



RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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Subject **FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT** Page

Wednesday, 20 May 2009

REPORT	377
Auditor-General	377
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Report to Parliament No. 1 for 2009: Results of local government audits.....	377
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Report to Parliament No. 1 for 2009: Results of local government audits—executive summary brochure.	377
SPEAKER'S STATEMENT	377
Photographs in Chamber	377
PETITIONS	377
TABLED PAPER	378
MINISTERIAL PAPER	378
MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS	378
Water Supply	378
Queensland Water Commission	378
Immunisation; Whooping Cough	379
Swine Flu	380
Unemployment	381
QFleet ClimateSmart Action Plan	381
Emergency Services	382
Go Card	382
Teachers Strike	383
Gateway Upgrade Project	383
Crop Diseases	384
Infrastructure Projects	384
Northern Hairy-Nosed Wombat	385
Foster Carers	385
Animal Welfare	386
Victims of Crime	386
Townsville, Disability Services	387
Queensland Young Volunteer Awards	387
New Zealand, Tourism Campaign	387

Table of Contents — Wednesday, 20 May 2009

NOTICE OF MOTION	388
Drug Free Australia Report; Referral to Social Development Committee	388
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE	388
Bligh Government, Election Commitments	388
Taxation	388
Public Sector Efficiency	389
Fuel Subsidy	390
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Copy of document titled 'LNP 2009 Election Financial Commitments'	390
Infrastructure Program	390
Fuel Subsidy	391
Queensland Health, Staff	391
Fuel Subsidy	392
Job Creation	393
Fuel Subsidy	393
Construction Industry	394
Fuel Subsidy	394
Toowoomba, Water Supply	395
Gladstone Electorate, Jobs	395
Far North Queensland, Public Transport	396
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Copy of letter, dated 18 November 2008, from Mr Wettenhall to the Hon. John Mickel MP, Minister for Transport, relating to upgrade of the Cairns bus fleet	396
Branding of Cattle	397
Ipswich Motorway Upgrade	397
Retirement Age	397
Literacy and Numeracy	398
PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS	399
Bligh Government	399
Aviation Industry	399
Vegetation Management	400
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Bundle of submissions relating to the moratorium on regrowth clearing	400
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Bundle of photographs depicting open grasslands and endangered regrowth	400
Liberal National Party	400
Logan City, Gambling	400
Kokoda Memorial Pool	401
Macleay Island State School	401
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Bundle of photographs depicting areas within the Macleay Island State School Library	401
Domestic and Family Violence	402
Chalco, Abbot Point	402
Chatswood Hills Tavern	403
Cairns Greyhound Racing Club	403
Foster and Kinship Care	404
Bundaberg Port, Coal Loading	404
Volunteers	404
Vegetation Management	405
MOTION	405
Order of Business	405
ADDRESS-IN-REPLY	405
WATER AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL	409
First Reading	409
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Water and Another Act Amendment Bill	409
<i>Tabled paper:</i> Water and Another Act Amendment Bill, explanatory notes	409
Second Reading	409
MOTION	410
Order of Business	410
TELECOMMUNICATIONS INTERCEPTION BILL	411
Second Reading	411
MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	439
South-East Queensland Floods	439
TELECOMMUNICATIONS INTERCEPTION BILL	440
Second Reading	440
MOTION	445
Drug Free Australia Report; Referral to Social Development Committee	445
MOTION	454
Order of Business	454
ADDRESS-IN-REPLY	454
<i>Tabled paper:</i> The Weekend Australian newspaper dated 16-17 May 2009 containing article titled 'PM plan to raid super for projects'	467

Table of Contents — Wednesday, 20 May 2009

ADJOURNMENT	469
Schoolchildren, Safety	469
National Volunteer Week	470
Superior Jetties	471
Morayfield Electorate, Anzac Day Ceremonies	471
Palmwoods	472
Morningside and District Country Women's Association	472
Air Ambulance	473
Domestic Violence Prevention Month	473
Watson, Sir Bruce; Martinuzzi, Mr A	474
HUSH for Homelessness Appeal	475
ATTENDANCE	475

WEDNESDAY, 20 MAY 2009

The Legislative Assembly met at 9.30 am.

Mr Speaker (Hon. John Mickel, Logan) read prayers and took the chair.

Mr Speaker acknowledged the traditional owners of the land upon which this parliament is assembled and the custodians of the sacred lands of our state.

REPORT

Auditor-General

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to report that I have received from the Auditor-General a report titled *Report to parliament No. 1 for 2009: results of local government audits*. I have also received an executive summary brochure to report No. 1. I table the report and the brochure for the information of honourable members.

Tabled paper: Report to Parliament No. 1 for 2009: Results of local government audits [\[241\]](#).

Tabled paper: Report to Parliament No. 1 for 2009: Results of local government audits—executive summary brochure [\[242\]](#).

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Photographs in Chamber

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I wish to advise that I have given permission for an official government photographer to take a number of photographs in the chamber this morning and tomorrow morning. On a personal note I am pleased to see the recovery of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

PETITIONS

The Clerk presented the following paper petitions, lodged by the honourable members indicated—

Nambour Connection Road

Mr Wellington, from 817 petitioners, requesting the House to ensure the intersection of Blackall Street and the Nambour Connection Road, Woombye remains open; reduce the speed limit; install traffic lights and fixed speed cameras [\[243\]](#).

Kenilworth Maleny Road, Little Yabba

Mr Powell, from 1,156 petitioners, requesting the House to upgrade and widen the Kenilworth Maleny Road between Conondale and the Bill Waldon Bridge at Little Yabba [\[244\]](#).

Gas-fired Power Station, Laidley South

Mr Rickuss, from 1,586 petitioners, requesting the House to find a more appropriate site for the proposed gas-fired power station than the corner of Boland Land and Mulgowie Road, Laidley South [\[245\]](#).

TransLink

Mr Wendt, from 395 petitioners, requesting the House to determine that the area between Bellbowrie and Tivoli be covered by TransLink [\[246\]](#).

Fitzgibbon Urban Development Area Plan

Mr Gibson, from 353 petitioners, requesting the House to immediately suspend approvals of the Fitzgibbon Urban Development Area Plan and subject the whole of the plan to a rigorous review and community consultation that takes proper account of the wishes of existing residents [\[247\]](#).

Desalination Plant, Tugun

Mrs Stuckey, from 435 petitioners, requesting the House to guarantee that residential properties and streets of Tugun, Currumbin and Currumbin Waters be restored to their original condition following extensive construction works associated with the desalination plant at Tugun [\[248\]](#).

Nerang and Mudgeeraba Police Stations

Mr Johnson, from 2,520 petitioners, requesting the House to upgrade the Nerang and Mudgeeraba Police Stations to 24 hour counter operations as a matter of urgency [\[249\]](#).

Petitions received.

TABLED PAPER

MINISTERIAL PAPER Tabled BY THE CLERK

The following ministerial paper was tabled by the Clerk—

Minister for Transport (Ms Nolan)—

- [250](#) Response from the Minister for Transport (Ms Nolan) to three paper petitions (1193-09, 1194-09 and 1195-09) presented by Ms Simpson from 526, 30 and 30 petitioners respectively regarding the CoastConnect transit lanes and the proposed removal of on-street parking along Aerodrome Road and Alexandra Parade

MINISTERIAL PAPER

The following ministerial paper was tabled—

Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations (Mr Dick)—

- [251](#) Queensland Law Reform Commission, Annual Report and Statement of Affairs, 2007-08.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Water Supply

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.34 am): I am very pleased to be able to stand here today and advise the residents of South-East Queensland and the House that overnight our combined dam levels have now reached 62.6 per cent. It is no small irony that today's 62.6 per cent landmark occurs precisely five years to the day since our dams were last at that level. The last time we had dam capacity of 60 per cent was 20 May 2004. SEQWater estimates that we hit the 60 per cent mark around midnight last night as a result of the very heavy rainfalls we have experienced across Brisbane and the catchment areas. With further heavy rains forecast this week, it is very likely that we will see dam levels increase even further.

Combined storage levels increased in the 12 hours to 7 am by 3.41 per cent. That is a phenomenal amount of water to be flowing from our catchment areas in that period. Wivenhoe Dam is now at 48 per cent, Somerset Dam is at 95.6 per cent and North Pine Dam is at 83.6 per cent. While this is fantastic news for our region, the worst stages of our drought should remain very present in our memories, just as we should never overlook the fact that water remains our most precious resource. Queenslanders can be proud of their tremendous accomplishment in conserving our water supplies over the past three years of drought. I encourage everyone to keep up the effort. The supplies we have now should be regarded as precious and we should be careful how we use them.

Queensland Water Commission

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.36 am): As all residents of South-East Queensland will recall, just three short years ago we found ourselves in the most dire of predicaments as the water supplies in our dams shrivelled to frightening levels of below 20 per cent. Those were circumstances not experienced in generations, but today we find ourselves at the other end of the spectrum. In fact, we find ourselves in a paradox as our dam levels have now surpassed the 60 per cent mark and further increases are anticipated this week with significant rains forecast.

Three years ago when we were in the midst of the most serious drought on record, the government established the Queensland Water Commission to guide South-East Queensland through this unprecedented chapter in our history. It was the responsible thing to do and, in the current conditions, with our water grid built, with our strategic plans for future water use in place and with Queenslanders now educated in effective water use to the point where it has become second nature, the functions carried out by the commission remain critical for ensuring water supply security in South-East Queensland and beyond.

However, today the government will introduce a bill that will modify the structure of the commission to reduce the commission from three commissioners to one. The commission will remain as an independent statutory body with its independent reporting requirements under the Water Act preserved. This will mean that the current functions will remain in place and the commissioner will report to the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade. This will allow the Queensland Water Commission to build on the achievements of the past, including finalising the water institution arrangements. The QWC has supported Queensland in our quest to be a world leader in water usage. It plays an important role and there is more work to be done. It will mean some cost savings as my government steers Queensland through the international financial meltdown. I stress that this will be achieved without job losses.

The independent review of Queensland government boards, committees and statutory authorities, known as the Webbe and Weller report, was delivered to government earlier this year and stated that where statutory authorities are required consideration should be given to whether board governance is needed. The decision to move to a single-commissioner model is in light of this recommendation.

As announced during the election campaign, the move to cut back on the communications functions of the commission, given it has now achieved its purpose, represents savings of about \$15 million over the next four years. The Queensland Water Commission will also be restructured so that its corporate services and communications operations will be provided by the Department of Environment and Resource Management. By consolidating the corporate services and communications functions of the commission into the department, we have identified further savings of up to \$7 million over the same period.

Today I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Queensland Water Commission for its groundbreaking achievements over the past three years and to the chair and the two commissioners, whose contracts expire on 18 June, who set the agenda for water reform in this state and have seen it through.

In particular, I thank Elizabeth Nosworthy for her work as the commission's chair since its inception. Ms Nosworthy has indicated that she no longer wishes to carry on in the position, and I thank her for her efforts over the past three years. Let us not forget that Ms Nosworthy moved into this position during one of the most difficult periods of our recent history. She was faced with a task that nobody had ever had to take on before—an unprecedented set of responsibilities. Her leadership in dealing with difficult, complex, groundbreaking and, let us not forget, often very controversial issues such as imposing restrictions and changing public attitudes has provided a great service to our state, and she is to be congratulated for her efforts. I also thank fellow commissioners Jamie Quinn and David Green for their technical expertise and professionalism.

The Queensland Water Commission has taken us from severe drought to our position as a drought-proof state, with a record achievement which has set the pace for the entire nation in responsible water management. Above all else, history will remember the Queensland Water Commission for the work it did to change the very culture of our attitude toward water. In short, it is responsible through its smart, clear and consistent public education and marketing campaigns for entrenching the view that water is a precious resource and for encouraging Queenslanders to treat our water supplies with more care and more respect.

Remember, Mr Speaker, as recently as 2006, when we entered the height of drought, the average resident of South-East Queensland was using more than 300 litres of water every day. Through its efforts, the Queensland Water Commission, in partnership with the people of South-East Queensland, has exceeded the Target 140 initiative and today Queenslanders continue to use an average of just 134 litres a day. That responsible attitude to water consumption, as I said, is now entrenched in our culture and is a model for the rest of the country.

Again, I commend the QWC staff and the chair and the commissioners for achieving that and so much more over the past three years. I look forward to seeing the commission's continual delivery under a new model. The government will appoint a new commissioner to fulfil the ongoing responsibilities of the Queensland Water Commission in coming weeks.

Immunisation; Whooping Cough

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (9.41 am): We are very fortunate in Queensland to have access to some of the best immunisation services in the world. Queensland children have access to a fully funded schedule of vaccines protecting against diseases such as whooping cough, diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, chickenpox, rubella, hepatitis B, polio and meningococcal C. Nationally, we have seen a decline in many serious infectious diseases. In Queensland, our childhood immunisation rates are good, being generally above 90 per cent for children at one and two years of age. However, unfortunately we continue to see some serious infectious diseases circulating.

At present in Queensland, and indeed across Australia, we are seeing alarming increases in whooping cough rates. This was brought home to me last month when Toni and David McCaffery from northern New South Wales wrote to me about the tragic death of their newborn daughter, Dana Elizabeth, who had been airlifted to the Mater Children's Hospital in Brisbane. Unfortunately, Dana at four weeks of age was too young to be vaccinated. In just the first three months of this year in Australia more than 8,000 adults and children have been diagnosed with whooping cough. The death of this baby has I think brought home to all of us how important immunisation is. The McCafferys have set up a website as part of their effort to get the community working together to protect our most vulnerable from this preventable illness.

Whooping cough has resulted in the deaths of three babies this year alone in Australia—fortunately, none of them Queensland babies but babies like Dana Elizabeth who came here to the Mater Hospital. Those babies, as I said, were all too young to have been fully vaccinated. Unfortunately, too many parents continue to leave their children unprotected and unvaccinated, putting not only the lives of those children at risk but also tragically the lives of others. But what is important to remember is that even those parents who are the most diligent about vaccinating their own children are often unaware of the importance of adults getting regular vaccination boosters.

Babies should not be dying of whooping cough in Australia in the 21st century. It is as simple as that. Each and every one of us needs to redouble our efforts. I strongly encourage all parents of young children and all adults who have frequent contact with young children to get a booster dose of whooping cough vaccine. As I said, many adults simply do not realise that the whooping cough shots that they had as children do not protect them throughout their adult lives and they need to get boosters.

I have requested the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health to fully examine our current immunisation programs with particular reference to whooping cough given the alarming increase in diagnosis rates and to take steps to improve the rates of vaccination and community awareness of the importance of adults maintaining their own immunity. On my health minister's request, this was raised at the most recent meeting of the council of ministers for health around the country.

There was a debate in this chamber yesterday about the sorts of issues that we could find bipartisanship on and take forward in the public interest. I would suggest that this is one on which there would be no disagreement across the House. I encourage all members, if they have good ideas about how we could increase vaccination rates and assist in seeing an increased level of protection for children and bring down these rates of whooping cough, to please talk to the Deputy Premier. We are all ears.

Swine Flu

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Health) (9.45 am): Swine flu remains a serious threat to the health of Queenslanders, and the Bligh government is taking it seriously. The virus appears to have originated in Mexico, where 72 people are confirmed dead. In late April the World Health Organisation raised concerns about the spread and potential impact of this new strain of influenza. The current World Health Organisation alert level is at phase 5—the last phase before the spread of virus is declared a pandemic. In response, Queensland activated its health pandemic influenza plan on 28 April.

Key strategies in the current phase are to ensure that plans are in place to cope with any pandemic, to delay the entry of this virus into Australia and to enhance disease surveillance. Our public health experts are regularly in contact with other states and the federal government. I have spoken regularly with federal health minister, Nicola Roxon, and fellow health ministers from other states. State borders do not matter to this disease. If we are going to delay any outbreak in Australia and combat its spread if does arrive, it is crucial that we work together.

Queensland Health border nurses are placed at three of our international airports to screen any unwell passengers. On behalf of this House and all Queenslanders, I would like to thank those nurses for the hard work they have done and continue to do. They are the real heroes of border security. Suspect cases that are detected at the border and those presenting to health services from the community are being offered antiviral medication and are being isolated in their homes. I would much rather be criticised for being too cautious, for being too prepared to tackle any swine flu pandemic that hits our shores, than be criticised for being too lax. As of six o'clock this morning health authorities—

Mr Horan: Quicker than you are with the mice.

Mr LUCAS: It is terribly sad that a former health minister has to make inane interjections when we are dealing with something as serious as a pandemic and straight after the Premier had talked about the need for bipartisanship on things like vaccinations. That says a lot about you. It is beyond your intellectual capacity.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Deputy Premier, again on the use of the word 'you', could you make sure your comments are directed to the chair?

Mr LUCAS: Mr Speaker, in cooperation with federal decision makers, Queensland Health is ready to ramp up strategies such as isolation and quarantine to prevent the spread of the virus.

Mr Messenger: You were caught out with no Tamiflu, though, weren't you?

Mr LUCAS: Australia has the largest per capita stock of Tamiflu in the world.

Mr Messenger: You had 31,000 doses.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Burnett, the Deputy Premier has the call.

Mr LUCAS: You have got to be pretty good to get promoted to the backbench and on that side—even they recognised your talent.

Anyone who has returned from overseas since April this year and has developed an influenza like illness or pneumonia within seven days of leaving should seek advice from their GP or local ED or call 13HEALTH. Queenslanders can do their bit by following normal hygiene procedures such as regular hand washing, covering nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing and staying home if they are sick.

Of concern, however, is that while this disease has hit at the end of the Northern Hemisphere flu season it has come at the start of ours. Now is not the time for complacency with either swine or seasonal flu. Even without swine flu, during winter months our hospitals are sometimes stretched due to increases in the number of people presenting to hospital with influenza type symptoms. Many employers offer vaccination programs to their employees as a very viable and useful investment in productivity and health. I would like to thank Queensland Health, our counterdisaster agencies, police and emergency services, councils, the federal government and, most of all, the public for their continuing cooperation.

Unemployment

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Employment and Economic Development) (9.49 am): As the global economy crashes, the human toll—the individual and collective tragedy of rising unemployment—continues to rise. The Australian Bureau of Statistics' figures released earlier this month show that Queensland's trend unemployment rate rose two-tenths of a percentage point in April to 4.9 per cent. In historical terms, this remains a low rate of unemployment. It is, however, the pace and trajectory of the rise in unemployment that is the dominant concern for our government. The drowning of our recent buoyant growth has pushed the trend unemployment rate up by 1.2 percentage points since a near-generational low of 3.7 per cent in September last year. Employment growth has crashed—from 7,600 jobs created in June last year to 400 jobs created last month. This represents the sharpest rise in the unemployment rate and the weakest growth in employment since the GST induced disruption to the economic cycle at the start of the decade.

