apprenticeship support, \$8 million over four years for a Digital Professional Workforce Plan, \$8 million over two years for the Social Enterprise Jobs Fund, \$5 million over two years for the First Nations Training Strategy and \$5 million in 2020-21 for the Workforce Transition Support Program.

Backing our frontline services

In the same way Queensland's regions have fortified our economy through the worst of the pandemic, so our frontline public servants have gone above and beyond to protect Queensland through one of the greatest challenges in our state's history. From the contact tracers and COVID ward nursing staff to the members of the Queensland Police Service and State Emergency Service volunteers who kept our borders secure to the teachers who delivered lessons remotely during lockdown, there has seldom been a time when the term 'public servant' has been more apt. They have served us so well, and they have our lasting admiration and gratitude.

We will do what Labor governments always do: we will always invest in the front line and we will always back our frontline workers. That is why this budget will continue to strengthen that front line. It commences the delivery of 5,800 nurses and midwives, 1,500 doctors, 475 paramedics and 1,700 allied health professionals. It will also commence delivery of 2,025 extra police personnel by 2025, including 1,400 frontline positions; 357 extra firefighters; 6,190 new teachers; and 1,139 teacher aides. Our government will always back our frontline workers, because we know they will always be there to back Queenslanders.

Protecting our environment

Queenslanders know that economic prosperity is intrinsically linked to the health of our environment. As custodians of the greatest natural wonder on earth—the Great Barrier Reef—we are acutely aware that the reef supports tens of thousands of Queensland jobs. We look forward to the day when we can welcome back visitors from around the world to marvel at the reef and everything else that Queensland's unique, precious and spectacular natural environment has to offer. In the meantime, this budget invests \$40 million to grow the jobs that will be needed for our ecotourism industry and to protect our natural assets that will draw those international visitors once more. Our investment in the reef includes:

- a \$10 million Reef Credits initiative to encourage restoration projects and environmental market development;
- a \$10 million Reef Assist program, delivered in partnership with local governments and natural resource management organisations;
- \$6 million for a Great Barrier Reef Island Arks program to deliver ecotourism and acquire new protected areas;
- \$3.9 million to develop world-class sailing trails around Townsville and the Whitsundays; and
- \$10.1 million for upgrades to national parks and World Heritage areas.

We will also supercharge the delivery of our 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2030 through our \$500 million Renewable Energy Fund. The fund will allow our publicly owned energy companies to increase their public ownership of commercial renewable projects and the infrastructure, like batteries and transmission lines, that will support them.

Fiscal position

The disruptive global impact of COVID-19 has caused unprecedented harm to the Queensland economy. As a consequence, revenue is forecast to fall \$12.3 billion lower than projected at the Mid-Year Fiscal and Economic Review in December 2019. That includes a \$4.5 billion reduction in forecast tax revenue, a \$3.8 billion drop in GST revenue and a \$4 billion fall in royalty revenue.

In this financial year alone, royalty revenue will fall by 45 per cent relative to last financial year. As we made clear in the election campaign, in the face of this revenue collapse it would be reckless and irresponsible to promise a budget surplus at this time. That is the same view as the federal government, the government of New South Wales, the government of Victoria and almost every other state and territory government in Australia.

The four years of deficits that I announce today represent exactly what we told the people of Queensland and what the people of Queensland expect from government at a time of economic crisis. This budget is in deficit because it is a pro-growth and pro-business budget. I make it clear today that the budget will only return to balance when the economy returns to normal.

Budgets are always about choices. This Labor government chooses to support those most affected by the brunt of the downturn rather than make them carry the unfair weight of a reckless rush back to surplus. We will not drop the anvil of austerity on those already weakened by the COVID crisis. Instead, we will use the strength of our balance sheet to restore the strength of the Queensland economy, and the stronger economy that we create will push our budget towards balance.

Driving productivity

The health response that protected Queenslanders and the economic relief measures that protected their jobs proved that adversity drives innovation. The implementation of our economic recovery plan allowed us to initiate reforms that reduced costs for businesses and allowed greater flexibility across the board, from the production of personal protective equipment to the hours when supermarkets could restock.

