Contemporary Music Strategy

Mr. WETTENHALL (Barron River—ALP) (11.59 am): Last Saturday I had the pleasure of representing Minister Welford at the first of a series of forums around the state that are integral components to the development of the Bligh government’s contemporary music strategy. The ideas and suggestions expressed at the forum will sharpen the focus on industry, audience and market development as well as opportunities for live music precinct creation through providing music-friendly regulatory environments. Queensland is a leader in this field, as the success of the Fortitude Valley precinct in Brisbane shows, following groundbreaking legislation introduced by the Labor government in 2006. Mr. Frank Henry from the Brisbane City Council took the forum through the process of creating an entertainment precinct. I am sure his experience will be valuable if Cairns goes down this track. I hope it will.

Holding the first of these forums in Cairns recognises that Cairns and tropical north Queensland in general, with its distinctive vibe, talented musicians, creative artists, high-profile events and festivals, is a powerhouse of potential. Cairns was selected to kick-start the statewide consultation following a delegation of musicians and music industry professionals I introduced to the Minister for the Arts at the Yarrabah community cabinet last year. I thank the minister for the keen interest he has shown in developing the potential for the live music industry around the state but particularly in the far north. Cairns is home to world-class musicians and I am determined to support them to expand their opportunities to work locally and entertain locals and tourists in comfortable and inviting venues for people of all ages and with a variety of musical tastes.

Tourists will always visit the far north to experience our reef and rainforests, but I believe Cairns has the potential to gain the musical reputation like New Orleans and other cities around the world that are famous for their musical traditions, culture, venues and contemporary offerings. Not only will this be great for locals but we never know—the tourists who are the sightseers of today might become the sound-seekers of tomorrow.

Fraser Island, Dingo Fence

Mr. GIBSON (Gympie—NPA) (12.01 pm): I table the letter from the member for Moggill to the WBTNI.

Tabled paper: Copy of a letter dated 8 April 2008 from Bruce Flegg MP to The Manager, WBTNI regarding a Moggill Pocket Sub-arterial from the Warrego Highway to the Western Freeway.

I wish to make some remarks with regard to the Fraser Island dingo fence that is being installed around the Eurong and Happy Valley communities. The Fraser Island residents who live in these communities say that the dingo deterrent fencing around these towns is a waste of public money and assets and that the money would be better spent on roads and amenities on the island. They are also very critical of the lack of public consultation that has occurred with regard to these fences.

For me there is the issue of the damage done to the fragile dune system by sending in a bulldozer to blaze a path for these fences. The destruction done is something that must be witnessed by one’s own eyes to be believed. I travelled there a few weeks ago to witness the destruction for myself and could not believe that the EPA had sent in a bulldozer to do this type of damage to Fraser Island. I also listened to the concerns of the residents of Happy Valley about the lack of consultation as this government goes about wrecking their community and their township. The minister keeps referring to the persistent, illegal and reckless feeding of dingoes in the township, but can he provide any evidence that this is currently happening? No. Has he provided any evidence that it has been a problem in the recent past? Again, no. Can he provide an audit of the effectiveness of dingo fences that are currently on Fraser Island? Again, the answer is no.

Animal behaviourist Robert Appleby has spent thousands of hours filming dingoes and he has found that there is no question about the fact that dingoes are resourceful. So how do we know that these fences actually work? We do not. Now Time magazine is reporting to its worldwide readership the reverse zoo that exists on Fraser Island and describes it like a concentration camp. Indeed, residents have described it as like living in Guantanamo Bay. This is the tourism message that is now being sent out to the world by this Labor government: ‘Queensland—beautiful one day, a concentration camp the next’.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Wendt): Order! That concludes the time for private members’ statements.

CONSUMER CREDIT (QUEENSLAND) AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. KG SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western Queensland) (12.04 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend
the Consumer Credit (Queensland) Act 1994, the Legal Profession Act 2007 and the Security Providers Act 1993 for particular purposes. I present the explanatory notes, and 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.

Second Reading

Hon. KG SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier in Western Queensland) (12.04 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The bill amends three acts administered by my department. The first amendment is to the Consumer Credit (Queensland) Act 1994. The bill also amends the Legal Profession Act 2007 and the Security Providers Act 1993.

On 13 November last year I informed the House of the government's intention to deliver reforms to ensure Queensland consumers have access to credit at a fair and reasonable price. A cap on interest, fees and charges under credit contracts made in Queensland is a significant part of these reforms. Many Queensland consumers are suffering serious detriment from obtaining high-cost loans from lenders operating on the fringe of the credit market. Borrowers using fringe lenders are often low-income or disadvantaged consumers. Many have poor credit histories and seek credit in desperate circumstances when they are most vulnerable to exploitation. The high cost of the credit can severely limit a person's ability to meet future household expenses and can lead to stress and health issues. High-cost loans also have broader social impacts, including an increased strain on community and welfare services and reduced consumer confidence.

The bill amends the Consumer Credit (Queensland) Act 1994 to facilitate the introduction of a 48 per cent per annum cap on the cost of consumer credit in Queensland, inclusive of interest, fees and charges. The bill will clarify that a provision of a credit contract is void to the extent it imposes a monetary liability above the capped rate and that any excess amount that has been paid under a credit contract is recoverable by the borrower. The bill also notes that, in these circumstances, the credit provider commits an offence for entering into the contract. A regulation will be made after the bill is passed stating the maximum annual percentage or cap rate of 48 per cent and the methodology for its calculation. The proposed cap regime is similar to that imposed for credit contracts made in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

The government decided to introduce a comprehensive cap after widespread consultation with the community, industry and consumer groups. There has been compelling support for the introduction of a cap. Community and consumer groups such as Legal Aid Queensland, the St Vincent de Paul Society, the Queensland Council of Social Services and the Queensland Consumers Association endorse the introduction of a 48 per cent cap on interest, fees and charges. Fringe credit providers have mounted strong opposition to a cap. Although there will be an impact on fringe lenders, especially those who currently offer small loans for short periods of time, the experience in New South Wales and in the United States of America has been that short-term lending has continued under a cap.