The ABS reported that last month a total of 2.2368 million Queenslanders had jobs. Of these, 1.616 million, or around 72 per cent, were classified by the ABS as full-time jobs, with 620,800 considered part-time jobs. The emergence of part-time work has been a modern feature of the way we work and the way our economy works. When monthly statistics were first collected, just 15.3 per cent of jobs were part time. Today the proportion is just under 28 per cent. It is important to note that, under the internationally accepted definitions utilised by the independent Australian Bureau of Statistics, someone who works for 34 hours a week will be classified as a part-time worker. In actual fact, the average part-time employee in Queensland works 16.7 hours a week.

All these plain numbers can mask the human toll. The starker numbers are these: 3,600 more Queenslanders joined the unemployment queue last month, with the queue now containing 114,200 Queenslanders. This situation serves only to strengthen the resolve of the Bligh government to put jobs ahead of job cuts and do everything in our power to create a net new 100,000 jobs this term.

It has been brought to my attention that Centrebet is starting to take bets on the level that unemployment will reach next month. Taking bets and making money out of the misfortunes of the unemployed is as about as distasteful as it gets. Trading in the misery of others is a shameless practice and I do not know what satisfaction anybody, including Centrebet, could gain by seeking to profit from others' misfortune. I think the people at Centrebet need to revisit this issue and accept that this is an unacceptable practice.

QFleet ClimateSmart Action Plan

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works and Information and Communication Technology) (9.52 am): The Queensland government is pursuing some ambitious climate objectives, and QFleet is leading by example. The QFleet ClimateSmart Action Plan came into effect on 1 January 2008 and sets out a number of targets and strategies. All are designed to reduce the greenhouse emissions from our fleet of almost 14,000 passenger and light commercial vehicles. The focus of the action plan is a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions of 15 per cent by 31 December 2010, compared to emissions at 30 June 2007. QFleet is powering towards this target and by the end of March 2009 a reduction of 11 per cent had already been achieved. This means that after just 15 months of the three-year action plan our emissions savings are well ahead of schedule.

Ms Jones: Hear, hear!

Mr SCHWARTEN: I thank the environment minister for her interjection. A key strategy in this achievement has been the introduction of minimum emission standards for vehicles based on the greenhouse ratings from the Australian government's Green Vehicle Guide. The greenhouse ratings

differentiate vehicles based on their carbon dioxide emissions—that is, the lower the emissions, the higher the rating. The action plan sets the standards at 5.5 for passenger vehicles and 3.5 for light commercial vehicles. I can say with some delight that we were the first state in Australia, as I understand it, to have incorporated that and it was an idea of my own.

Mr Johnson: Bacon rind under your fingernails.

Mr Hopper: Bringing home the bacon.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I see the collective wit and intelligence of the people over there on display for everybody. There is not enough to fill a thimble, and collectively none of them would get hot on the stove.

I will go through this again, as you are so interested in it. The action plan sets the standards at 5.5 for passenger vehicles and 3.5 for light commercial vehicles. By the end of March 2009, 86 per cent of the passenger fleet and 95 per cent of the light commercial fleet were compliant with those minimum greenhouse rating standards. The non-compliant vehicles are having their emissions offset, with offsets to increase to 50 per cent of the fleet by 2010 and 100 per cent by 2020.

As the action plan implementation continues, I expect to see increased numbers of hybrid, small and light vehicles, and vehicles with advanced engine technology such as new-generation diesel engine passenger cars. The 2010 target of 15 per cent emissions reduction is challenging, but the achievement of 11 per cent in the first 15 months shows that it can and will be done.

QFleet is generating jobs as well as reducing emissions. The state will soon embark on a \$147 million program of purchasing motor vehicles to lease to clients to facilitate the delivery of government services. Not only will this new emissions program help the environment, but this spend will also generate new jobs in dealerships and help protect existing jobs at the same time throughout the state.

Emergency Services

Hon. NS ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (9.55 am): Wild weather across the state's south-east has kept our emergency services personnel busy overnight. Since 5 pm yesterday afternoon, the State Emergency Service hotline, 132500, has received more than 350 calls for assistance and advice. Early reports indicate that SES personnel have attended more than 34 jobs in the Brisbane, north coast and Toowoomba regions since five o'clock yesterday. Most of those jobs were temporary roof repairs and sandbagging. In the Glasshouse Mountains, SES personnel are currently responding to a number of calls for assistance mainly relating to roof repairs.

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service attended 11 swift-water rescue incidents overnight where vehicles were driven into rising floodwaters. The first such incident occurred at around eight o'clock last night on Neurum Road in Neurum, with the most recent at seven o'clock this morning at the intersection of Old Gympie Road and Pikes Road in Beerwah. Other incidents occurred during the night at Royston, Nundah, Larapinta, Peachester, Waterford and Glass House. Thankfully, in all cases the motorists had safely removed themselves from the vehicle by the time our skilled fire and rescue officers arrived at the scene. But these incidents again reinforce the need for motorists to avoid driving through flooded roads and streets. So far this storm season we have tragically lost nine lives in flooded streams, creeks and drains. People are simply not heeding the warnings that are consistently reported during these wild weather events. Floodwaters are unpredictable and dangerous and I implore Queenslanders again to keep a safe distance at all times and to particularly keep an eye on children and young people and keep them under supervision where possible.

While I am on my feet, I take the opportunity to thank our tireless SES volunteers for their ongoing efforts to support Queensland communities in need. Additionally, many rural fire volunteers along with Queensland fire and rescue swift-water rescue teams and incident management teams provide invaluable support to local councils and disaster management groups during disasters and wild weather events. So far this year there have been around 5,000 SES activations and over 92,000 hours of operations performed by SES volunteers. They do a fantastic job and we should take every opportunity we can to thank them.

Go Card

Hon. RG NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (Minister for Transport) (9.58 am): Queensland faces three key challenges—climate change, peak oil and continuing high levels of population growth—and we are facing these challenges in the toughest economic climate in generations. The common solution to these challenges is to get Queenslanders relying more on public transport. So I am pleased to announce today that South-East Queensland commuters have created transport records as more and more commuters jump on board public transport each and every day. In March, go card use topped more than

one million trips every week in yet another milestone for the groundbreaking technology. Five million go card trips were made in the month of March. More than 30 million trips have been made on the go card so far, as go card trips now make up about 29 per cent of all trips taken across the TransLink network.

This is a great result given that TransLink finished rolling out the system last June—less than a year ago, as you would well know, Mr Speaker. South-East Queensland is just the second Australian public transport system to successfully roll out smart card technology, and it is by far the largest.

The go card continues to surpass all of our expectations and targets. Go card users do not have to worry about finding spare change or queuing for paper tickets. Another benefit is that TransLink's planners and operators are able to provide better services and better planning. Also, patronage levels continue to soar. In March, total trips topped more than \$17.4 million on public transport across the TransLink network—the highest ever. In February, the Queensland government rolled out a major bus and rail package across the network that provided capacity for another 79,000 commuters each week. The package included a record \$6.8 million bus enhancement package for Brisbane.

South-East Queenslanders are on track to make about 185 million trips this financial year on TransLink network buses, trains and ferries. People are turning to public transport for three key reasons: it saves money, it is good for the environment and it is very convenient. This is a great example of the Queensland government and the community working together to reach our Q2 targets of a strong and green Queensland.

Teachers Strike

Hon. GJ WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Education and Training) (10.00 am): I wish to thank all those involved in supervising students during yesterday's strike by the Queensland Teachers Union. Across Queensland, regions have reported that 15,741 students attended schools yesterday—about 3.3 per cent of Queensland's state school student population. These students were supervised by 14,108 staff members. This is a ratio of one adult for every 1.1 students.

I am advised that all of these staff members were principals, registered teachers and teacher aides. In a limited number of cases, particularly in special schools, health staff such as nurses and occupational therapists were in attendance, as they often would be on a normal school day. There was a principal or an officer in charge at every school, I am advised. I am advised that every officer in charge was a registered teacher. We regret, of course, the disruption to parents and students that this industrial action has caused.

We are continuing to negotiate with the Queensland Teachers Union, and I remain positive about the prospect of ultimately reaching agreement. The government's offer to teachers is fair, reasonable and, most importantly, responsible during these tough economic times. Our \$900 million package offers teachers a substantial pay increase, Australia's highest superannuation benefits of 12.75 per cent and superior leave arrangements. Everyone is tightening their belt, and our offer to Queensland teachers finds a balance between valuing their hard work and responsible spending.

If Queensland teachers accept this offer now, it will make them the nation's second highest paid. We value our teachers and the work they do. Quality teaching was identified as a key issue in the review of our education system by Professor Geoff Masters. We are currently seeking feedback from the public on this important road map to help us reach our goal of improving Queensland's education system. We are seeking public feedback on his proposals.

I recently joined the Premier and Professor Masters in a round-table discussion with key education stakeholders to seek their views. Teacher organisations, parent bodies, education academics, unions and principals associations across the state and non-state systems were represented. This meeting provided an opportunity for groups to meet directly with Professor Masters and offer their input on his recommendations. It provided some fruitful discussion and offered initial feedback on the stakeholder views. Consultation on this vital issue of getting the basics right in our schools will continue until 29 May, and I encourage all Queenslanders to have their say.

Gateway Upgrade Project

Hon. CA WALLACE (Thuringowa—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads) (10.04 am): Last week the members for Bulimba and Chatsworth and I had the chance to visit the Gateway Upgrade Project construction site and see for ourselves the tremendous work that is taking place there. This \$1.88 billion project is one of the Bligh government's key congestion-busting initiatives. Upon completion, free-flow tolling and the Gateway Upgrade Project are expected to deliver immediate and proven travel time and road safety improvements while reducing congestion for Brisbane motorists. Motorists should begin to experience incremental travel time savings as works are completed and as additional lanes are opened along the new-look Gateway Motorway. When completed, this project is expected to take up to 25 minutes off the travel time for those using the Gateway and Logan Motorway network.

Free-flow tolling comes into effect in July, and it is estimated that this alone will save up to 10 minutes travel time across the motorways for current cash-paying motorists. The toll booths will be phased out from July and completely removed by September. When I visited the project last week, I was able to observe the new free-flow tolling gantries that have been installed on the existing Gateway Bridge to facilitate full implementation of free-flow tolling. Other construction works associated with free-flow tolling are also on schedule. The Gateway upgrade with free-flow tolling demonstrates the Bligh government's commitment to delivering critical infrastructure to meet future needs while continuing to provide employment and a boost to our economy. The Gateway Upgrade Project is sustaining an average of 6,000 direct and indirect jobs over the life of the project.

I was extremely impressed by the work that is happening on the Gateway upgrade. Construction on the deck of the 700-metre long 10-span northern approach of the second Gateway Bridge is now complete. Construction will now focus on the 350-metre five-span southern approach using a 650-tonne crane to erect bridge segments. Overall the project is three months ahead of schedule, with the new Gateway Bridge due for completion by the middle of next year and the existing bridge refurbished by early 2011.

Crop Diseases

Hon. TS MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland) (10.06 am): Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries is continuing to support the state's \$2 billion field crop industries by developing grain crops with high-level resistance to diseases and pests. Crop diseases can be devastating. Ten years ago \$29 million was stripped in one season from Queensland's barley production, and losses continue today. Plant diseases are a major issue for industry, costing \$50 million a year for leaf diseases and \$40 million a year for root and crown diseases of wheat.

To bolster the response and research into plant disease, a scientist with significant international experience has been appointed to lead QPIF's winter cereal plant pathology team, which is working to find new ways of beating wheat and barley diseases. Dr Stephen Neate, principal plant pathologist, will be based at the Leslie Research Centre in Toowoomba. He brings 17 years experience with the CSIRO in Adelaide and eight years of research and teaching at North Dakota State University in the United States. Dr Neate is intent on finding solutions to major plant diseases in Queensland, identifying new and more effective forms of disease management and affordable chemical control.

In the grain sector, Dr Neate will lead research into minimising the effects of crown and root disease and rust through plant resistance and management practices. This research is unique in Australia, and QPIF continues to work with plant breeders in developing disease and pest resistant and tolerant varieties.

This research is also being conducted in collaboration with the University of Southern Queensland, the University of Queensland and the University of Adelaide. Research by QPIF plant pathologists has improved the level of resistance to a range of diseases in our crop varieties. Researchers have developed disease management plans and are able to respond quickly to significant disease outbreaks. QPIF researchers are also providing information to industry on ways to minimise the effect of pests and diseases on current and future crops. All this research is assisting the grains industry as we build a diverse economy powered by bright ideas.

Infrastructure Projects

Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Infrastructure and Planning) (10.08 am): The number of Queenslanders working on the Airport Link, Northern Busway and airport roundabout upgrade projects continues to climb. There are now more than 1,500 workers on the job. On Monday night, work on Australia's largest road infrastructure project really kicked into gear, with the start of 24-hour tunnelling at the Bowen Hills and Windsor construction sites. This highlights the enormous progress on the project since the Premier announced the winning bidder in May last year. One year on, two road headers are now working underground at Bowen Hills and at Truro Street, Windsor. Crews of seven operators will run them day and night for the next two years as they create six kilometres of tunnels.

Since the official start of construction last November more than 1.7 million hours have been worked. Seven major work sites are now operational, including the flyover that will eliminate the airport roundabout, where the Premier signalled the start of work last month, some four months early. The project will cut travel times for motorists heading to and from the Brisbane Airport from mid- to late 2011. And we ain't seen nothing yet!

Later this year, the first of two 3,000-tonne tunnel-boring machines—the TBMs that I have spoken to the House about before—will arrive from Germany to begin tunnelling south from Toombul. By mid-2010 a total of 13 pieces of tunnelling machinery will be carving out Australia's largest infrastructure project.

Over the next three years, the Airport Link projects are expected to create some 10,000 direct and indirect job opportunities. When it is complete in mid-2012, the Airport Link project will allow motorists to drive between Bowen Hills and the Brisbane Airport in six minutes, avoiding 18 sets of traffic lights along the way. This vital addition to Brisbane's road network will provide a critical link between the northern suburbs and two of South-East Queensland's most important economic centres—the CBD and the airport. Not only will it provide work for thousands of Queenslanders; it will truly be a congestion buster for all of us who use those roads daily.

Northern Hairy-Nosed Wombat

Hon. KJ JONES (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability) (10.10 am): I am pleased to report to the House that our very own northern hairy-nosed wombat—one of the world's most endangered species—has recorded a population boom. Its population has increased by 20 per cent in the last two years thanks to some remarkable state government recovery efforts. It is more endangered than the Sumatran tiger and the giant panda. They have grown in number from 115 to 138 individuals in their only habitat just outside Emerald.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Ms JONES: Great electorate. I am also pleased to inform the House that in another new initiative my department is creating a second colony near St George to further increase the wombat population. This is being funded by Xstrata.

The population increase is a dramatic turnaround for an extremely vulnerable species in Queensland. It is the largest population increase in more than 25 years. It is a testament to the wonderful efforts of our Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service officers and the Bligh government's commitment to protect endangered species.

Actions taken to promote the growth at Epping Forest National Park include building a 20-kilometre predator-proof fence, providing food and water in times of drought and conducting controlled burns to prevent wildfire and improve food quality. We have created an environment where the wombat has thrived which is a major milestone in our efforts to save this species.

Now, thanks to a \$3 million partnership with the mining company Xstrata, a second colony should be up and running in a couple of months. The 130-hectare site was carefully chosen after it was found to have suitable soils and food, within the original geographic range of the species. Work is already underway to create a suitable environment for the new colony which includes building a specially designed predator-proof fence. Our project team will create conditions at this site equivalent to those of the Epping Forest colony. The increasing population in Central Queensland, our experienced team of wildlife staff working on the project and financial support from Xstrata to set up a second colony means the future of the northern hairy-nosed wombat is looking a lot brighter.

Foster Carers

Hon. PG REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport) (10.13 am): Foster carers are the heart and soul of our child protection system. Child safety services simply could not do its job without them. In my short time as minister, I have been very impressed by the tireless work foster carers do. Foster carers play a special role in making sure Queensland children who have been abused or neglected get a better start to life than they would otherwise get if they remained with their parents.

On Mother's Day last year, the Bligh government launched its most extensive foster carer campaign, with an ambition to recruit 500 new carers. The campaign prompted almost 7,000 inquiries from across the state. From those inquiries we have already recruited an extra 413 carers and we expect many more. We anticipate achieving the target of 500 by the end of June.

The campaign has not only generated an enormous level of interest in becoming a foster carer, but has inspired interest in supporting foster carers generally. Community newspapers seek out foster carers as a regular source of positive news during significant times such as Child Protection Week, Foster and Kinship Carer Week and Mother's Day.

This supportive community attitude gives Child Safety an excellent foundation to keep expanding the pool of quality foster carers. I would like to mention the particular success of the campaign in Central Queensland. I am advised that the department has received 862 enquiries from Rockhampton and the region since the campaign started, and to date 154 of those have completed training and 69 new carers have already been approved.

Mr Schwarten: It shows what great people there are in Rocky.

Mr REEVES: I will take that interjection. A further 224 people are undertaking comprehensive training and assessment to enhance their understanding of the needs of children in care. That is an outstanding response and I congratulate the people of Central Queensland for offering to open their hearts and homes to those young people and children who need it.

I must commend the member for Rockhampton and the member for Keppel for their strong support of the Central Queensland campaign, and the Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin* for taking up the cause as well. They have printed numerous stories supporting the campaign and they have also repeated advertisements at their own cost. We will continue to welcome interest from people wanting to be a foster carer, in whatever capacity is open to them, and appreciate the support of the community.

Animal Welfare

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Local Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (10.15 am): I am sorry to say that each year in Queensland more than 25,000 cats and dogs are euthanased. It highlights how important the Bligh government's managing of unwanted cats and dogs strategy is, which includes the new Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008. From 1 July this year we will have state-wide consistency when it comes to managing dangerous, menacing and restricted dog breeds. The act's registration and microchipping provisions will also apply to 11 South-East Queensland councils from 1 July, with the rest of the state following by December 2010.

I am pleased to say that leadership and innovation is coming on these matters from regional Queensland. Gladstone Regional Council has not only embraced the new legislation with open arms, it will be bringing in registration with a range of incentives more than a year ahead of the required time, starting 1 July this year. It is championing the cause in the region because it recognises the benefits of responsible pet ownership and that returning loved pets to their owners is a win-win for all.

On top of this, consistency in registration is common sense, with incentives in place for microchipped and desexed cats and dogs. Other important components of the Bligh government's program include pilot studies in the Moreton Bay Regional Council, Logan, Gold Coast and Townsville city councils. Each one is exploring ways to reduce the number of animals put down each year.

Moreton Bay Regional Council is working with the RSPCA's education mobile unit and the Portable Animal Welfare Service, or PAWS. In the first week of the trial, 135 cats were desexed and over 1,000 cats and dogs were microchipped. I believe it is equally important that more than 2,700 children attended responsible pet ownership information sessions. That is pretty impressive. I congratulate the Moreton Bay Regional Council on these early results and look forward to hearing similar stories from the other councils as their projects get off the ground. I thank the many people and organisations who are working with the Bligh government to deliver a fairer, stronger Queensland for responsible pet owners.