Our government recognises the role that ongoing reform will play in driving productivity gains. It is why we have appointed a dedicated Small Business Commissioner to enable us to work even more closely with small businesses, to help them continue to drive prosperity and create new job opportunities. It is why bringing the Queensland Productivity Commission into Treasury to form the Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction will enable us to fast-track opportunities for regulatory reform that can accelerate our path away from COVID-19.

Borrowings

Since I released our government's COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review I have been clear about the need for Queensland to borrow to rebuild. As Queensland Treasurer, borrowing is not my first choice, but right now, and for several years into the future, borrowing is the only choice.

As I said during the election campaign, budget deficits must be funded from borrowings. Accordingly, borrowings will increase. No Queenslanders will be surprised by that. Borrowings will also increase to drive stimulus and support investment in productivity-enhancing infrastructure.

For nearly a decade, Queensland politics has been haunted by the false argument that debt in Queensland was somehow inherently more dangerous and damaging than debt borrowed anywhere else or borrowed by anyone else—that, somehow, Labor borrowing to build schools, hospitals or prisons was somehow more harmful to the economy than the LNP borrowing to pay consultants who informed their cut, sack and sell agenda. This argument, consistently levelled at Queensland, was an attempt to justify wholesale cuts to essential services and the sale of public assets.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Members to my left, there is a convention that budget speeches will be listened to, and of course we would like to hear the Treasurer. Members to my left are tempting fate with a former treasurer now a Speaker on this point.

Mr DICK: Today is the day that myth is finally and conclusively dispelled.

When Australia begins to exit this pandemic, Queensland will have the lowest debt of east coast states, even if you include all the borrowings of our government owned corporations and statutory authorities. By June 2024, Queensland's debt will still be lower than that of New South Wales and Victoria. And unlike those states, Queensland has kept our public assets in public hands.

Keeping public assets in public hands has meant that the revenue these assets generate remains in public hands. It means that Queensland's balance sheet is in a strong position. This is no accident. The Palaszczuk Labor government has pursued a deliberate strategy to keep our public assets in public hands for the benefit of all Queenslanders. It means that, while Queensland's total non-financial public sector debt will reach \$130 billion at the end of the forward estimates, that debt will be two-thirds of the total non-financial public sector debt of the New South Wales government, which will ramp up to

\$190.8 billion over the same period. Government debt in New South Wales is projected to be so high that there is already speculation in the financial sector that the Reserve Bank of Australia may have to enlarge its quantitative easing program to support the borrowings of the New South Wales government.

While New South Wales and Victoria will have total debt levels exceeding 190 per cent of revenue by 2024, Queensland's figure will be 174 per cent. And while Victoria's general government debt-to-revenue ratio will be 212 per cent and New South Wales will be at 170 per cent, Queensland's general government debt-to-revenue ratio will be 134 per cent.

Although we will deliver a lower level of debt than New South Wales or Victoria, we will still be borrowing. To do anything other than borrow to rebuild would condemn our economy to years of austerity and a far slower and more painful recovery. It would condemn unemployed Queenslanders to a longer job search. This has been recognised by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the International Monetary Fund, the Prime Minister of Australia, the federal Treasurer and the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia.

If there has ever been a time to borrow to build, to create jobs and to strengthen the Queensland economy, it is now. Last month, Queensland Treasury Corporation issued a \$1.5 billion green bond—an issue that was immediately oversubscribed by a factor of nearly two to one, such is the international and domestic appetite for bonds issued by Queensland. Forty-three per cent of that offer was taken up by investors in Europe and Asia, and the yield on that oversubscribed issue was 1.1 per cent per annum. That is the lowest rate ever paid on a QTC bond.

As a result of the strong demand for our bonds, our debt servicing costs will represent three per cent of our total revenues across the forward estimates. Not only are our interest costs lower than the peak of 4.7 per cent they reached in the 2013-14 financial year during the term of the Newman LNP government; they are also more than offset by our interest income. In simple terms, the interest that the Queensland government is earning on its investments is more than we are paying out to service our debt. Our government is taking advantage of this difference to support Queenslanders and to invest for the future.