My department has thoroughly analysed alternative ways to regulate the cost of credit. However, none of these options provides an appropriate level of consumer protection nor would they be as effective as a comprehensive cap in controlling the cost of credit. There are alternatives to short-term high-cost loans. A range of measures designed to assist and educate consumers, especially those who currently feel they have no choice but to take out these loans, will be implemented. A cap will send a clear message to lenders that loans in Queensland with excessive interest rates, fees and charges are not acceptable.

The Legal Profession (Transitional) Regulation 2007 provides for two matters. Firstly, it provides for an exemption from the reservation of legal work to legal practitioners in section 24 of the Legal Profession Act 2007 for certain licensees under the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000. Secondly, it provides for the liability for the costs of a costs assessment to be determined on a basis that is consistent with the national model laws for the regulation of the legal profession. These matters need to be incorporated into the Legal Profession Act 2007 because the regulation expires on 1 July 2008.

The Queensland Law Society and the Real Estate Institute of Queensland have been extensively consulted in the development of the amendments to section 24 of the act. I would like to record my sincere appreciation for their cooperation in this matter and the way in which they have participated in consultations.

The purpose of the amendments is to ensure that activities commonly conducted by licensees in documenting real property transactions as part of their work as licensees under the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000 do not amount to engaging in legal practice. The Queensland Law Society
would have liked some of the amendments to be more restricted. On the other hand, the Real Estate Institute of Queensland has been concerned to provide clarity for licensees that their longstanding involvement in documenting these transactions does not amount to engaging in legal practice and gives rise to potential prosecution. Given the volume of licensee transactions and the variety of circumstances that can be involved, it is not appropriate or effective to regulate the conduct of these transactions through section 24 of the Legal Profession Act.

Licensees will still need to be careful not to provide legal advice or draft documents of such legal complexity that it would be reasonable to expect that a solicitor would undertake the work. If deficiencies are being identified in contracts or conditions used or altered by licensees, I would urge the society and institute to continue their cooperation in this matter and to discuss options for improving consumer outcomes with the Office of Fair Trading.

At the request of the Queensland Law Society, the bill also includes an amendment to the Legal Profession Act 2007 to facilitate for the terms of members on the Queensland Law Society council to be for calendar years from 1 January 2009. The council will be able to make society rules of a transitional nature for this purpose.

The Security Providers Amendment Bill 2006, passed by the House in March 2007, introduced licensing requirements for security equipment installers. Under these requirements, new sectors of the security industry will be licensed, including businesses which work within electrical contracting and locksmithing. In keeping with the overall framework of the Security Providers Act 1993, an age requirement of 18 years and over applies to applicants for licences in these new sectors of the industry.

However, subsequent to the passing of those amendments, it became clear that the security equipment installation sector regularly engages apprentices and trainees, many of whom may not yet be 18 years of age, and are therefore unable to be licensed under the Security Providers Act 1993. As security equipment installation is not associated with physically maintaining order and control in liquor licensed premises, the age limit of 18 years is not directly relevant. The bill will provide certainty that trainees and apprentices under the age of 18 years may obtain a security equipment installer's licence. This will have a positive impact on the continuing employment and training opportunities for young people. The Security Providers Amendment Bill 2006 also created new categories for security providers' licences, including security officer licences for the service of providing guard dog patrols and electronic monitoring. An amendment to the Security Providers Act 2007 will make it clear that security officer licences can be issued for these specific categories.

The Security Providers Act 1993 will also be amended to clarify that the ongoing training regime introduced by the Security Providers Amendment Bill 2006 will take into account all administrative licensing processes as intended by these amendments. In particular, the amendments will ensure that the chief executive does not need to ask security providers to show cause why the new ongoing training requirements should not be introduced, consistent with the government’s commitment to raise standards in the industry. The bill will make it clear that the training requirements are not subject to appeal. The amendments will ensure that new training requirements to improve operating standards in the industry can be implemented efficiently and quickly. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Miss Simpson, adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Fire and Rescue Service; Queensland Ambulance Service

Hon. N ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (12.14 pm), by leave: The Queensland government respects the role of the men and women who serve in the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. When a further wage rate increase takes effect on 1 July this year, the wage rates for firefighters and station officers will have increased by about 70 per cent since 1996, which is approximately 40 per cent above movements in CPI over that time. The provisions for superannuation for firefighters and station officers will have increased by about 70 per cent since 1996, which is approximately 40 per cent above movements in CPI over that time. The agreement’s clause 4.3, Occupational Superannuation, states—

Effective from 1 July 2006, the employer contribution to employee superannuation shall equal at least 9% of ordinary time earnings as defined by the Superannuation Laws Amendment (2004 Measures No. 2) Act 2004. Where the employer contribution is higher, those arrangements will remain in place.

In terms of the specifics of firefighter superannuation, I am advised by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service that the implementation of the 38-hour week was introduced on 25 February 1998 along with a rotating leave roster and it was to be implemented on a cost-neutral basis. Firefighters work on average 42 hours per week on a continuous shift roster. Of that average 42 hours, two hours are recognised in terms of providing firefighters with accrued time to be taken at a later date and an additional two hours is paid for at the rate of time and a quarter and is known as the 38-hour week allowance. That and the other allowances paid to firefighters are all-purpose allowances which are