Victims of Crime

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.18 am): The Bligh government is committed to ensuring victims of crime have access to the support they need to recover and get their lives back on track. Providing greater support for victims is part of our commitment to a fair and safe Queensland. There is no doubt that being a victim of crime is one of the most horrific experiences a person can go through and can impact on every aspect of a person's life. An act of violence in particular can have a devastating effect, often felt not only by the victim but also by their family and friends.

This government is determined to do everything it can to help reduce these effects and enable victims to get back on their feet. That is why the Bligh government made a commitment last year to overhaul the existing victims compensation scheme and replace it with a more efficient and compassionate system that will make life easier for victims of crime. The new Victims Financial Assistance Scheme aims to cut red tape so that victims can access the support and assistance they need as soon as possible. The new scheme is moving away from a focus on a lump sum compensation figure to instead identify the actual financial assistance required for treatment and support to help victims recover as quickly as possible.

Today I will be releasing for public comment a draft bill of this new scheme—the Victims of Crime Assistance Bill 2009. The draft bill expands the categories of victims eligible for assistance. It also establishes interim emergency assistance and reduces backlogs in the existing system. While the global financial crisis is placing immense pressure on all budgets, this government will not compromise on essential services for the most vulnerable members of our community. To the contrary, through this new scheme we will provide assistance for more people who have suffered at the hands of criminals. From today the draft bill can be downloaded from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General website. I look forward to receiving feedback, with consultation open until 12 June.

Townsville, Disability Services

Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs) (10.20 am): Last week I convened a ministerial round table with a focus on early intervention for children aged between zero and eight years. The round table was well represented by families and stakeholders from across the state, including The Umbrella Network, MontroseAccess, the Cerebral Palsy League, Butterfly Kids and AEIOU. The forum clearly identified the need for a single access point for support, information and advice for families to access both community and government services in their local communities. I am currently working on an action plan for children with a disability which will outline my priorities to enhance access to information, improve coordination of services and cater for needs in rural and remote areas across the state.

Last Friday I visited Townsville and announced \$90,000 for The Umbrella Network. It provides early intervention services for families with a child with a disability in the local area. These children with a disability may include children such as those having Down syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy or other physical disabilities. Angie and Jenny who run The Umbrella Network are part of gen Y: they are young, they are sassy and they are connected with families and the community through modern technologies. They have a contemporary way of doing business.

The other initiative I announced in Townsville is the trial of a child connect officer to be based in Townsville. The child connect officer will be employed by the department of disability services and will meet with families and provide early assistance for families once their child has been diagnosed with a disability. They will visit local child-care centres and kindergartens to identify and assist families with a child with a disability and to access information. We are going to trial these child connect officers over the next six months. This afternoon I will meet with the Hon. Bill Shorten, my federal counterpart, to discuss ways in which we can work together to nationally deliver early intervention strategies for children with a disability.

Queensland Young Volunteer Awards

Hon. KL STRUTHERS (Algera—ALP) (Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women) (10.22 am): Nominations are now open for the 2009 Queensland Young Volunteer Awards. The awards recognise young volunteers aged 12 to 25 who give up their time and energy to help others. One-third of young people in Queensland are volunteers; they are making a real difference to people's lives. They are our unsung heroes and they deserve recognition for what they do. That is one of the main reasons behind these awards. We want to publicly acknowledge their contribution to the community. Their volunteer work is important to Queensland's future. That is why the Bligh government has made a commitment to boost the number of volunteers in Queensland by 50 per cent by 2020.

Young volunteers are important to our target: they are the volunteers of the future. The vast majority of young people are law abiding and achievers in sport, in the arts, school and community activities. We must value our youth and not give oxygen to fallacies that lots of young people are offenders, the fallacy that youth crime is out of control. I am pleased to report to the House that youth crime trends have declined. In 2001 there were around nine offences per 100 young people; that is now down to around eight offences per 100 young people. Let us value our youth and let us reward their achievements.

New Zealand, Tourism Campaign

Hon. PJ LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading) (10.24 am): A new \$600,000 international tourism marketing campaign is underway to encourage Kiwis to discover the diverse range of experiences available on the Gold Coast and beyond. The two-week television, print and online campaign was a joint initiative of Tourism Queensland in partnership with Gold Coast Tourism and Flight Centre. Tourism Queensland coordinated the partnership to promote the Gold Coast and provide opportunities for visitors to rediscover more than just the traditional Gold Coast beach lifestyle but also the diverse range of hinterland and beyond the coast experiences available for visitors. One of the campaign's main objectives is to entice New Zealand travellers to the Gold Coast to incorporate and package more experiences into their visit. This is by far one of the most aggressive tourism marketing campaigns that we have undertaken in New Zealand this year. The campaign will feature prominently on New Zealand television channels 1 and 2, newspapers, websites including stuff.co.nz and nzherald.co.nz as well as 130 Flight Centre outlets across the country.

With a downturn in international travel due to the current global economic crisis, we are focusing our attention on markets such as New Zealand which are short-haul markets and likely to drive growth for Queensland tourism in the short term. Increasing awareness of Queensland experiences and generating confidence and understanding about what Queensland has to offer is our aim. We want to offer Kiwi travellers to Queensland affordable experiences in Queensland that position the Gold Coast as fun, very natural, very active and very diverse. International tourism is a key economic driver for

Queensland and during challenging economic times such as these it was crucial to continue hard-hitting tactical campaigns which increased the visibility and presence of Queensland destinations and products in international markets. More than 211,000 visitors from New Zealand visited the Gold Coast in 2008, supporting 2,500 Queensland jobs and injecting almost \$580 million into the Queensland economy. This is just another example of the Bligh government working to protect and deliver new tourism jobs for Queensland.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Drug Free Australia Report; Referral to Social Development Committee

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (10.27 am): I give notice that I shall move—

That the *Cannabis: suicide, schizophrenia and other ill-effects* research paper published by Drug Free Australia Ltd, be referred to the Social Development Committee for investigation and report.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, for this afternoon's debate—because it is a debate—I am hoping that this time we might just use notes rather than read our speeches. Let us see how we go this afternoon. With regard to the announcement for schools today, St Michael's College and Caboolture State High School students will be visiting Parliament House.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Bligh Government, Election Commitments

Mr LANGBROEK (10.28 am): My question without notice is to the Premier. Will the Premier provide a list of the pre-election promises she made which she considers to be breakable?

Ms BLIGH: As I outlined during the election campaign, before the election campaign and after the election campaign, Queensland—like the rest of this country, like all developed economies across the world—is facing the reality of the worst global economic crisis that we have seen in three-quarters of a century. I have been very honest with the people of Queensland and I have told them what it means for our budget and what it means for our economy. I have been up-front and told them that we are likely to see things get worse before they get better; that, tragically, more Queenslanders are going to be out of work in the short term; that our budget has seen a \$14 billion decline in revenue over the next four years.

No organisation can sustain a \$14 billion drop in incoming revenue without facing some very tough decisions on how to bring that back into some balance in expenditure. By and large, that is the central question that determined the last campaign: how should a state government react to a global financial crisis? What economic strategy should they adopt? The economic strategy that we were absolutely clear about was this: now is the time for government to act, to intervene in the economy and to stimulate our economic activity. As a state government, you do that by investing in a building program. That is what we are doing this year—the largest in the country—and we will not walk away from it. We will make it the No. 1 priority of this budget.

Secondly, we will prioritise the protection of people's jobs. Those opposite went to the election with a different plan: firstly, that they would slash and burn jobs and that they would knock off infrastructure projects. Of course, the Liberal National Party thinker in residence had this to offer by way of an economic strategy and how he would find the \$14 billion—

I mean, the amounts that are identified—amounts that, of course, you know we will be, we will be looking at but we're principally looking at amounts of money which we are going about finding.

That was what the thinker in residence offered the people of Queensland by way of economic strategy. That is the what the mentor had to offer. He is still the architect of their economic strategy, last week convincing them to put out a press release to back the Western Australian budget that slashed and burned. Magic!

Taxation

Mr LANGBROEK: My second question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer stand by his pre-election pledge that there will be no tax increases, including increases in levies, charges, fees and other types of sneaky revenue raising?

Mr FRASER: I stand by the platform that the government took to the people of Queensland in February this year, that is, that we were best placed to deal with the fallout from the global economic crisis. As I have said many times since the election, the priority for the government, as we put together this budget in the most difficult circumstances that have faced our nation, our state and indeed the globe in the last 75 years, is to seek every inch of the way to maintain each and every one of those election

commitments. Is that a tough ask? Absolutely, but now is not the time to be raising taxes. Now is not the time to be raising taxes at a time when the economy needs our support. Now is not the time to adopt the strategy that was put forward by the members opposite during the election campaign, that is, that the time was right to undertake a wholesale slash and burn. That would have a deleterious effect on the Queensland economy and destroy jobs at a time when government needs to act to support jobs.

Our No. 1 priority is maintaining an infrastructure program of the order that supports employment in the Queensland economy, an infrastructure program that has and will leave other states' infrastructure programs in its wake, an infrastructure program that has and will leave the infrastructure investment that has been undertaken by federal governments in the past in its wake.

Our commitment was clear about not raising taxes or introducing new taxes for business in this election campaign. That remains the commitment of the government as we put together this budget in the most difficult of circumstances. Those circumstances, remember, include a further write-down in GST revenue to now \$5.6 billion across the forward estimates. I expect other line items of revenue in the budget to be further written down when we present the budget in four weeks time. But what people need to remember here—

Mr Springborg: How can you go broke in a boom?

Ms Bligh: You still don't believe in the economic crisis, do you? You've still got your head in the sand. Go and watch the Barack Obama ad a few times.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, Premier.

Mr FRASER: What people need to remember here is the alternative that is being offered falsely by the opposition. What people need to remember here is that all the way through the election campaign they invented magic cuts, magic pudding money, magic pots of money that never existed. They revealed that, of course, in its full glory before the election campaign, where they could not name it and, more to the point, they budgeted for billions of dollars worth of deficits. So make no mistake that there is somehow this view that resides on the other side of the chamber that they do not accept the need for debt and deficits. They say one thing and they did another thing in the election campaign.

Public Sector Efficiency

Mrs KIERNAN: My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier outline for the House the government's approach to public sector efficiency?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. There is no doubt that achieving greater efficiency in the public sector is not only an ongoing challenge but also a responsibility of government. I have said from the outset that our priority is to maintain our building program, because it supports thousands of jobs in the private sector. But given that we will see \$14 billion stripped away from our revenue, caused by the global financial crisis, keeping the building program will mean some sacrifices in other areas. We cannot ask people to make sacrifices unless we can reassure them that government is not operating wastefully.

Our Public Service will grow, because we are a growing state. But that is no reason to accept inefficiency. That is why, when we were re-elected, I put in place the biggest shake-up of the public sector in decades to make it more effective and, over time, more efficient. It is also why we put in place the Weller review of government boards, committees and statutory authorities.

Mr Springborg: You didn't tell them about that before the election.

Ms BLIGH: One hundred and three boards and authorities were abolished to do their work in other ways. I take the interjection from the member for Southern Downs, who said that I did not speak about that before the election. I announced it in this House last year and it has been worked on for 12 months.

This approach is very different from that of the opposition. As we know, the opposition went to the election campaign with a program of cutting 12,000 jobs a year and taking \$1 billion every year out of the budget. They were very hairy-chested about it. The member for Southern Downs was very hairy-chested. The member for Southern Downs went around beating his chest saying he had the stomach for it, he would get rid of 12,000 public servants because they were all a waste. He had what it took. He had the stomach to cut \$1 billion every year—\$3 billion in one term. So imagine my surprise when the only piece of correspondence I have received from the member for Southern Downs since the election starts like this—

I wish to express my concern and opposition to your government's proposal to abolish the Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Board.

The member is like the white rabbit. He is always late for an important date. He is never in the right place at the right time. He does not have the stomach to get rid of the Darling Downs-Moreton Rabbit Board, but he thinks he can sack 12,000 people every single year. You are not up to the job. You are not fit for opposition.

Mr Springborg: How much money did the state put into it?

Ms BLIGH: You are still defending it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Premier, I think you should refer to the honourable gentleman by his correct title.

Fuel Subsidy

Mr NICHOLLS: My question is addressed to the Treasurer. There is speculation the government will introduce a new fuel tax. Will the Treasurer release any economic modelling into the job losses and cost of living increases that will be caused by this proposed new fuel tax?

Mr FRASER: I thank the shadow Treasurer for his question. As we have said, the government has a number of very difficult choices before it. We are yet to commit to any of those choices in putting together what is no doubt the most difficult budget that this state has faced in the past 75 years. As we look at all of the choices, the reality is that government is a tough task. Putting together a budget in these circumstances is a tough ask and none of the choices are pretty. However, as the Premier outlined in her last answer, any notion that those members opposite are up to the task of undertaking any of those tough choices falls at the first hurdle presented by the West Moreton Rabbit Protection Board. That presents an insurmountable hurdle that members of the Liberal National Party are unable to clear. The reality of our circumstances is clear and the reality of those circumstances has been clear to this side of the House for a long time prior to the election, during the election and after the election. But the toughness of those circumstances is still denied by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Liberal National Party. They believe, hope and pretend that this is not a tough set of circumstances.

I am pleased to talk about the election campaign because it gives me a chance to place a document of some repute onto the public record. It is the LNP election financial commitments. That document charts a course for deficits each and every year that it put forward: next year \$2.7 billion, the year after \$2.8 billion, the year after \$2½ billion and \$2½ billion in the year after that. Why did it do that? Because it was in direct contrast to what the then Leader of the Opposition said all the way through the election campaign, which was that he would be able to deliver a budget in surplus. Right at the end of the election campaign he admitted that he had neither the strategy nor the ability nor the wisdom to be able to implement that commitment. That is why the people of Queensland judged him. That is why the people of Queensland, for the third time, got it perfectly right.

What is the biggest issue in all of this? It is the \$3½ billion dirty little secret of a lie that was contained on page 11 of the LNP costings. For three weeks during the election campaign they did not quantify the whole-of-government productivity dividend—and they had a whole election campaign to outline it—that is, the \$797 million, \$834 million, \$818 million, \$936 million and \$3½ billion worth of jobs that they committed to cutting out of the public sector. There it is for the record and the benefit of the House. Make no mistake: on this side we accept the challenge.

Tabled paper: Copy of document titled 'LNP 2009 Election Financial Commitments' [\[252\]](#).

Infrastructure Program

Ms MALE: My question without notice is to the Premier and Minister for the Arts. Can the Premier outline to the House the economic benefits of the government's approach to infrastructure development?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member, who I know understands the economic power that is generated when governments invest in major building programs at any time but even more so during times of economic downturn and times of recession, as we are seeing rampaging around the world. If we invest in infrastructure now, we support jobs now to soften the blow of the global recession. We do not pretend to the people of Queensland that Queensland can be immune. We say that government has a role to cushion the worst effects, to soften the blow and to keep as many people in work as we can until we can recover from this terrible global crisis. At the same time we have to deal with long-term reforms that will restore the budget to surplus over time.

As I have said before, central to our efforts is our building program. This year it supports 119,000 jobs. It is keeping up with our growing population. Now is not a time to take our foot off the accelerator because we need roads, hospitals and schools. The program provides training opportunities for young apprentices and people doing their trades and traineeships, so that when we come out of this downturn we will come out stronger and with a more skilled workforce, ready to take advantage of the economic recovery. Every year we outline to the building industry and the community our forward program through SEQIPP. This plan is the envy of the country. The federal government is looking at how this planning process could be put in place in other parts of Australia.

As the Treasurer outlined yesterday to the House, those opposite think that the Western Australian budget is a model that should be followed and put out a press release urging the government 'to match the achievement of the Western Australian government'. What did the Western Australian government achieve in its infrastructure program? It scrapped the Carnarvon police justice complex, it scrapped the upgrade of the Albany Hospital, it scrapped the upgrade to the Esperance Hospital and it canned the new outdoor stadium, the East Perth museum and the redevelopment of the Perth foreshore. That is six major projects. If that is the effort that the Leader of the Opposition wants us to match, he should name the six projects that we should dump to match the effort of his friends in Western Australia. Which projects should we dump? In budget week he will have to give a speech in reply and we will be listening for the projects that he thinks should be scrapped, just as his friends in Western Australia have done. We will keep building this state. We will build for recovery and Queensland will come out of this stronger because we believe in jobs and not job cuts.

Fuel Subsidy

Mr SPRINGBORG: My question without notice is to the Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading. Will the minister inform the House of advice that he has received on likely job losses and declines in investment in Queensland's drive tourism market by introducing an 8.4c a litre state fuel tax?

Mr LAWLOR: I thank the honourable member for the question. Firstly, as the Treasurer has explained, no decision has yet been made in relation to the fuel subsidy. Travel cost, including fuel prices, is only one of many factors taken into account when deciding a tourism destination. Tourism Queensland recognises the unique travel drive experiences available to our state for domestic and international tourists. Barcaldine is a good example. I was out there recently. The Tree of Knowledge exhibit is a great place to visit, especially for the drive market.

Internationally, Tourism Queensland has developed and currently markets three international journeys: the Great Sunshine Way, which encompasses the best of all Australian experiences; the Reef to Outback, an undiscovered Australian journey linking two of Australia's most spectacular natural attractions, the Great Barrier Reef and Queensland's outback—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr LAWLOR: Members opposite are going on about Barcaldine. The member for Gregory was there and I am sure he agrees that it was money well spent. The Great Tropical Drive is a self-drive touring route that encompasses beaches, rainforests and the outback of North Queensland.

Domestically, drive tourism is now considered a key element of the wider tourism industry and, as a result, where appropriate is featured in key destinations and experience based marketing activity. Information on drive tourism experiences in Queensland is available on the Drive Queensland website, which is located at www.drivequeensland.com.au.

There is no better time for Australians to holiday in Queensland given the low Australian dollar, the global financial crisis and issues with swine flu. Tourism Queensland and other operators are putting together fantastic deals for the drive market. By way of comparison, in the UK petrol costs A\$2 per litre and in the USA it costs A\$3.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The minister will resume his seat. There is too much interjection. The House is becoming disorderly.

Mr LAWLOR: The other issue is that the \$17 billion Capital Works Program is also developing destinations and investing in ports, airports and the like. Cruise ship facilities are being developed in Townsville and Cairns and recently the Brisbane—

(Time expired)

Queensland Health, Staff

Mr PITT: My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health. Could the Deputy Premier please inform the House how Queensland Health is tackling the challenges facing our health workforce now and into the future?

Mr LUCAS: I thank the honourable member for the question. He is someone who is acutely interested in health issues throughout Australia's most decentralised mainland state.

Since 2005, Queensland Health has employed over 2,100 more doctors, nearly 7,200 more nurses and over 2,400 more allied health professionals. We know that we need to continue to work to recruit even more staff. We also need to revisit the roles that people have and look at how we can upskill the existing workforce to look at innovative ways of delivering sustainable and improved health care across our state. This is particularly important in areas such as rural and remote Queensland, where it does provide us with the ability to provide updated and more services to people living in those parts of Queensland.

Take physician assistants for example. We are undertaking a 12-month physician assistants trial across Queensland. These are medical professionals who are certified, licensed and experienced and work in a support capacity to the medical profession, supervised by the medical officer to whom they are assigned. Princess Alexandra Hospital in Brisbane will trial cardiology related roles. Cooktown and Mount Isa will be trialling rural related roles. Cooktown will have two physician assistants starting on 25 May.