Savings measures

Of course, our government will not spend money simply for spending's sake. We are investing where we expect a return for Queenslanders—whether that return is economic, social or environmental. Coupled with that careful investment is a commitment to delivering savings and efficiencies wherever possible.

In July I announced our government's Savings and Debt Plan, targeting \$3 billion in savings over four years, including \$750 million this financial year. We are 42 per cent of the way through the financial year and our government has already achieved 47 per cent, or \$352.2 million, of our savings target for 2020-21 through a range of measures.

Economic update

Australian governments at every level know that the recovery has a long way to run. In Queensland, we are witnessing positive early progress. The successful health response in Australia, including in Queensland, has allowed a greater than anticipated rebound in domestic economic activity.

When I delivered the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review in September, employment was forecast to grow at 3.5 per cent through to the June quarter 2021. It is now forecast to grow at 6.75 per cent, creating 77,300 more jobs compared with the COVID fiscal and economic review, for a total of 160,000 jobs over the year to the June quarter 2021.

But our government takes no economic outcome for granted. Across the world, the 2020 trend of high volatility and uncertainty has continued unabated. The resurgence of the virus in other countries has resulted in a weaker outlook for global trade and economic activity. That has inevitable consequences for a trade focused economy like Queensland.

Merchandise trade has fallen considerably, by 22 per cent over the past 12 months. At the same time, our domestic economy is performing strongly. Retail sales rebounded by 8.9 per cent in the September quarter to be 11 per cent higher than in the same period in 2019. Dwelling approvals rose 11.6 per cent in the September quarter to be higher than pre-COVID levels. New loan commitments for owner-occupiers surged to their highest level in 18 years, up almost 79 per cent over the year to September for first home buyers and up by almost 40 per cent for other buyers.

Conclusion

A month ago yesterday, the people of Queensland once again placed their trust in the Palaszczuk Labor government. This honour comes with enormous responsibility, perhaps a greater responsibility than at any time in recent memory. The next four years will be a hard road for Queensland as we

recover from COVID-19. There is no point trying to pretend otherwise. As we travel that road together, at all times our government will continue to respect and honour the trust and confidence placed in us by Queenslanders. We will stay true to the promises we have made to them.

The opening of our borders today is a signal of hope and a sign of confidence in the plan that has brought us this far. It means more flights, more accommodation bookings and more activity to support jobs throughout our tourist regions. It means more chances for families to reunite, especially as the songs of the holiday season and the hymns of Christmas start to fill the air. It means the distant star we see ahead is starting to glow a little brighter, calling us on to a Queensland of hope, opportunity and renewal. By working together we will set our state on a path to prosperity and success that will last for decades to come. This budget is the first step on that journey. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Hon. CR DICK (Woodridge—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Investment) (2.40 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! In accordance with standing order 177, the bill is set down for its second reading.

ADJOURNMENT



Hon. YM D'ATH (Redcliffe—ALP) (Leader of the House) (2.41 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 2.41 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Andrew, Bailey, Bates, Bennett, Berkman, Bleijie, Bolton, Boothman, Boyce, Boyd, Brown, Bush, Camm, Crandon, Crawford, Crisafulli, D'Ath, Dametto, de Brenni, Dick, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Frecklington, Furner, Gerber, Gilbert, Grace, Harper, Hart, Healy, Hinchliffe, Howard, Hunt, Janetzki, Katter, Kelly, King A, King S, Knuth, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Lauga, Leahy, Linard, Lister, Lui, MacMahon, Madden, Mander, McCallum, McDonald, McMahon, McMillan, Mellish, Mickelberg, Miles, Millar, Minnikin, Molhoek, Mullen, Nicholls, O'Connor, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pease, Perrett, Pitt, Power, Pugh, Purdie, Richards, Robinson, Rowan, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Scanlon, Simpson, Skelton, Smith, Stevens, Stewart, Sullivan, Tantari, Walker, Watts, Weir, Whiting