Nurse practitioners also play an important role. We will recruit 30 additional nurse practitioners who play a vital role in tackling emergency department waiting times. I have been to a number of emergency departments now in my capacity as health minister, and it is really clear the very strong working relationship between the physicians and the nurse practitioners and their ability to assist with processing people and to assist people in our emergency departments. We have a number of nurses in this chamber and have had in this chamber in the past. They are very highly skilled people, and the extent to which we can provide further career paths for them I think is very important. This will mean that patients with less serious cases will receive treatment sooner and allow our doctors to focus on more urgent presentations. They will be able to undertake more advanced tasks that other registered nurses are not qualified to do, such as ordering X-rays. They will join our 45-strong nurse practitioner workforce.

Self-interested parties propagate a myth that there is friction between doctors and nurse practitioners. As I indicated before, that has not been my experience in the hospitals that I have visited. Not only are our emergency departments assisted by this; they are also invaluable in improving access to health care in Indigenous communities. Four nurse practitioners are working in remote Indigenous communities.

We are committed to securing health by creating front-line jobs that improve access to health services for all Queenslanders. We are not going to go down the WA path of three per cent cuts, pulling \$120 million out of their health budget, scaling back front-line services and cutting jobs, or indeed staffing a mental health system with volunteers, as was their policy. In a decentralised state like Queensland, the ability to think constantly about how we might improve services with training or alternative professional pathways is really important. I would enjoy other members of the House to work with us in this regard.

(Time expired)

Fuel Subsidy

Ms SIMPSON: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Has the minister made representations to the Treasurer and Premier opposing a new fuel tax being imposed on trucking operators who have already been slugged with massive registration hikes?

Ms NOLAN: Everybody knows that we face tough economic times—the toughest absolutely in my lifetime.

Ms Bligh: They don't.

Ms NOLAN: That is right—everybody except the opposition knows. That would be a more accurate way of saying it. We know that there has been a cut in our revenue in the budget forward estimates of \$14 billion. That is a matter that is clearly on the public record. There are two ways that you can deal with this. You can protect jobs now and for the future or you can cut them. You, as the opposition, went to the last election with a clear commitment to cut jobs. So what would that have meant? You want to talk about the field of transport. What would that have meant?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable transport minister will address her comments through the chair.

Ms NOLAN: Not 'you jokers over there', Mr Speaker?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I do not know what you are referring to. You will address your comments through the chair.

Ms NOLAN: Mr Speaker, this opposition went to the last election with a clear commitment to cut three per cent of jobs out of the department of transport. What would that have meant? That would have meant cutting 250 jobs in the first year alone. It would have meant three per cent of jobs out of customer service centres. It would have meant that when a customer service officer in a Queensland Transport office goes off on, say, maternity leave they would not get replaced and waiting times for services would blow out.

A large part of our budget is for Citytrain services and for the TransLink network. The opposition's proposition would have meant not more buses, as I talked about this morning—\$6.8 million for more buses on the TransLink network; it would have meant three per cent fewer buses. It would have meant less frequent bus services and more crowding on them.

We are rolling out one new Citytrain on the TransLink network every month. If this opposition had won the last election, that would have meant not rolling out more trains on the Citytrain network; it would have meant taking them off. We are responsible economic managers with a commitment to jobs and a commitment to services. We are committed to jobs. The opposition continues to be committed to job cuts.

Mr Johnson: I reckon you should come back, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: I'm already back.

Job Creation

Ms NELSON-CARR: My question without notice is to the Treasurer. Could the Treasurer provide the House with an update on the recent levels of job creation in Queensland?

Mr FRASER: I can and I thank the member for Mundingburra for her question. As I indicated earlier in my ministerial statement, Queensland was one of only two states that created net new jobs in the last month, according to the ABS. Four hundred jobs were created in Queensland. And what will be of particular interest to the members opposite, even though they have made nought mention of this fact since the statistics were released earlier this month, is that those net 400 jobs were in fact an addition of 1,600 full-time jobs which was offset by a loss of 1,200 part-time jobs. The members opposite have failed to mention this fact in their comments to date, nor have they mentioned the fact that, in contrast to Queensland, New South Wales lost 2,100 jobs; Victoria lost 3,700 jobs; Western Australia lost 2,300 jobs; and Tasmania lost 800 jobs.

Mr Johnson: We've lost 5,000 in the mining industry alone.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer will resume his seat and wait for the House to come to order. I call the honourable the Treasurer.

Mr FRASER: Thank you, Mr Speaker. On the day those statistics were released by the ABS I was in Townsville visiting Wulguru Steel, a firm which may be known to some members of this House. I was there with the member for Townsville. To go to the member for Gregory's point, this is a firm that has taken a great benefit from the boom that has existed in the mining industry in recent years. It has enjoyed massive growth from the boom in the mining industry, but just as it enjoyed that growth it has very much felt the pressure of the downturn in the mining industry in the last little while. But rather than adopt an approach that many might in the circumstances, Wulguru Steel resolved to work harder and smarter.

Wulguru Steel contacted the state government through QMI. They took our assistance and through that they have managed to get into other fields of business and not only save their business but employ more people. They will employ more apprentices this year. As I walked around Wulguru Steel I could see the \$17 billion infrastructure program in action—steel works for QR being worked on, steel works for bridges for Main Roads being worked on, steel works for the Abbot Point coal terminal expansion being worked on. The infrastructure program is supporting jobs in that company and indeed around Townsville.

That is why we need to make our substantial infrastructure program our policy priority. Infrastructure programs always move around. Projects come in and out, but what is important as we chart this budget is making sure that the quantum of the spend on the infrastructure program is out in front and providing a stimulus to support jobs in the Queensland economy just as it is at Wulguru Steel, and I pay tribute to their resolve and the role they are playing.

Fuel Subsidy

Mr GIBSON: My question is to the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning. Will the minister outline how imposing a new fuel tax will impact on private sector companies which have already tendered on existing government infrastructure projects?

Mr Lucas: A lot less than slashing infrastructure would have.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: My friend the honourable the Deputy Premier has beaten me to the punch by saying nowhere near as much as the slashing of an infrastructure program would have. The \$17 billion infrastructure program that this government is undertaking this year shows how important it is to deliver infrastructure and to continue with infrastructure in the private sector in this state.

What I think the honourable member for Gympie does not appreciate is that the policies that he and his colleagues took to the last election would have had an absolutely detrimental effect on the delivery of that infrastructure program. That program is so important to what we are doing here in South-East Queensland to protect jobs, to ensure we maintain jobs in this state and to in fact break through the challenges of the global financial crisis and support jobs.

Across the whole of government, the three per cent productivity dividend that was prescribed by the opposition ahead of the last election would have resulted in some 12,000 job cuts. In relation to the budget of the Department of Infrastructure and Planning itself, some \$5 million would have been carved out of its productivity dividend.

Mr Lucas: Plenty of fuel to do nothing. That's what they want. Plenty of fuel to sit there and watch the bridge not being built. That is what they want.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: Their prescription is all about pleasing the banks and the markets; that is what they were all about. I understand the member for Gregory's comments earlier in response to your defence, Mr Speaker, about being a Bunnies supporter. I know that he is a passionate Dogs supporter and he knows that I support the Dragons. As a Dragons supporter who watched the game on Friday night, I know what it is like when someone runs interference, and that is what we are doing here—running interference to avoid the devastating effect that the opposition's policies around supporting the Western Australian model would have had on our budget and on employment in Queensland.

Construction Industry

Mrs SMITH: My question is to the Minister for Public Works and Information and Communication Technology. Would the minister please inform the House what effects the economic downturn is having on the Queensland construction sector and employment in that industry?

Mr SCHWARTEN: It is indeed very sobering news coming out of the building sector. Last year it was worth in round figures about \$40 billion for Queensland, and that is about 280,000-odd jobs directly employed in the construction industry. What we are being told by the forecasters is that it will be reduced by some 10 per cent back to about \$36 billion. But the good news, especially for the honourable member for Burleigh who is interested in jobs on the Gold Coast, is that 10,000 jobs will be created in the construction of the Gold Coast Hospital, which is a \$1.5 billion project.

I have been somewhat bemused by the inanity of the remarks coming from those opposite this morning who seem to live in this vacuum of belief that you can go down the path of cutting the infrastructure program and not affect jobs. I cannot for the life of me work it out. It is little wonder that they sit over there wretched and in disarray if that is how closely they are connected to the community.

I spend a lot of time on building sites, Mr Speaker, and I can tell you that the No. 1 concern of construction workers is whether they will have a job next year. I tell you what, Mr Speaker: if you take the \$17 billion worth of infrastructure out of \$36 billion, you start to get an understanding of just how graphic this situation is. In our own case, it is \$8½ billion worth of projects—such as the Gold Coast Hospital and the Queensland Children's Hospital, with 7,000 jobs being tied up there. Do members remember their offer to build one on the cheap?

Ms Bligh: Two.

Mr SCHWARTEN: They were going to build it with volunteer labour. They said it was not going to cost anything because someone like Leighton or Thiess, out of the goodness of their hearts, was going to build it for nothing. It was not going to cost anything. That is what they said: it was not going to cost anything. It was going to be done as a PPP. In other words, a PPP becomes a goodness of the heart from the building and construction industry.

Mr Nicholls interjected.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I again reiterate my comments from this morning: if the honourable member's brains were dynamite, they would not blow his hat off, with a stupid interjection like that. The fact of the matter is this is very, very important and we as a government must set aside every single dollar we can to protect this infrastructure budget. We must do that. If those people opposite want to challenge the right of this government to create jobs in the construction industry, then let them stand up and say so and let us go to the construction sites that we have in Queensland—

(Time expired)

Fuel Subsidy

Mr HOPPER: My question is to the Minister for Primary Industries. Will the minister release the advice he has received on how many jobs will be lost in the primary industry sector by introducing an 8.4c per litre fuel tax?

Mr MULHERIN: I thank the honourable member for Condamine for the question. The question regarding the abolition of a fuel subsidy is purely speculation from that side of the House. The Treasurer will be bringing down his budget on 16 June.

In the area of primary industries and fisheries, we are still committed to delivering services which will improve the economic development of primary industries across this state, including industry development, biosecurity and fisheries. Primary industries and fisheries is still committed to a fresh approach that enables investment in building skills, which is so important there. The government is

committed to creating 150,000 traineeships and training programs throughout the state. Primary industries, through the Australian Agricultural College Corporation, will have a major role in delivering training in rural areas. We will be capitalising on our research and development. As the member opposite realises, we made a commitment to modernising our network. Research and development is so important to not only make productivity gains in the industry but to deal with disease threats and incursions.

Have a look at what has happened in Western Australia. They have slashed and burned, with 5,000 jobs going in the public sector. That has a knock-on effect into the private sector. As people would be aware, in primary industries we have collaborative partnerships, so that would also affect employment opportunities.

The opposition was proposing a three per cent cut at the last election. For primary industries and fisheries, that would have meant a cut of at least 150 jobs across the department. Which jobs were you going to cut? Were you going to cut the jobs in science that will lead to improvements in productivity? Or would you cut jobs in biosecurity?

The biggest threat to primary industries and fisheries is the threat of disease. A disease like foot-and-mouth disease would wipe out our \$4.5 billion beef industry and put hundreds of thousands of people across Queensland out of a job. But that is the sort of thing that opposition members were on about. This government is committed to working with primary industries in the area of rural and regional Queensland.

I remember the last time the opposition was in government when Mackay got duded \$80 million on the hospital redevelopment. People in Mackay paid for that. I want to know what projects the opposition is going to cut across rural and regional Queensland which will lead to significant job losses in both the public and private sectors.

Toowoomba, Water Supply

Mr SHINE: My question is directed to the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning, and I ask: can the minister provide an update on work on the Toowoomba water pipeline?

Mr HINCHLIFFE: While SEQ's dam levels have now topped 60 per cent, we have not forgotten that Toowoomba's situation remains dire. There have been some good falls overnight up on the range, I can advise the honourable member for Toowoomba North, but the Garden City's combined dam levels remain under 10 per cent. There have been 90 millimetres into Crestbrook, 82 millimetres into Perseverance and 39 millimetres into Cooby, which has produced one-quarter of a per cent increase to 9.45 per cent. As I say, the situation in Toowoomba remains dire.

That is why we are getting on with the job of building the \$187 million underground pipeline to supply Toowoomba with water from Lake Wivenhoe. The workforce is now at its peak, with 261 workers on site. I want to thank them for delivering earlier than expected on a number of milestones. They only started laying the pipe in March and already one-third of the total 38 kilometres is in the ground. That is great progress. However, we know that there will also be times when work is slower than expected, perhaps because of rainfall.

We are now well on track to have that pipeline operating on time, by the end of January 2010. Not only will this pipeline provide a vital, secure water supply for the Garden City for decades to come; it is also providing local jobs that are important right now in the midst of this global economic crisis that some in the House do not seem to think exists. All 261 workers are employed full-time, with over 200,000 person hours worked to date on the project. The economic boost to the local region has been absolutely terrific. Esk, Tagoolawah, Crows Nest, Gatton, Fernvale and Toowoomba are all experiencing a boost from this project, with over \$5.3 million committed to local businesses to date.

Now the Beaudesert region is also gearing up for the jobs and local spending that will flow from the Wyaralong Dam—another water supply project which will support some 420 jobs. They have hit the ground running with that project, building SEQ's first dam in 20 years. It will be fantastic to see that finished by 2011. It will be an invaluable new water resource for the whole of South-East Queensland to help cope with climate change and population growth into the future.

Gladstone Electorate, Jobs

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: My question without notice is to the Premier. Hundreds of jobs have been lost in my electorate in the last weeks. What government funded projects are proposed by the Queensland government to provide real job opportunities for these workers?

Ms BLIGH: I thank the honourable member for the question. I, like her, am dismayed at what is happening particularly to some very large projects in her electorate. The loss of literally hundreds of jobs in a town the size of Gladstone will have a devastating effect not only on those families who are unfortunate enough to lose the job but also for the whole economy in the Gladstone region.

I am happy to advise the member that in the first instance in every case where we are alerted to job losses, particularly large scale job losses, we have deployed the rapid response team, which has worked with individuals who have been displaced. I am not going to pretend that they have been able to place every single person—of course that is not possible in these economic circumstances—but they are having some success in providing people either with a retraining allowance or with relocation expenses that have meant some of those displaced workers fortunately have been able to take up other jobs.

In relation to major projects in the member's region, a number have been brought forward as part of our resources for mining communities projects—for example, the \$100 million to bring forward road projects in the Central Queensland area. I would expect some of the contractors who are being displaced in Gladstone would be well placed with the skills to take up some of those jobs.

The long-term future for Gladstone is very much tied to the development of an entire new industry and that is the liquefied natural gas industry. This is an industry that has the capacity to considerably expand job opportunities not only in Gladstone but also for the whole of the region and the whole of the state to grow our economy. Five or six years ago, nobody even contemplated this industry existing in our state. It is now on the verge of becoming one of our largest export industries.

As the honourable member might have heard in my ministerial statement on this issue yesterday, British Gas, for example, one of the main proponents, signed a 20-year contract to supply gas to the China offshore oil company. These are going to be real jobs in Gladstone. As the member knows, I was in Gladstone earlier this year opening the office for Santos. They are putting \$1 billion into the local economy in Gladstone. There are very few places in the rest of Australia where anybody is doing that. That is real investment and real jobs. There has been a lot of opposition to this industry getting off the ground in Gladstone. If the member for Gladstone, by her question, is indicating that she will change some of her earlier positions to get behind this industry and support its development, then I welcome that.

Far North Queensland, Public Transport

Mr WETTENHALL: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Can the minister please update the House on any public transport service enhancements for Far North Queensland?

Ms NOLAN: I thank the honourable member for his question. I know very well that he, like the other Cairns members, has a very strong commitment to public transport in the Cairns region. The first regional trip I took as transport minister was to Cairns, where we made some announcements about planning for a Cairns transit network. While I was there, the member for Barron River also talked to me about his local bus service.

As the Minister for Transport, I have made it really clear from the start that my priority is quite simply to make public transport better, to make it more accessible and to make sure it is an environmentally sustainable service. So I am delighted to report to the House today that the Queensland government has made a significant funding contribution towards the acquisition of 54 new urban buses for the regional public transport network. The buses will be run by the Transit Australia group, which runs the Sunbus system that operates in Cairns, Townsville and Rockhampton.

It is intended that these low-floor, wheelchair accessible, air-conditioned buses will be deployed across all three of those Sunbus networks. There are 24 new buses for Cairns, 19 for Townsville and 11 for Rockhampton. The buses will expand the capacity of local public transport networks. They are bigger than the buses they are replacing. The smaller sized buses which are being replaced have a seating capacity of 27 to 29 passengers. These new buses have a capacity of between 43 and 57 people per bus. As I said, they are wheelchair accessible, they have a low floor, and they are really easy to get on and off.

The other big advantage of these new buses—and I know that this is particularly an issue for Cairns, but I think it is fair to say for Townsville and Rockhampton, too—is that the new buses have much better air conditioning. The member for Barron River told me that the old buses are colloquially called 'butter boxes' because they are small and they are hot. What this means is that we are phasing out those old buses and replacing them with new, disability accessible, air-conditioned buses.

I want to table a letter that the member for Barron River wrote to you, Mr Speaker, as the then minister for transport about this, and I know that you responded and got this process started.

Tabled paper: Copy of letter, dated 18 November 2008, from Mr Wettenhall to the Hon. John Mickel MP, Minister for Transport, relating to upgrade of the Cairns bus fleet [253].

The bottom line is that these regional centres have quite a good public transport network. Cairns has the highest public transport patronage of any regional centre. More than three million trips a year in Cairns happen on public transport. As soon as these 54 new buses are rolled out, there will be better bus services in Cairns, Townsville and Rockhampton as a result of the Bligh government funding commitment.

(Time expired)

Branding of Cattle

Mr JOHNSON: My question without notice is directed to the honourable Minister for Primary Industries. Will the minister confirm that his department plans to make the branding of cattle noncompulsory in Queensland? If so, has the minister checked the impact of this policy with producers, particularly in pastoral Queensland, and with the Queensland Police Service Stock Squad?

Mr MULHERIN: The answer to that question is no, we are not looking at that, but we will be having discussions with industry around branding and fees.

Ipswich Motorway Upgrade

Mrs MILLER: My question is to the Minister for Main Roads. Can the minister please advise the House on the progress of the Dinmore to Goodna section of the Ipswich Motorway upgrade?

Mr WALLACE: I thank the honourable member for the question and her interest in upgrading that very vital section of road. The good news is that Main Roads is progressing rapidly with the upgrade of the Dinmore to Goodna section of the Ipswich Motorway to ensure that this vital link between Ipswich and Brisbane can cope with continued traffic growth and traffic volumes. It is expected that this project will be completed by 2012. That is good news for the residents of the member for Bundamba's electorate and those of the members for Ipswich West, Inala and Ipswich as well.

Last week's federal budget included a welcome announcement of an initial \$884 million for the upgrade. This takes the total funding from the Rudd government to \$1.95 billion, which meets the full cost requirement of the project and will ensure that construction will now be able to progress as quickly as possible. The additional funding provided by the federal government will allow the project to provide the greatest efficiency and functionality for motorists.

The new motorway upgrade will be built to the highest possible design standards. It will be constructed without hindering traffic flow and will incorporate installation of the most advanced and comprehensive transport system technology. My department's Roads Implementation Program contains \$16.2 billion worth of road projects over the next five years. That is a job generator of around 25,000 jobs per year because of our road construction efforts. They are vitally needed jobs as Queensland faces the worst economic crisis since the Second World War.

The Dinmore to Goodna project will create much needed jobs for the western corridor region. The member for Bundamba will be interested to know that around 1,000 people will be directly employed on this worthwhile project, with up to 5,000 additional jobs created in the region.

My department is project managing the upgrade and has formed an alliance with major contracting and consulting firms to deliver this project. The alliance members bring to the project a wide variety of experience and technical knowledge that will ensure the project is delivered quickly and efficiently. Importantly, preconstruction activities for the upgrade have already commenced, including design, acquisition and relocation of services. The department and the alliance have been conducting detailed public consultations with the community. Public displays were held in April and May this year, with the displays viewed by over 2,000 people. That shows the level of interest in the project in that corridor shown by the member's good folk. Over 10,000 people have received detailed fact sheets about this worthwhile project.

The Bligh government looks forward to continuing to deliver this important congestion-busting and job-generating project in conjunction with the Rudd government. I thank the Rudd government for the Commonwealth at last playing a role in infrastructure provision in this state. It is good to see it get off its backside and give us some money, but, again, we want more.

Retirement Age

Mr MESSENGER: My question without notice is to the Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women. Minister, can you explain why you agree with Prime Minister Rudd's decision to increase the retirement age by two years to 67? What will this mean for Queensland seniors?

Mr SPEAKER: Just rephrase the question. Have a look at it.

Mr MESSENGER: Can the minister explain why she agrees with Prime Minister Rudd's decision to increase the retirement age by two years to 67? What will this mean for Queensland seniors?

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you. I call the minister.

Ms STRUTHERS: I am very happy to receive a question in my portfolio area. It often seems to be neglected by opposition members. I can tell members that we have some very exciting things happening in the areas of community services, housing and women which I am responsible for. We have wide-ranging concessions in Queensland for seniors. Our seniors benefit from utility subsidies, rate rebates and a whole range of other things that help make life a little easier for low-income earners and people on fixed incomes—many seniors are in that category.

The issue of retirement age is one that the federal government has dealt with recently. Let me remind the member that people are living longer these days. Interestingly, women are living longer than men. I am not sure what fact is behind that. On average, women are living to about 81. I have a little way to go before I am 81.

We need to acknowledge that we have a better quality of life. We are living in an age where people are living longer. We need to accept that reality. We need to acknowledge that our economy relies on people working. Many people want the income security that will last for their life. Many of us at this stage in our lives are thinking ahead to our retirement. Many of us will be fit and healthy through our 50s and 60s and will want to keep contributing to the community and be paid for that contribution.

As I go around my community I do not see many people who want to give up on their income security. I do not see many people who are prepared to sit down, relax and watch the show go by without actually contributing to the community. It is interesting to note that the retirement age is a topic for discussion now. It is probably a topic that should have been on the agenda a while back. We need skilled people now and into the future. We will continue to need skilled people now and into the future. It is very important that people's skills are valued and rewarded.

Is the member suggesting that we should have volunteers through our workforce contributing in key areas of social services, policing, health and other areas? We will need people working. We will reward people for that work. We will ensure that seniors and others will receive the sorts of supports and concessions that they receive currently.

Literacy and Numeracy

Ms CROFT: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. Can the minister provide some feedback to the House on numeracy and literacy tests recently conducted in Queensland schools?

Mr WILSON: I thank the honourable member for the question. This government has a single-minded objective of lifting the literacy and numeracy achievement of Queensland students to the level of those in the highest performing states over the next three years. That was the first recommendation of Professor Geoff Masters handed down late last year. It has been the centrepiece of all of the work we have done on that area since then.

I had the opportunity to visit Ferny Grove State School at the time students were sitting the 2009 NAPLAN test. That is the national literacy and numeracy test conducted across Australia. Some 230,000 Queensland students in year 3, 5, 7 and 9 across 1,800 schools sat the test over three days in that week. We are hopeful that there will be an improvement in the results when they are published in September this year.

Last year was the first year that Queensland students participated in the national testing. Unfortunately, the results that came forward then were very disappointing indeed. With that in mind, that is why the Premier set up the review by Professor Geoff Masters. The results from last year's test were a significant wake-up call to everyone about the need to create a sharp focus on literacy and numeracy with our students. We want to make sure that these critical skills are front and centre in everything that takes place in our schools.

Professor Masters also made a number of other recommendations in his preliminary report which we have implemented, and that was the practice testing done by 20 March this year. He has just now come down with his final report with some major recommendations in it, and the Premier and I attended a round table of all key stakeholders inviting early contributions to his recommendations. Public consultation is now open until the end of the month and we call upon all Queenslanders and all those who have a significant interest in education—not just in the Queensland education sector but across all sectors, the independent and the Catholic education sector as well—to take part in that process because we want to make sure that we get positive, constructive feedback contributing to Professor Masters's five recommendations in his final report. We want to use the outcome of that feedback to further push ahead to lift the literacy and numeracy outcomes of Queensland students to the level of the highest performing other states over the next three years.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The time for question time has ended.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Bligh Government

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 am): Again this morning during question time after questioning the Treasurer and various ministers about ruling out a new tax following the promises that this government made during the election campaign, no-one on that side could rule it out. No-one would rule it out. The minister for tourism suggested that it is like Monty Python: we were lucky we do not live in the UK! We live in Queensland where we know petrol costs less than the UK. We live in a country and a state rich in resources. It is not a matter of being lucky not to live in the UK; we live in Queensland where we expect the government to maintain its promise from the election campaign that there would be no new taxes and no new charges.

The Treasurer was in here this morning ruling out taxes for business but not necessarily ruling out taxes and also not addressing the issues of fees and other charges, and they are the concerns that we have about the promises that he has made—promises that he has made when we know that Labor has no idea. Last year the budget surplus was predicted to be \$800 million. By December it was \$50 million and only a couple of months later it was \$1.6 billion in deficit. So Labor has no idea about running this economy and instead of that talks about jobs. The question is: when does a new tax save jobs? When does a new tax create jobs? Clearly it does not, and that is what we are calling on the government to give us information about.

This morning the Premier said that the government is saving money from the Water Commission. This is the Water Commission that originally had a budget allocation of \$2.5 million in 2006. By 2008-09 it had a budget of \$27.8 million, and of course now the Premier is saying that we are saving money! It is a funny way to save money when you go from \$2.5 million to \$27.8 million and then say that you are cutting it back and that that is saving money. Also this morning the Premier asked for some bipartisan support on immunisation. Under the Howard government immunisation rates went from 66 per cent to 92 per cent, and it is the Rudd government that is considering cutting the help that it gives to doctors for immunisation schemes. So here is bipartisan support: ask Kevin Rudd not to cut support to doctors!

(Time expired)

Aviation Industry

Mr WENDT (Ipswich West—ALP) (11.32 am): I want to alert the House today to some good news for jobs and the economy in Queensland. Specifically, I want to talk about how a Queensland based aerospace engineering services company will buck the trend by being able to announce that it will create more than 70 new jobs in the state's aviation industry. Increases like this do not just come about by accident; rather, there has been a calculated effort by the Queensland government to offer strategic incentives to businesses to continue to expand and seek new markets. As a direct result of this investment by the government, we will see Tasman Aviation Enterprises remain and grow at the RAAF base at Amberley.

I had the pleasure of welcoming the Premier, the Treasurer and my parliamentary colleague the Minister for Transport, Rachel Nolan, to my electorate a few weeks ago to announce that, with the aid of some small incentives being provided, TAE has been encouraged to invest in further capital and job creation opportunities in Queensland, even in these tough economic times. Not only will 70 new jobs be created by TAE's continued investment; we will also see 184 existing aerospace technical staff based at its current workshop at the RAAF base retained and retrained. These staff will be upskilled to help maintain the Australian Defence Force's new Hornet and Super Hornet aircraft engines that will be arriving soon. Because these staff are currently working on contracts involving the maintenance and analysis of the old F111 engines, it was thought that they could be left high and dry had they not had the opportunity to reskill to the new aircraft.

The idea of providing TAE with a grant through the Queensland investment and incentive system and payroll tax incentives has now ensured that the company will stay at Amberley and will thus allow it to fulfil its 10-year Defence Force contract with the Hornets. I am not entirely sure if everyone here realises, but there are now approximately 16,500 people employed in the aviation industry and it should be recognised that much of this responsibility for the birth, development and growth of this industry can be directed to the previous Premier of the state, Mr Peter Beattie. In conclusion, I look forward to the phasing out of the old F111s and the introduction of the new Super Hornet aircraft and the benefits that this will bring to our Queensland and local economies.

Vegetation Management

Mr SEENEY (Callide—LNP) (11.34 am): The government's moratorium on the control of regrowth was always a politically motivated farce, and so it has been shown to be in the couple of weeks since the legislation was passed through the House. The moratorium supposedly allowed for a period of consultation and for landholders to make submissions. The only way that landholders could make submissions was via an email link, an email input. Many producers across Queensland have tried to make those submissions in the last couple of weeks, only to get their emails returned marked 'unread and deleted' and a series of other messages which indicate that the department is not receiving and is not interested in receiving submissions from landholders.

Today I table in the parliament a collection of such submissions that have been forwarded to my office—some 200 submissions that have been sent by email to the department, and I table them in the parliament and make them available to the Premier and the minister to ensure that they at least can be aware of what is a sample of the submissions that are being made by people across rural Queensland.

Tabled paper: Bundle of submissions relating to the moratorium on regrowth clearing [254].

I also table in the parliament a collection of photographs which illustrate the absurdity of the moratorium legislation.

Tabled paper: Bundle of photographs depicting open grasslands and endangered regrowth [255].

Members will remember that I tabled in this place the maps that had the blue markings on them that showed the impact of the moratorium restrictions on individuals' properties. Today I table a series of photographs that show what those areas are. For example this picture, for the benefit of members, according to the government's department of natural resources is tagged with the emotive term of 'endangered regrowth'. There is a whole series of photographs here that show those areas are actually open grassland. They are buffel grass paddocks; they are sorghum crops; they are watering points, and that is just a sample of what has been received by my office, and many of those photographs are included in the submissions that have been sent to the department. The whole process is a farce and it has been shown to be a farce and the government should abandon it.

(Time expired)

Liberal National Party

Mr MOORHEAD (Waterford—ALP) (11.36 am): Despite a new leader, the opposition comes in here still out of touch with the people of Queensland. What is clear from his performance this week is that the Leader of the Opposition is merely a stopgap measure until the member for Clayfield can get his numbers together. The now Deputy Leader of the Opposition went to the people of Queensland promising job cuts at a time when the people of Queensland are fearful for their jobs and the employment opportunities for their children. Despite being rejected three times by the people of Queensland, the LNP has no option but to conscript him into the deputy leader's role.

The opposition is trying to have us believe that somehow it understands the battlers of Queensland because it has a new face leading the same old team. The parliament debates matters of crucial importance to the people of Queensland. However, the new Leader of the Opposition has some strange priorities. On 8 August 2007 the now Leader of the Opposition came into this place and said—

I used to be a member of Tatts, which I left when it refused to let women in. I used to go there and apologise for the food. I have come here and, unfortunately, at times I have to apologise for the service. My guests do not make comment, but I am embarrassed because sometimes the casual staff—who are earnest and enthusiastic—do not speak the language.

In the tough election battle we have just fought, not one member of the public raised with me their concerns about the quality of service in the parliamentary dining room. This reveals just how out of touch the opposition leader and the LNP are—they are more concerned about the perks of the job rather than the jobs of Queenslanders. But no-one should be surprised. The LNP frontbench still includes the emergency services spokesperson who ran into a parked ambulance, the transport spokesperson who promised train lines that are not connected with the train network and a tourism spokesperson who left Cairns restaurants in his wake during the regional parliament 2008 with his predilection for arguing about restaurant bills. The people of Queensland are not convinced by the old National Party hiding behind the veneer of the member for Surfers Paradise.

Logan City, Gambling

Mr McLINDON (Beaudesert—LNP) (11.38 am): Logan City is a fantastic place for a family to raise their children and is an ideal location—in fact, so much so that the Logan City Council ran a 10-year slogan of families, lifestyle and business. However, there is one thing that is certainly strangling the local economy, and that is the scourge that pokies is having on the city. Of the state's \$1.8 billion that was lost in 2007-08 from gamblers across Queensland, almost \$100 million of that was dragged away from the local economy in Logan City.

We now have before us an application for some 200 poker machines, which I urge the government to reject in its entirety. The rejection of this application also has the support of the mayor and several councillors who are passionate about this issue.

The gap is widening greatly between the haves and the have-nots in Logan City. In this Labor heartland area, which Labor has had the lack of ability to manage over the past 10 years, we see some of the highest levels of unemployment and the longest waiting list for public housing. Despite suffering an economic downturn and every business tightening its purse strings, we are seeing an increase in pokie revenue. A study conducted by Monash University showed that 52c in the dollar of gambling revenue came from problem gamblers. That means that the majority of the money raised through gambling comes from problem gamblers. I believe also that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General has stated that 80 per cent of those problem gamblers were pokie patrons.

In my seven years working in the hospitality industry, I have seen the issue of problem gambling firsthand. When those problem gamblers receive their welfare cheque, the first thing they do is walk into the hotel in the morning and when they leave I cop the abuse. I also thank former Premier Wayne Goss for acknowledging and publicly regretting the fact that he introduced electronic poker machines in 1992.

Our good friend Tim Freedman from the band The Whitlams said that he needs to 'blow up the pokies and drag them away'. Logan City is one place where we certainly can blow up the pokies and drag them away. I urge the Treasurer to listen to the concept of an 'Ausvegas' style project, which would cap and freeze the number of pokies across the state and centralise them so that we can rebuild local economies across this great state of Queensland.

Kokoda Memorial Pool

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (11.40 am): The Queensland government is delivering on its Q2 promises and delivering jobs for North Queensland. It is actively building infrastructure all over the state, and my seat of Mundingburra is one clear example of that leadership.

Recently, the government committed \$1.5 million to the redevelopment of our community aquatic facilities. This facility serves the people of Townsville and the broader region for both recreation and preventive health activities. The Kokoda pool is one of Townsville's icons, having been built in 1965, and the people of Mundingburra are very happy that the government has invested in its redevelopment. Of course, this redevelopment will employ North Queenslanders.

The redevelopment also contains plans for the future construction of a hydrotherapy pool that will serve not only the people in my electorate but also the greater region. There has always been a demand for this facility, and I am delighted that stage 1 will commence to ensure it is built. I will continue with all stakeholders to press for this community asset. Public pools have always come under council jurisdiction. So it is with great pride that I welcome the state government's injection of \$1.5 million to push forward this project.

Continued support from Queensland Health for pool clients is a very important promise that is so welcome. Queensland Health has maintained the use of a private hydrotherapy service for its clients as well as for military and community groups for many years. So with government departments working together, it is pleasing to see that the Townsville City Council will keep its end of the deal for ratepayers. The Bligh government is displaying leadership by creating jobs and infrastructure investment as well as providing much needed community support facilities.

Macleay Island State School

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—LNP) (11.42 am): I table a bunch of photos taken this morning at Macleay Island State School of what passes for the library and former classroom there.

Tabled paper: Bundle of photographs depicting areas within the Macleay Island State School Library [\[256\]](#).

These photos show deteriorating asbestos, cracks, blistered paint, leaks, minor works, patches over the holes in the wall, structures breaking away from asbestos ceilings and warning signs erected in relation to asbestos. Staff and parents of the school report dust falling from this unacceptable asbestos ceiling into the library where teachers and students must work.

I am told that a year ago the area was closed for investigation but nothing was done. The question that has to be answered by the Minister for Education is: why is this disgraceful room still there? Why has it not been replaced and why is it still in use by staff and students? Even without asbestos the room is a disgrace. It is shameful to see Queensland schools in this dilapidated state, but with asbestos it is also dangerous for everyone who occupies that room.

I challenge the minister to release the results of dust testing from this school which will show the asbestos. If I were the minister I would be ashamed to see one of my schools in this state. Erecting a sign is not a substitute for fixing the problem. Bay island residents have been ignored by this government for long enough. They should have new classrooms.

There has been some great work done by the P&C secretary, Renae Lulham, but at the end of the day the government is responsible for safe and usable classrooms in this state. I think it is amazing that, after all we have said about asbestos in this place, we still see dilapidated, damaged schools with asbestos. I will be writing to the minister and asking for this issue to be fixed immediately.

Domestic and Family Violence

Ms MALE (Pine Rivers—ALP) (11.44 am): I rise to inform the House of the good work that two community groups perform in the Pine Rivers electorate: the Pine Rivers Neighbourhood Centre and the Caboolture Regional Domestic Violence Service. I recently attended, with staff and volunteers from the Pine Rivers Neighbourhood Centre, a candle-lighting ceremony in Pine Rivers Park to remember the victims of domestic violence. It was pleasing to see other organisations, such as the Queensland Police Service and Zonta, supporting the event as well as members of the public.

The candle-lighting ceremony is an integral part of Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month. It reminds us all of the deadly consequences of violence in relationships and the need to challenge and change attitudes that perpetuate domestic and family violence. Domestic and family violence touches the lives of many people. It harms our friends and work colleagues. It wrecks families.

Pine Rivers Neighbourhood Centre is recognised by the Bligh government as one such organisation on the front line of fighting domestic violence. The neighbourhood centre plays a key role in providing information and advice, crisis support and counselling services for people in Pine Rivers and the surrounding area. The Bligh Labor government provides funding to the Pine Rivers Neighbourhood Centre to continue its excellent work with local residents. This year it has received over \$400,000 to do so. This funding will continue each year as part of the centre's triennial funding agreement.

The Bligh Labor government is committed to its Toward Q2 vision, which affirms its commitment to making Queensland strong, green, smart, healthy and fair. By providing funding to organisations such as neighbourhood centres, which have a key focus on healthy and fair communities, we can support our workers and volunteers who strive to keep our communities safe.

It is through the good work of organisations such as the Caboolture Regional Domestic Violence Service and the Pine Rivers Neighbourhood Centre that domestic violence is not hidden away in houses and ignored. I commend those organisations for their great work, as they continue to make a real difference in assisting those people who find themselves in such difficult and distressing situations. I also remind members that everybody needs to play their part in ridding our communities of the scourge of domestic violence.

Chalco, Abbot Point

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—LNP) (11.46 am): Bowen residents are stunned that plans for Chalco to establish an alumina refinery at Abbot Point may not go ahead. The Chinese aluminium group is seeking state government permission to shelve its plan for a \$2.2 billion alumina refinery which would process Aurukun's alumina output.

The Beattie and Bligh governments have built up the expectations of Bowen's businesspeople, and if this government grants permission for the Abbot Point plan to be shelved there will be a lot of very disappointed people as well as huge job losses and loss of investment capital that has been expended already in readiness for this future development. I call on the Premier, Anna Bligh, to stick to the contractual agreement between the state and Chalco. I call on the Premier not to waver from the original contract. The original agreement was that, in addition to the bauxite mining lease at Aurukun, the company would develop a new alumina refinery in Queensland. That does not mean just the expansion of an existing facility; it was to be a new, stand-alone facility.

The Premier is using the global financial crisis as an out for Chalco not to build the Bowen refinery. The future economic stability of North Queensland is at stake. This issue rings massive alarm bells. I am calling on all parties to commit to Abbot Point as the best site in Queensland for any proposed new developments—not just for an alumina refinery but any other major industrial development, given the declaration of the state development area and the Northern Economic Triangle.

This latest news is shattering. If Chalco does not go ahead as planned, housing developments and house prices will be hit. Commercial industry and food outlets will also be hit. The government has shown little regard for the Bowen region recently with its failure to build the northern missing rail link, its

failure to get the Water for Bowen project moving and its failure to see the need for a baseload power station, which would underpin the needs of new industry not just in Bowen but in the whole of North Queensland. This development has the full support of Bowen Collinsville Enterprise, Enterprise Whitsundays and Townsville Enterprise. The state government must not renege on this promise.

Chatswood Hills Tavern

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (11.48 am): I wish to inform the House of the objection of the Springwood community to the application for extended trading hours by AHL group/Aceridge Pty Ltd, trading as Chatswood Hills Tavern, Springwood. The company is requesting an extension to open to 3 am.

The Chatswood Hills Tavern is located in a small suburban shopping centre. That shopping centre—and the hotel—is in the centre of a residential area. It shares its boundaries with homes and town houses. In fact, the tavern's fence line is shared with a town house complex.

The close proximity of these residences is just one of the reasons the community and I believe a 3 am closing time for the tavern is unacceptable. Other than travelling in private cars, there are no transport options for patrons. Therefore I envisage a large number of patrons having to walk past residences, which will create disturbances and affect the lifestyles of my constituents. This also increases the risk of drunk drivers on our local roads. In the past I have received complaints from residents who live close to the tavern and along Chatswood Road about antisocial behaviour and hooning. I must say those complaints usually arise from incidents that occur around the tavern's closing time.

The Chatswood Hills Tavern does not service any factories, services or businesses that have a late-night or 24-hour operation. It is located in a small suburban shopping centre that is only open during shopping centre hours. It is in the middle of a residential area and is known to the community as a family tavern, not a late night hotel/club venue. It can be best described as a tavern where you can go to have a meal, play the pokies or have a bet at the TAB. It certainly does not have the reputation of a late night or early morning venue.

While I understand the importance of having late-night venues for entertainment, I do not believe this tavern is a suitable location or venue for such activities. I thank Eric Rostron, Mike Smalley, Maria Licence, Ted Burnett and Mal Whatmore for their hard work obtaining signatures on a petition that I will be tabling in the House later this week. The petition strongly demonstrates the community's objection to this application. I hope that it will be looked on favourably.

Cairns Greyhound Racing Club

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—LNP) (11.50 am): I wish to draw the attention of the House to a serious issue involving greyhound racing. The Cairns Greyhound Racing Club has been asked by Greyhounds Queensland to show cause as to why its operation should continue, despite being a good, financially viable club. The reason behind the show cause is that Townsville is considered the favourite centre for the north, consolidating clubs into one venue. That is yet more evidence of the lack of understanding of the value of such clubs to rural towns and the industry itself. It is not fair to evaluate the validity of a club by comparing it to big city clubs that might bring in more money through Sky Channel coverage and the TAB at the expense of Cairns and Mackay clubs.

Sport is not just about money and coverage. It is about lifestyle, enjoyment, pleasure, fulfilment and fairness. The Cairns Greyhound Racing Club is financially viable and enjoys strong support from the community, being involved in various catering and fundraising events as well as racing. It is also an important feeder club for Townsville. At this point, the Cairns Greyhound Racing Club has been offered 24 race meetings, which is down from 40 meetings, and \$130,000, which is down from \$210,000. That happened before it had an opportunity to put in a submission to show cause. The club has not been offered the standard \$10 per unplaced dog as other clubs have been. I understand that about two months ago, well before the meeting to decide the fate of the Cairns Greyhound Racing Club, Greyhounds Queensland offered the Cairns club's starting boxes and rails to the Bundaberg club.

You do not have to be Einstein to work out that city clubs need feeder clubs. The closure of smaller tracks removes this essential feature of greyhound racing. Once a track is closed it is too late to realise its worth and value to the entire industry. In the broader scheme of things smaller clubs are essential as feeder clubs and they engender interest in racing in smaller towns. Greyhound racing is not just for the city. It should be available to all who love the industry. I call on the minister, Peter Lawlor, to check the integrity of and override the decision that has been made to downsize the Cairns club and allow it to function fully.

Foster and Kinship Care

Mr KILBURN (Chatsworth—ALP) (11.52 am): I was pleased to be invited to attend the Foster Mothers' Family Fun Day and Mothers' Day function held at the Mount Gravatt Showgrounds on 9 May. I thank the Minister for Child Safety for giving me that wonderful opportunity to learn about foster and kinship care in Queensland. I was privileged to meet many wonderful people from the Department of Child Safety, as well as government supported community partners and, of course, the fantastic foster and kinship carers themselves. I was impressed with the level of commitment from all of the people involved in child safety in Queensland.

I learned a lot about the number of different community support groups that are directly funded by the Department of Child Safety and other Queensland government departments. Some of those groups include the CREATE Foundation, a national organisation with officers in every state established especially to advocate for children and young people in care; Foster Care Queensland, which provides support and advocacy to foster and kinship carers throughout Queensland; and the Pyjama Foundation, a Brisbane based, not-for-profit organisation that provides love-of-learning programs to children in care. There are many other support agencies that I do not have the time to mention here.

During the fun day I met a number of foster carers from my electorate of Chatsworth. I was impressed with one particular family that have a total of six children in their care. Over the past 15 years they have fostered 47 young Queenslanders. My grandmother has a habit of saying that they give medals to the wrong people. After meeting those foster carers and other wonderful people from the community, I can only agree with her. Whilst I cannot offer medals, I offer my thanks for the contribution that they all make to making Queensland a more caring and compassionate society.

Bundaberg Port, Coal Loading

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—LNP) (11.54 am): Prior to and during the lead-up to the last state election, the Deputy Premier and both Labor candidates for Bundaberg and Burnett went on the public record to make promises to stop any coal loading at the Bundaberg port. The people of the Burnett, including residents of Burnett Heads, Moore Park, Bundaberg port, Bargara and Childers—indeed, the whole of the Burnett Coast—want the Deputy Premier and Premier to make a public statement honouring those promises. They need that statement because there is still confusion over whether this government, through the government owned corporation the Brisbane Port Authority, will allow coal loading to be carried out at the Bundaberg port.

Nobody wants coal loading at the Bundaberg port and nobody wants the current proposal for coal loading from the Northern Energy Corporation. Property prices have suffered and the tourism industry, the second largest industry in the Burnett-Bundaberg region, is threatened by this proposal. When one considers the pristine beaches and the environment generally, it is a ridiculous proposal.

By guaranteeing nearly \$30 million in state taxpayer funds to ensure the building of an unwanted and un-needed desalination plant on a pristine beach at Agnes Water, this state government and the Premier have ensured a number of important events. Firstly, significant damage will occur to the Great Barrier Reef. Agnes Water is the closest point to the Great Barrier Reef. The area contains the nesting sites of two species of officially endangered turtles. The leatherback and loggerhead turtles are threatened by this project. It will also mean state government support for the most expensive water rates in Australia for only 700 ratepayers. A project worth over \$40 million is aimed at only 700 ratepayers. That does not make sense. This nonsensical project has been given extraordinary political support by this government. I want a guarantee that none of the \$30 million allocated to the project finds its way to people associated with the Labor Party.

Volunteers

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (11.56 am): Volunteering can mean different things to different people. In reality, there is a wide range of interpretations of what constitutes voluntary work. The Queensland government defines volunteering as an activity for the benefit of the community and the volunteer, and where the volunteer freely chooses their involvement without expectation of payment. Indigenous Australians' sense of reciprocity and attachment to extended family means that volunteering is viewed not as a separate, unique or complementary activity to their professional or personal lives, but rather as a way of life and a non-negotiable part of Aboriginality.

Voluntary work makes a significant contribution to the Queensland community. National Volunteer Week, from 11 to 17 May, is the largest celebration of volunteers and volunteerism in Australia, and provides an opportunity to highlight the role of volunteers in our communities and to say thank you to the more than five million Australians who volunteer. During Volunteer Week I visited the Sherwood Neighbourhood Centre to say thank you to many people from the local community who give their time to help others, just for the love of it.

Australian volunteers are essential to society and many charities would struggle to survive without the support of their volunteers. They provide more than 700 million hours of community service to so many areas of our society.

Volunteering Queensland recently undertook an intergenerational volunteering case study of one of my local groups, the Wolston Creek Bushland Group. Those volunteers work to revegetate 47 hectares of land north of Wolston Creek. It was previously Corrective Services land that I arranged to be transferred to the Brisbane City Council a number of years ago. Some members of the group started as members of CRAMP, Concerned Residents Against More Prisons, which was formed in 1988 to actively lobby against the construction of a prison 500 metres from their homes, proposed by the then Borbidge government. Although not yet the local member for the area, I worked with this determined group to oppose the government's plan.

(Time expired)

Vegetation Management

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (11.58 am): I rise to speak, as did the member for Callide, on the regrowth moratorium. I take this opportunity to outline just how many concerns have been raised by people coming to my office. They are not little concerns but major concerns about people having their income affected by 65 to 70 per cent. I would ask every member of this House whether they would be willing to lose 65 to 70 per cent of their income, especially if it were seasonal income. That is exactly what the regrowth moratorium is doing.

This situation has been devastating for many. I have been concerned to hear stories about what departmental persons are saying to people. This moratorium is based on a large area. In some areas people have done the wrong thing and cleared a lot of regrowth and virtually have none left on their land. In other areas people have preserved the regrowth and have truly been caretakers of the land but they are now paying the penalty. They are being affected, not the people who have cleared regrowth. Their incomes have been quite devastated.

One person in particular has had to sell his small 10-acre block just so that he can survive. He has done the right thing and said to people, 'I cannot clear your land because you are now under the regrowth moratorium.' But some of those people have actually gone out and got an illegal operator to come in and clear their land. So there are a lot of issues out there across-the-board.

This is costing them a lot of money. The banks, in one instance, have increased their charges by \$80,000 because of the loss of equity in the property, and there are financial losses of \$300,000 a year due to loss of production. How many members would be prepared to cop that? Three times I have asked the minister about landholders and councils being able to control weeds on declared land but no answer yet.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Johnstone): Order! The time for private members' statements has expired.

MOTION

Order of Business

Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (12.00 pm): I move—

That government business orders of the day Nos 1 and 2 be postponed.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Resumed from 22 April (see p. 138).

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the honourable member for Kallangur, I would remind the House that this is the honourable member's first speech in this House. I therefore ask that every courtesy be extended to her on this important occasion. I call the member for Kallangur.

Ms O'NEILL (Kallangur—ALP) (12.01 pm): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am honoured to make my first speech as the new member for Kallangur—the first woman to do so. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today. I also respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners and the present Indigenous people who call the electorate of Kallangur home. I

also acknowledge the hard work and dedication of my predecessor, Ken Hayward, who served the constituents of Kallangur for more than 22 years. Ken was generous with his time and support, and an excellent and popular member.

It has been a long journey for this dairy farmer's daughter from Talbingo in the Snowy Mountains in New South Wales to being elected to the 53rd Queensland Parliament. Not only am I proud to be the first woman to represent Kallangur, but I am extremely proud to serve in the first Bligh government. It was my early years as part of that community in a beautiful valley in the Snowy Mountains, and later in Wee Jasper in another beautiful valley, that I learnt the values that are still with me today.

As part of farming communities, everyone knew that their prosperity depended on their collective approach to both work and the use of available resources. As a young teenager even I was involved. The community showed me that I was an important part of the collective. They gave me jobs to do. One of the jobs I was given was in the bush fire brigade, where I was responsible for relaying messages that I received by walkie-talkie on to the control room by phone. That sounds simple enough, but in this case to receive the radio messages I had to climb a ladder up on to the roof to get clear reception. But everyone did their bit.

Each individual farmer worked hard in their own right to care for and manage their property but was always available in busy times to assist their neighbour with such things as hay carting, harvesting or taking their produce to town. In times of illness, the community worked selflessly to assist and in times of flood or fire or other emergency came out not only to alleviate the effects of the emergency but to provide practical assistance, not least in the form of delicious food and good humour. From them I learnt that, no matter how efficient or fortunate we are, we will always need our community and that even the biggest job can be done when we all pitch in. They taught me compassion, empathy and that sharing both sadness and celebrations binds us together.

When my parents and their friends gathered at meal times, their conversation taught me about fairness and equity and that we are all entitled to fair treatment regardless of our station in life. My brothers had great attitudes and protected me, as well as pushed me to be independent and to protect myself. And they have grown into inspiring men whom I look up to to this day. I was lucky to have such good role models. My family placed great emphasis on manners, courtesy and discipline. These attributes not only create harmony but assist in all relationships and roles.

But sometimes it is random events that leave a lasting impression. One of these events that left a lasting impression on me occurred at a local festival in Tumut one autumn evening when I was about eight or nine. I saw a man standing on the back of a truck speaking to a growing crowd of people. My family stopped to listen to him. He was easy to understand, friendly and was obviously engaging. I thought he was terrific and asked his name. He had an unusual name and afterwards I always looked for him in the news or other events. His name was Gough Whitlam.

Eventually this man, whom I admired when just a child, became one of my heroes for the far-sighted and wide-ranging legislation he introduced. Some examples are: Australia's first federal legislation on human rights, the environment and heritage; welfare payments to single parent families; the abolition of the death penalty for federal crimes; his government commissioned inquiries into Aboriginal land rights; equal opportunities were given to women in federal government employment; free tertiary education; the setting up of legal aid and Medibank; and not least the introduction of *Advance Australia Fair* as our national anthem. What a difference one person can make.

Another life-changing event for me was my move to Queensland in 1995. My late husband, Jim, and I came to Brisbane from Canberra. I had worked in Canberra for more than 20 years, but the great weather and lifestyle of Queensland was always tempting us, particularly on icy winter mornings. Canberra is a wonderful city and, though I have many fond memories of my life there, I am thankful every day that we made the move here. I came to Brisbane to work for the Australian Services Union Clerical and Administrative Branch as an organiser. Janice Mayes and the late Chris Woods interviewed me and offered me the role, and I thank them for their faith and for the opportunity to join the best union in Queensland.

Mr Speaker, I am a proud unionist. Of course I am a proud unionist. I am proud that I have worked with and for members who believe in fair, equitable and dignified workplaces and, further, who understand that it is through a collective approach that these aspirations can be achieved. And they demonstrate their commitment to that collective approach by joining and being active in their union. The working lives of thousands of admin workers in Queensland have been improved because of that commitment. Of course I am a proud unionist.

I have been privileged to work in unions for more than 20 years and for eight of those years as Assistant Branch Secretary of the Australian Services Union. I can think of no better training ground for being a member of parliament. I learnt to listen, to explore issues and to seek solutions. I learnt that open and frank discussion solves many issues and that courtesy makes for productive negotiations and meetings. I learnt that many people understand that their issue may not have a solution but that an opportunity to seek advice and reassurance can give them confidence and solace.

I witnessed that our attitude, our enthusiasm and small demonstrations of leadership can make a huge difference to a difficult work situation—that not all leaders are out front; some are firmly in the centre of the crowd, leading by example. I saw firsthand that genuine consultation improves outcomes, that giving men and women the opportunity to be part of the solution, to have a role no matter how small, inspires and strengthens them and that involvement leads to understanding and action. Union activism has also taught me that with rights come responsibilities and that these responsibilities must be accorded the same attention and energy as our rights—that all of us have a responsibility to do whatever we can to enrich and enhance our working lives, our environment and our community.

I am extremely grateful for these lessons and experiences, and I am eager to use my experience to represent and engage the constituents of Kallangur. I am enthusiastic, I work hard and I will work with my constituency to resolve issues that concern them, and I will use our combined collective experience to find workable solutions for our community.

The electorate of Kallangur includes the suburbs of Kallangur, Whiteside, Kurwongbah, Petrie, Murrumba Downs, Dakabin, Burpengary South and parts of Lawnton and Narangba. Some of these are newly part of Kallangur, welcomed since the redistribution from the seats of Kurwongbah and Murrumba. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the retired member for Kurwongbah, Linda Lavarch, and Dean Wells, the member for Murrumba, for their efficiency and generosity in introducing me to the constituents in those redistributed areas.

In Kallangur, we are fortunate to have a varied and vigorous retail and business sector, some semirural areas and beautiful green spaces and picnic areas. Kallangur includes access to fabulous recreation areas like Lake Samsonvale, Lake Kurwongbah and the Pine River, and of course Lakeside Park, formerly known as Lakeside International Raceway—what Wikipedia describes as the spiritual home of Queensland motorsport. Lakeside has been the site of international premier racing events and played host to such names as Jim Clark, Jackie Stewart, Jack Brabham, Graham Hill and others—not forgetting Dick Johnson and Peter Brock and five-time world motorcycle champion Mick Doohan. Lakeside is also used for developing smart road technology for Queensland Motorways. It is a family oriented venue, providing many forms of entertainment apart from racing, from model boats to fishing, pocket bikes and go-carts.

Kallangur also has many war memorials. One in particular, Anzac Avenue, goes through the suburb of Kallangur and finishes in Petrie. The drive along Anzac Avenue reminds me every day of the sacrifices and service of all who have served in war. It makes me think of my own father, Bowman Morris, who was based at Sandgate for training and then served as a Spitfire pilot in World War II in Britain, Italy and Africa in the RAAF while attached to the RAF.

As the member for Kallangur, I plan to meet with the business community and discuss the revitalisation of the retail and business sector by using innovative ideas to take advantage of the great community spirit in Kallangur and to provide community services and events. Constituents will be invited to meet with me, to take part in community forums and to suggest other means of engagement. I will meet with and consult with our Indigenous community through elders Uncle Lenny Johnson and Uncle Lloyd Hornsby and their organisation Bunyabilla. This is an organisation to be proud of which works tirelessly to progress its mission statement of 'sustainable practices for the community'.

As the Labor member for Kallangur, I aspire to all the aims of a just society: social justice, affordable housing, accessible quality education, youth engagement, reconciliation and dignified and fair employment conditions. When I look into the future for Kallangur, I see a vibrant community with frequent popular community events; I see business and retail returning to revitalise our business precincts; I see an increase to social housing availability; I see a coordinated and integrated transport system that has reduced congestion on our roads; I see an enhanced and revitalised volunteer register that allows for regular assistance to our aged and infirm; I see our schools flourishing and receiving the recognition they deserve; I see improved resources for young people to enjoy themselves safely and legally—for example, safe and accessible trail bike riding trails, a youth space and a community centre.

Our communities in Queensland are full of selfless, hardworking people, doing their best and dealing with their triumphs and tragedies with dignity and fortitude. In every school, there are heroes changing and enhancing lives. In every hospital, there are wonderful staff dealing with every kind of emergency and heartbreak with compassion and efficiency. In every sporting club, there are parents and friends devoting hours to the enjoyment and development of our kids. These people are usually unnoticed until we have personal need of them. Then they truly assume their rightful place as heroes.

During my husband's terminal illness, we were astonished and touched by the services available to support us and to provide medical and personal assistance, not least from our community of friends. I was able to care for him at home until he died but only with the wonderful assistance provided by government services, the Blue Nurses and the palliative care teams of Mount Olivet, and our local GP.

We would all be uplifted if we heard more about such unselfish service or stories of triumphs. Too much attention is placed on the negative in our country, our state and our community. How can we have hope and motivation if all we hear about are the crimes and brutish behaviour of the minority? We

should instead share the tales that inspire us, that lift us up when our energy flags and our enthusiasm wanes. I want to collect those stories of the everyday achievements and successes in Kallangur. I want to publish and promote them to encourage optimism and enthusiasm for what I believe to be a wonderful community. We must take every opportunity to celebrate and congratulate each other.

In all campaigns, there is a team of dedicated, unpaid, overworked people who generously and selflessly support the candidate. Thank you to them all. Thank you especially to Julie Bignell for her friendship, her sense of humour, her leadership and her unfailing clarity—and for having the vision.

Thank you to my union for their generous moral and physical support. Thank you to my friends and family for their support and congratulations. Thank you to my colleagues in the union movement who gave up their own time and money to help, particularly the ASU, the LHMU, the ETU, the TWU, the RTBU, the CEPU, the MUA and the QPSU. Thanks to the Australian Labor Party branch members and their families for their hard work. Thank you to my campaign director, Chris Whiting, for his wise counsel, hard work and unfailing enthusiasm.

I particularly thank my partner, Craig, for his support, his belief in me, his great ideas and his practical nature. He proved to have an instinctive talent for campaigning, and his huge capacity for hard work was invaluable. He of course fitted it all in around family responsibilities and full-time work. And a big thank you to Jordan for all of his hard work and great ideas.

My friends travelled from as far as Canberra, Sydney, England and Germany and worked on the election campaign—not to work on it, but they did work on it. I must make special mention of Matt Stein from Berlin. He gave up his long-awaited holiday in Australia to work tirelessly on my campaign—early mornings, late nights and very energetic letterboxing. It was not quite the holiday in Queensland depicted in our wonderful tourism brochures.

Thanks to Barbara Byrne and Harold Logue from Canberra who came and worked during the campaign, and I know they had hoped to be here today. They have been with me through many significant events—some happy, some tragic. They have provided me with great food, drink and conversation. They now have their own significant issues to deal with but still find the time to support me and I thank them.

Thanks to the many people who believed I could do it and gave me the confidence to try: to my mum, who has always told me that I was special and who taught me to be compassionate and that the feelings and rights of others are as important as my own; to my father, who taught me to question and that I deserved to have my opinion heard; and to both my parents for never teaching me that there are some things a woman just cannot do.

To my many mentors who have taken the time to teach me and to guide me: without you all, I would never have had the confidence to try. Thanks to the union movement, particularly my first union, the ATPOA, which gave me the opportunity to be involved, recognised in me the seeds of an activist and took the time and resources to teach me and train me, inspire me and motivate me.

To all the people who gave me time, good advice, inspiration and much needed motivation: thank you. To Jo Justo, Kate Ward from Canberra, Sharon Valles, Ian McCarthy, Tom Brown, Carl Ratana, Dave Anderson, Bob Macintosh, Shane and Angie King, Iris Ashton, Terry Armstrong, Michelle Burgett, Graeme Russell, Joy Seiffert, John Targuse, Bob Kline, Senator Claire Moore, Emily's List and every other fabulous person who donated money, stuffed envelopes, did endless letterboxing or bought a raffle ticket or other ticket for fundraising: thank you.

In every working woman's life, there is another woman they rely on to assist in family emergencies and tribulations, and for me that woman is Chris Scarcella. She always steps in to help me in any situation and we could not manage without her. Thank you, Chris. It is not only me that relies on you, and you never let us down.

Thank you also to Kevin and Michelle in my electorate office. I literally could not manage without you, your hard work and wealth of knowledge and your unfailing good humour.

Lastly, may I congratulate all the staff here in Parliament House for the friendly, efficient and professional assistance they provide me. This is a great comfort to me as I look forward with pride and a sense of privilege to representing the constituents of Kallangur. My message to the people of Kallangur is that the values that have animated and strengthened me in my life—compassion, empathy and collectivism—the values that have been instilled in me by my friends and family, now impel me to work hard to build our community.

Debate, on motion of Mr Hinchliffe, adjourned.

WATER AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. GJ WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Acting Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade) (12.19 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Water Act 2000 and to make a consequential amendment to the Public Service Act 2008. 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.

Tabled paper: Water and Another Act Amendment Bill [257].

Tabled paper: Water and Another Act Amendment Bill, explanatory notes [258].

Second Reading

Hon. GJ WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Acting Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade) (12.20 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce into this House the Water and Another Act Amendment Bill 2009. The Queensland Water Commission, established under the Water Act 2000 in June 2006, is an independent statutory body responsible for ensuring sustainable water supplies in the South-East Queensland region, SEQ region, and other designated regions. The Queensland Water Commission has played a crucial role in securing our water supplies both in the short and the long term. The commission's jurisdiction is currently limited to the SEQ region. However, it can be expanded to further designated regions in Queensland if the need arises.

The planning and regulatory functions carried out by the commission are critical for the continued implementation of regional water supply security within the SEQ region. The commission's achievements in South-East Queensland to date place it at the forefront of water sector reform in Australia. The commission's most notable achievements include—

- strategic water supply planning through development of the SEQ regional water security program and the draft SEQ water strategy;
- establishing the SEQ water grid, including the SEQ water grid entities, the system operating plan and water grid manager contracts;
- SEQ water market development and enforcement as the market rules administrator;
- establishing and implementing a regional water restriction regime for business and domestic water use including a drought exit strategy, resulting in a water consumption drop from over 300 litres per person per day to under 140 litres per person per day for over three years; and
- monitoring and reporting on infrastructure and demand management projects, water efficiency management plans, retrofit programs and water use.

On 12 March the government announced a major public sector reform program which included an independent review of Queensland government boards. The Weller-Webbe review recommended that the QWC be abolished and its functions transferred to the Department of Environment and Resource Management. In the government's view, the commission continues to have a significant role in water supply and demand management, and we did not support the Weller-Webbe recommendation at that time.

In light of this, the government has considered options for organisational change in the context of broader arrangements for water related functions as part of the structure of the new Department of Environment and Resource Management. The government, on recommendations provided by the commission and submissions from key stakeholders, is implementing significant reform through restructuring the water sector and reducing the number of entities involved in managing SEQ's water supply. This significant reform has delivered improved regional coordination and management of water supplies, a clearer responsibility and accountability framework, consistent levels of service and improved water supply security.

With a significant part of the restructuring of the SEQ urban water arrangements in place, it is a timely opportunity to consider rationalising the structure of the Queensland Water Commission. Structural change at this point will not impact on the ability of the commission to continue the implementation of the stage 2 reforms creating new SEQ local government owned retail and distribution businesses.

The Water and Another Act Amendment Bill 2009 forms part of the government's implementation of its response to this element of the Part B Report—*Brokering balance: a public interest map for Queensland government bodies—an independent review of Queensland government boards, committees and statutory authorities*.

This bill proposes structural change to the commission through amendments to the Water Act 2000 to establish a 'single commissioner model' for the commission. The Water Act currently requires the commission to comprise a chairperson and at least two other commissioners appointed by the Governor in Council. The current terms of the chairperson and the two other commissioners expire on 18 June 2009.

The single commissioner model will replace the current board model and retains the appointment by Governor in Council of a third party, external or internal to government, as the commissioner to undertake the existing statutory and regulatory functions of the commission. This simplified governance structure will deliver associated cost savings for government and is consistent with the part B report recommendation that, where statutory authorities are required, consideration should be given to whether board governance is required. The bill does not propose any changes to the current arrangements for the commissioners' duration of appointment, terms and conditions, resignation and termination of appointment.

Currently the Water Act provides the arrangements for meetings, associated quorum, related governance requirements and other business. Under the new arrangements, with only a single commissioner, provisions for meetings and other business are not necessary and, accordingly, the bill proposes to omit these provisions.

The bill amends the Water Act to require the commissioner to disclose to the minister—previously the chairperson—any direct or indirect pecuniary interest in a matter which may conflict with the proper performance of the commissioner's functions. In the event of disclosure of a conflict of interest, the commissioner is prohibited from performing or continuing to perform functions related to the matter. Other arrangements are in place such as the appointment of an acting commissioner which would allow the ongoing function of the commission in this circumstance. The bill also makes provision for the minister to appoint an acting commissioner in circumstances where the single commissioner is unable to perform his or her duties or is absent from office for any reason.

Under the proposed arrangements, the commission will remain a separate statutory body with independent reporting requirements under the Water Act. All of the commission's current functions and powers remain the same including the same geographical jurisdiction, and the ability to employ staff and establish advisory bodies.

The structural changes to the commission are consistent with the government's public sector reform program, which aims to deliver reduced bureaucracy and improve efficiency and maintain integrity and security of necessary regulatory functions. The changes to the commission are only in relation to its composition, rather than its establishment and ongoing operation, and will provide for associated cost savings for government in the future. The bill will not commence the new arrangements until after the 18 June 2009 expiry date of the current commissioners' term.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank water commissioners Elizabeth Nosworthy, Jamie Quinn and David Green, who have been at the forefront of the unprecedented initiatives undertaken by the commission and have made an enormous personal contribution. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Langbroek, adjourned.

MOTION

Order of Business

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (12.27 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.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS INTERCEPTION BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from 22 April (see p. 79), on motion of Ms Bligh—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.27 pm): I rise to speak to the Telecommunications Interception Bill 2009, which will introduce telephone-tapping powers in Queensland. There is a very comprehensive brief from the Queensland Parliamentary Library, which has updated a previous one of a couple of years ago. I will be using some of the comments from that brief because it is a very good brief. New members would be well advised on some of these issues to have a look at what the library produces, because it is a great help in doing research for these sorts of matters. Lawrence Springborg, the member for Southern Downs and former Leader of the Opposition, has introduced private members bills on this issue over the last few years, and I look forward to his contribution on this bill.

I want to indicate that this bill is longstanding Liberal National Party policy, and it has been introduced into parliament during the last three sittings and we will be supporting it. I note that the library brief states—

The Commonwealth Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979 or, TIA Act, seeks to establish a comprehensive national scheme for the lawful interception of telecommunications.

This bill will enable the Queensland Police Service and the Crime and Misconduct Commission to apply for telecommunication interception warrants under the Commonwealth T(I&A) Act for the investigation of serious offences.

We are the only jurisdiction not to have had such legislation. So the absence of such legislation has meant that the Queensland Police Service and the Crime and Misconduct Commission cannot be declared interception agencies. Only an interception agency can obtain an interception warrant under the T(I&A) Act. Neither the QPS nor the CMC can currently obtain a warrant to authorise the interception of telecommunications to assist them in the investigation of serious offences within Queensland.

It is pointed out in this research brief that over the years law enforcement agencies in Queensland have had to use alternative detection and investigation measures rather than depend on being allowed access to information intercepted by their interstate or Commonwealth counterparts. For example, the Queensland Police Service, under the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act, has used surveillance devices which include listening devices, visual surveillance devices and tracking devices to investigate indictable offences. The Public Interest Monitor created under the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act is allowed to appear at applications for warrant hearings to represent the public interest.

I note that part 2 of this bill is where the Public Interest Monitor's position is codified. It is interesting to read about the Public Interest Monitor in this brief. The position was established in 1997 by the then coalition government under the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act as an independent statutory office holder to, among other things, appear at hearings of applications for various surveillance warrants in order to represent the public interest.

Obviously, up until now the police and the CMC have been limited in their use of surveillance devices vis-a-vis telecommunications interception. Listening devices can only pick up one side of the conversation. Of course, telecommunication interception can capture both sides of a telephone conversation, or facsimile communication, or email between computers all in real time.

I note that the offences for which interception warrants may be obtained are serious offences. They are exhaustively defined in section 5D of the T(I&A) Act. They include: murder, kidnapping and similar offences; serious drug import and export offences and other serious drug offences; acts of terrorism and related specific offences; child pornography related offences; and specified offences involving loss of life, injury or trafficking in prescribed substances. There are other specified offences including: theft, handling stolen goods, bribery or corruption of government officer offences; money laundering offences; telecommunication offences; certain computer related offences such as cybercrime; offences related to people smuggling with exploitation, slavery, sexual servitude and deceptive recruiting; certain child sex tourism type offences; and ancillary offences such as aiding, abetting and conspiring to commit other serious offences.

The brief says that the majority of warrants issued during the 2006-07 reporting year were obtained to assist with investigations of serious drug offences. There were 1,494 serious drug offences that were specified in interception warrants obtained by interception agencies.

There was recently a case of note on the Gold Coast. This was reported in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* and heavily featured in the news. I understand authorities were monitoring some sort of telecommunications device and overheard someone attempting to murder his wife. He was convicted of this. Because of the police interception they were able to stop that happening. That case was quite prominent in the news the other day.

Mr Shine: How were they able to do that, do you think?

Mr LANGBROEK: It shows that telecommunication interception can be used to good effect. It is most important that we are finally getting these powers in Queensland.

Mr Shine: It is illegal.

Mr LANGBROEK: I am not sure whether it was a federal investigation. That is not what I am talking about. I am talking about the fact that in Queensland we have been remiss in not having these powers. As the research brief points out, as far back as 1989 the Fitzgerald report considered that the interception of communications was one tool to consider in any comprehensive review of law enforcement powers. I take from his interjection that the former Attorney-General, the member for Toowoomba North, is implying that he would rather not have had that situation go on and had the circumstances of a lady being murdered—

Mr SHINE: I rise to a point of order. The honourable member's remarks are totally inaccurate and offensive and I ask him to withdraw them.

Mr LANGBROEK: I withdraw. In 1991 the then Criminal Justice Commission released an issues paper on police powers in Queensland. It presented a range of views in relation to telecommunications interception. In 1997-98 the then coalition government released the review of police powers discussion paper. In March 1998 the coalition introduced the Telecommunications Interception Bill 1998 which lapsed with the dissolution of parliament. Since then, the Queensland Police Service and the PCJC have found that there have been no examples of significant breaches of interception legislation or abuses of power in any state or territory. There have been constant recommendations by the parliamentary committee with oversight of the CJC that the CJC be given telecommunications interception powers with safeguards.

A bill was introduced by the member for Southern Downs, the former leader of the opposition, on 9 October 2003. The object of that bill was to establish a recording, reporting and inspection regime to complement the Commonwealth telecommunications interception legislation. That has happened since. In May 2004, former Premier Peter Beattie told the parliament it could not introduce telephone interception powers because of constitutional limitations. I note that the back-end and front-end protections afforded by the Public Interest Monitor give reassurances about accountability. Under this legislation the Public Interest Monitor will not just check on applications that have been made after the fact.

We will be supporting this bill. It has been long a time coming. It is about time we had this debate. For too long this Labor government has put politics before the safety of Queenslanders. This bill will finally put us into line with other jurisdictions in the fight against crime.

The policy of the Bligh government has been to tie the hands of our law enforcement agencies by depriving them of the support they need to get on with the job. That is exactly what the research brief points out. We know from talking to members of the Police Service that they have needed these powers for a long time.

In the time that I have been in this place, Queensland has developed a reputation for being the methamphetamine capital of Australia. According to the Australian Crime Commission, our state has the highest number of clandestine drug labs of any state. Without the necessary powers, it makes it difficult for our police to capture these criminals.

In speaking to this bill I pay credit to the hard work of those in the Queensland Police Service. Despite a lack of legislative support and power, in 2007-08 they detected more than 49,000 drug offences. That is 49,000 fewer people peddling dangerous drugs on our streets.

These laws will give our state law enforcement officers access to the Commonwealth telecommunications network in order to carry out covert surveillance operations. The bill finally brings Queensland into line with our neighbouring states, who have enjoyed these powers for years. As I have mentioned too, it is important to note that the Liberal National Party has supported phone-tapping powers for police since 1999. As crime becomes more sophisticated, so, too, should the powers of our police to detect it. We need to keep perfecting the way we give our police powers to detect crime. Phone tapping is not a new technology. There are new technologies being developed. It is important that our police have access to those technologies.

As I have mentioned, the Fitzgerald inquiry flagged the use of telecommunications interception. I have also mentioned that the CJC developed an issues paper. As part of submissions then, the Queensland Police Service put forward a submission for the need for telephone interception powers. Following the report, the CJC recommended the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee introduce laws that would allow Queensland police to tap into the communication network to combat organised crime.

I have mentioned that the Borbidge government brought in the bill that lapsed when parliament was dissolved prior to the 1998 election. Since then, the Liberal National Party has tried on three occasions to introduce laws that would provide our law enforcement agencies with the powers they need to fight serious crime. Each of these private members' bills provided the necessary safeguards in accordance with the Commonwealth security requirements. However, in spite of several independent recommendations to introduce these laws and in spite of police saying they needed these powers, the members opposite voted against the bills.

The Beattie-Bligh Labor government refused to adopt the Commonwealth's safeguards because of a squabble over the role of the Public Interest Monitor. No other state took issue with these provisions. Every other state was given access to the communications network except Queensland. Our police were deprived of this important power because of some argument between Queensland and Canberra over which approach was the better approach. How many opportunities to catch out criminals and stop crime have been lost as a result? The Crime and Misconduct Commission states that illicit drug markets represent the most prevalent form of organised crime in Queensland. In the past 10 years the illicit drug market has boomed in Queensland, yet the members opposite sat back and let it happen. They obstructed efforts by police to weed out the destructive drug market. Between 2005 and 2008, there were 5,479 drug convictions made in Queensland courts. Not once was the maximum penalty imposed. Have we become so complacent about the scourge of drugs that we simply do not see it as a serious enough crime to warrant extra police powers or higher maximum penalties?

There is no question that criminal networks have grown significantly under the Labor government. One only needs to look at outlaw motorcycle gangs for proof of this. The CMC has also confirmed this to be the case. These sophisticated crime networks pose a danger to all Queenslanders. When crime flourishes our communities become unsafe, and we know that Queensland families deserve to feel safe at home. There is no doubt in my mind that enacting this law earlier could have saved lives destroyed by drugs or violent criminal gangs. In 2004 the CMC concluded that the amphetamine market in Queensland would continue to grow because of limited police resources to tackle the problem.

Beyond the ever-present drug scourge, fraud and identity theft have also become par for the course for organised crime activity. We are seeing so much publicity about that now, reaching a crescendo in the last few months in New South Wales. We have called on the Commonwealth to ensure that we have national laws so that we do not have these issues going to the states where the legislation is the weakest. No Queenslanders is immune from identity theft. With skimming technology, fraudsters can gain access to anyone's bank accounts and personal information. In the age where private information and money is exchanged over mobile phones and the internet, identity fraud is a real possibility. It is hoped that these new laws will give police the extra powers needed to catch identity thieves.

When it comes to organised crime, we have a good idea of who the key players are. Outlaw motorcycle gangs and ethnic crime gangs are gaining strength in South-East Queensland. The CMC has maintained that up until now established criminal networks have been allowed to grow in sophistication because of the limitations on Queensland law enforcement agencies which have lacked telecommunications interception capabilities. Labor's approach to tackling crime is such that you would think that organised crime is conducted in public phone booths and on billboards. It seems the Bligh government has only just discovered mobile phone and internet technology. The LNP has long maintained that telecommunications interception powers would be one of the most effective investigative tools for law enforcement agencies. It concerns me greatly that it has taken a decade to bring in this legislation. At this rate, we may never see the so-called antigang laws the Premier was so quick to jump on when the bikies were appearing on the front page of the papers.

Under federal laws, the types of crime that can be monitored—I have mentioned a whole list of them—are serious offences including murder, kidnapping, drug importation and terrorism offences. Law enforcement agencies may also use phone tapping to track offences punishable by a maximum period of at least seven years. The Queensland Law Society has long been urging the Queensland government to introduce telephone interception powers to bring Queensland into line with such agencies in every other jurisdiction. Its valued, impartial and balanced input on this issue must be acknowledged. In fact, it seems the Bligh government were the only opponents to giving police these extra powers.

I want to comment for a moment on the Public Interest Monitor. I find it interesting that, even though the Rudd Labor government has introduced amendments to the Commonwealth act to recognise the state's Public Interest Monitor, the federal Attorney-General noted that any submission made by the Public Interest Monitor would be taken into consideration but could be outweighed by other matters. So despite all of this government's huffing and puffing about having the Public Interest Monitor front row and centre in the process, the federal Attorney-General can override its recommendations.

Given the very intrusive nature of telecommunications interception powers, it is important that the Public Interest Monitor should have a role in this process. I note, as I began, that the Public Interest Monitor monitors compliance by law enforcement officers and that the Public Interest Monitor appears at

hearings of applications for warrants to test the validity of the application. For that purpose, the Public Interest Monitor can present questions for the applicant to answer, examine or cross-examine any witnesses and make submissions on the appropriateness of granting the application. It has back-end accountability and front-end accountability so that the Public Interest Monitor has an interest at all levels. With that contribution, we are supporting the bill.

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12.45 pm): I rise to support the Telecommunications Interception Bill before the parliament. As members opposite stand to speak in this debate over the course of the day, they cannot claim one single iota of virtue for introducing a piece of legislation to this parliament 10 years after it was recommended by the law enforcement authorities of this state and indeed some two decades after the first Australian state jurisdictions gave their law enforcement authorities the ability to be able to intercept telecommunications in their particular state jurisdictions.

Over the last decade in this state we have seen a deliberate process of obstruction and kite flying from members of the Labor Party as they have desperately sought and rallied against the introduction of telephone interception powers in Queensland, and they have done that under all sorts of nebulous contentions about the rights of those people who might have their liberties intruded upon when an authority has been granted. That says more about the left-wing genesis of the party that sits in government in Queensland and the way that it sees the issue of telephone interception powers and the way that it is more concerned about the impact on the rights of those people who are accused rather than the rights of the people in the community who should be protected against the scourge of organised crime, money laundering, drugs, organised prostitution, identity fraud or whatever the case may be.

There has been ample opportunity in this parliament over a long period of time for this government to be able to enact amendments which may have addressed its particular concerns. Needless to say that, even if we could believe for one moment that there was a legitimate iota of concern in the Labor Party's contention that telephone interception powers struck at the heart of civil liberties or the capacity to be able to guard against the intrusions of people's right to privacy, then one only needs to look at other jurisdictions and see what concerns have arisen in those other jurisdictions—namely, many Labor state jurisdictions that have introduced telephone interception powers over the last two decades. Those concerns have not in fact manifested themselves in those jurisdictions that have introduced telephone interception powers. So if we look at it, we have seen 10 years of obstruction from the Beattie Labor government and now Premier Bligh and previous Attorneys-General in government in this state. As a consequence, we have seen our law enforcement authorities in this state fight organised crime, in all of its various manifestations and permutations, with one hand tied behind their backs compared to what their interstate and interjurisdictional colleagues have had on offer.

Indeed, if someone wanted to line up a drug run in Queensland or some other sort of nefarious criminal activity, all they would need to do is step across the border—step across the Tweed River into Queensland—and they are able to organise it and there would be no problem. However, if they did that in New South Wales using the telephone then they would be in really big strife—unless, of course, our law enforcement authorities were fortunate enough to be involved in a joint operation with the Federal Police or the Australian Crime Commission. That is the only occasion when law enforcement officers can be involved in using telephone interception powers if they are in the Queensland Police Service or the Crime and Misconduct Commission or its predecessor, the Crime Commission. We know that those officers cannot always rely upon joint operations because of the various trigger mechanisms and the nature of those operations.

There was no reason whatsoever for Labor to stand in the way of telephone interception powers in Queensland for one-tenth of a century—for, indeed, more than half a generation. Only the previous sitting week we saw this government come into this place and say that the actions of alleged criminal farmers were of far greater concern to this government. So it rushed through changes to the vegetation management laws in this state, even though those farmers were abiding by the very law that this government introduced in 2004. Yet a major issue of public policy and concern that has been bubbling away for at least 10 years had not been acted upon with the same degree of haste and concern by this government.

In 1988 the Victoria Police were given telephone interception powers by the Victorian government. On 30 January 1989, the New South Wales Crime Commission was given telephone interception powers. On 30 January 1989, the New South Wales Police Service was given telephone interception powers. On 6 June 1990, the Independent Commission Against Corruption was given telephone interception powers. On 10 July 1991, the South Australia Police was given telephone interception powers. On 15 July 1997, the Western Australia Police was given telephone interception powers. On 14 July 1998, the Police Integrity Commission in New South Wales was given telephone interception powers. On 24 September 2001, the Western Australia Corruption and Crime Commission was given telephone interception powers. Who were the first ones that that commission started getting into? Of course, they were Brian Burke and his mate Grill. Maybe later they were a bit concerned about what it meant for their mates.

Mr Shine: And they would have had a field day with Joh, too.

Mr SPRINGBORG: The former Attorney-General, who was one of the architects of opposition to telephone interception powers in Queensland, is now sitting on the back bench. He is still railing against telephone interception powers. I admit that the new Attorney-General in Queensland has driven this change and has gone against the obstreperous attitude of the Labor Party over a long period with regard to this issue.

Those bodies to which I referred were given the authority to introduce telephone interception powers under the Commonwealth Telecommunications Act over the past two decades. Where are all of these examples of concern about undue applications for telephone interception powers being made by authorities? Where are all the abuses of telephone interception powers in the other state jurisdictions since the introduction of those powers in those other states? It has not happened. It has been an absolute furphy on the part of the Labor Party to even come into this place and allege that there were going to be these sorts of abuses and that we needed this multilayered level of protection.

The simple reality is that on at least two occasions I introduced into this place a bill that provided a role for the Public Interest Monitor. The Public Interest Monitor was put in place by a coalition government in the 1990s to guard the public interest on behalf of those people who could have listening devices planted against them. Under my proposition, the PIM could have been brought into the process after the granting of that particular authority—and before that authority was granted—to protect the interests of those people against which the authority was being sought. Therefore, somebody who had the standing of a judicial officer was able to make sure that the law enforcement agency, whether that be the Queensland Police Service or the Queensland Crime Commission, could not just go on some sort of foraging expedition.

So all of those protections would have been put in place through legislation that I introduced into this parliament. As we heard from the Leader of the Opposition a moment ago, after all the carry-on from this government about the fact that it would not do anything for over 10 years because it wanted this change to the Telecommunications Act so that the PIM could become involved earlier in the process—and that was its contention, but I suspect it was its general reluctance to support telephone interception powers—there is no ironclad guarantee of any of that.

I want to outline the history of telephone interception powers. In 1998 telephone interception powers legislation was introduced by the then Borbidge-Sheldon government. That legislation lapsed owing to the election and was not reintroduced by the newly elected Beattie government. In 2003, while in opposition, I introduced telephone interception legislation. That legislation lapsed when the parliament was prorogued in early 2004 for a state election. In 2004 the legislation was again introduced into this parliament, but it was voted down by Labor. In 2007 the Terrorism, Organised Crime and Anti-Corruption Surveillance Bill was voted down—again by Labor.

The Project KRYSTAL report, which was a report by the Queensland Police Service and the Queensland Crime Commission and which was released in June 1999, called very forcefully for the introduction of telephone interception powers in Queensland to help crack down on organised crime in this state, organised criminal gangs, drug trafficking, money laundering—all of those types of crime that concern people in our community. Yet in the ensuing 10 years, this government was not prepared to listen. It is interesting to note that all of the other recommendations that were contained in the report were introduced by the government—and some of those reluctantly so. The executive summary of the report states—

Project KRYSTAL makes the following public recommendations:

1. That law enforcement agencies adopt a comprehensive market based approach to the analysis of organised crime, incorporating an ongoing assessment of organised criminal identities and networks operating in and between illicit markets.
2. That the Risk Assessment Matrix be used for the continuous monitoring and evaluation of the Queensland organised criminal environment to provide strategic direction for effectively disrupting organised crime in Queensland.
3. That law enforcement agencies seek legislative changes—particularly in the area of telecommunications interception, civil based recovery of proceeds of crime, and covert operations/witness anonymity—and appropriate resources to support them.
4. That a public report of Project KRYSTAL be made available to inform the community about QCC/QPS assessment of organised crime in Queensland.

Almost all of those things happened, but the one thing that the Labor Party in Queensland railed against month after month, year after year—for almost a decade—was the need to introduce telephone interception powers in Queensland on some sort of nebulous basis that it had to run out and protect those people who might have an authority issued against them for their phones to be tapped. The Labor Party was more concerned about the civil liberties of those people than it was about the need to bust organised criminal activities in Queensland and drug trafficking, which probably, as a consequence, has cost hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars in fighting criminal activity in this state successfully and also possibly even the destruction of young lives and others as a consequence.

Even then there was general reluctance by this government to introduce civil based recovery of proceeds of crime in this parliament in Queensland. I drafted the legislation for comprehensive legislation when I was the shadow Attorney-General. I introduced it into this parliament. The then Attorney-General and the member for Yeronga, Matt Foley, came into this parliament and voted against the legislation, which was a private member's bill. He then reintroduced it almost entirely in its original manifestation, but with his own moniker on it just because he did not want to give any credence to the opposition in parliament. When it comes to legislative provisions introduced into this parliament, this government is very happy to talk about bipartisan support and make that plea to the opposition, but it is never happy to provide the same level of bipartisanship to a range of legislation that is very necessary to provide the mantle of safety to our community against organised crime and other criminal activities in Queensland.

The same process occurred with the introduction of drug courts in Queensland. On a number of occasions the Labor Party came into this place and voted against motions to implement drug courts in Queensland. It was dragged kicking and screaming into implementing drug courts. It did not want to support the introduction of drug courts when it was the opposition's point of view, but it introduced into this place legislation identical to what was being proposed by the opposition. That shows this government's lack of commitment to bipartisanship when it comes to the issue of dealing with law and order and crime and justice issues in Queensland.

I refer to a CMC *Crime Bulletin*, which was issued in September 2004. At that stage, the CMC was still making a plea for telephone interception powers in Queensland. Indeed, it makes reference to the implementation of the 1999 recommendations of the Project KRYSTAL report. The bulletin states—

With one exception, all of the recommendations of the 1999 report have been implemented. As evidenced by this assessment, law enforcement agencies have adopted a market-based approach to the analysis of organised crime using risk assessment methodology. New legislation has been passed concerning the civil-based recovery of proceeds of crime, covert investigations and the protection of witnesses.

They are all essential legislative reforms that had the bipartisan support of the opposition. Indeed, on one occasion such legislation had been introduced by the opposition but it was voted down by the government. Again, that bulletin lamented the fact that Queensland did not have telephone interception powers.

In conclusion, whilst the opposition supports this legislation, it is 10 years overdue. It will assist our police. It will assist the Crime and Misconduct Commission in Queensland. Organised criminal activity in Queensland is becoming more and more sophisticated. Organised criminal gangs have the latest in technology and the latest in capacity. They are fighting far above their weight and, in some cases, with a greater degree of sophistication than our law enforcement agencies in Queensland. For a long period we have languished behind our intrajurisdictional colleagues because we do not have these powers. We are finally going to have them. But I say to honourable members opposite that, as they stand up today to sing the praises of their government and to sing the praises of their minister, they should look at the history of the introduction of this legislation in parliament and what Labor has denied over the past decade in Queensland through pure ideological opposition.

Sitting suspended from 1.01 pm to 2.30 pm.

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—LNP) (2.30 pm): It is with great pleasure that I contribute to the debate on the Telecommunications Interception Bill 2009. It is encouraging to see that the Labor government has adopted a policy of the coalition government of 1998. I knew we would drag one out of it; it does not take much. I want to pay tribute to the new Attorney-General. I congratulate him on his elevation to the high role of chief law officer of the state. I hope we will see more of this type of legislation in the House, which will be advantageous and beneficial to the Queensland Police Service in the apprehension of criminals. Beside the minister sits the former minister for police and corrective services, Judy Spence. Over a number of years in my capacity as the shadow minister I had the pleasure of working with her. I congratulate her on the part she has played in bringing this legislation forward, although unfortunately we were not able to pass it before now. From time to time I speak to senior police within the Queensland Police Service and I know that they are very pleased to see this bill come before the House today.

In 1998 the former minister for police and corrective services, the Hon. Russell Cooper, introduced a telecommunications interception bill to the Queensland parliament. During his second reading speech he stated—

The importance and effectiveness of this investigative tool has been clearly demonstrated in other jurisdictions where it has been used for many years.

Similar legislation was introduced in Victoria in 1998, in New South Wales in 1989, in South Australia in 1991 and in Western Australia in 1997. Other crime-fighting bodies have been able to take advantage of this very important tool following its inclusion in the legislation of those states. This is about taking the handcuffs off the police and putting them back onto the criminals.

As far back as 1986 the Stewart royal commission stated that the power to use telecommunications interception tools in order to fight serious crime was of paramount importance. For more than 10 years across Queensland police have been crying out to the government to give them the tools to fight organised and serious crime. In 1989 during the Fitzgerald inquiry the subject was reviewed. In 1991 the CJC and the police minister's office released the *Police powers in Queensland: an issues paper*. In its submission, the Queensland Police Service advocated for the need for telephone interception powers, subject to the standards and safeguards imposed by the Commonwealth legislation. In 1995 the CJC noted that telecommunications interception powers would enhance the capacity of both the police and the CJC to combat organised and major crime. In 1997-98 the Borbidge government acted by introducing a bill to give police and the CJC the necessary provisions to enable them to access interception powers. Unfortunately, that bill lapsed with the calling of the election in May 1998. For more than 11 years since that time the Labor government has given excuse after excuse as to why it would not introduce these laws, and organised crime has grown and flourished across Queensland.

Year after year we have seen report after report that organised crime, particularly involving criminal bikie gangs, Russian Mafia and the like, has become entrenched in Queensland. However, I would ask all members of parliament to err on the side of caution when talking about bikie gangs. We have heard a lot about the criminal activity that is entrenched in bikie organisations. I hope that, when the blanket is thrown over organised crime, the good people of the bikie groups are not branded in the same way as the criminal element. There are good people in those organisations. Many Vietnam vets enjoy riding bikes. Before lunch one of my colleagues said to me, 'I hope you're not going to brand the bikie gangs.' I agree with her and I know that people on both sides of this House would concur. Criminals who drive motor cars have other means of networking to engage in criminal activity. They are all a scourge to the ongoing justice and the good people of this state, which is why it is so important that the bill before the House today is passed.

Between 2002-03 and 2007-08 there has been a 42.5 per cent increase in the number of arrests as a result of CJC-QPS investigations into organised crime. In the same period the number of charges increased by 38 per cent. Again, the Commonwealth T(I&A) Act seeks to establish a comprehensive national scheme for the lawful interception of telecommunications. This ensures that all Commonwealth, state and territory law enforcement agencies covered by this act are subject to equivalent supervisory and accountability requirements when engaging in intercepting telecommunications under a telecommunications interception warrant. At present, Queensland is the only jurisdiction not to have such legislation. This means that the QPS and the CMC cannot be declared to be interception agencies. As only an interception agency can obtain an interception warrant under the T(I&A) Act, currently neither the Queensland Police Service nor the CMC can obtain a warrant to authorise the interception of telecommunications to assist in the investigation of serious offences within Queensland.

For too long in this state the Queensland Police Service has had its hands tied when trying to uphold the law of Queensland because this power is not available to it. Criminals at the forefront of organised crime are working not only on the local Queensland scene but also on the international stage. Over the past few years our police have been doing great work in the interception of criminal activity through the internet network, especially in the area of child pornography and other similar types of evil that affect the youth of our state and our nation. Task Force Argos and the police have done some great work to bring this evil element of our society to justice. The tool that will be made available today will be truly advantageous to our Queensland police. It will enable them to be at the forefront of stopping criminal activity by outsmarting the criminals.

I wish to refer to former Victorian Police Commissioner Christine Nixon, who said recently that one of the great tools that was available to her service in the cleaning up of the underworld operations that have been the scourge of that state over many years was the capacity to use telephone-tapping powers. We have witnessed a lot of that through the *Underbelly* series shown on television in recent times. That showed how blatantly some people snub their noses at the law and the great work that the police do to stop them. Simon Overland, the new Commissioner of Police in Victoria, will pick up the mantle left by Christine Nixon. When this legislation is proclaimed in Queensland, Commissioner Bob Atkinson will be able to help his senior officers and senior detectives curtail organised crime, whether it involves drugs, money laundering or whatever. They will be able to stop people filling our prisons with the people who help them in their criminal activities.

A lot of people think the people in our jails are criminals. A lot of people in our jails are there as a result of the criminal activities of grubs, as we can call them, who do not take drugs but who are involved in the wide scale selling of this evil product and who push drugs on to our young people. It is those young people who ultimately become the victims and who find themselves before the courts and end up in our prison system.

I think this legislation will have long-term repercussions for corrective services and the Queensland Police Service because I think when people find out that they will be subject to this kind of scrutiny they may not commit these crimes in the first place. With things like DNA testing and now telephone-tapping powers we are seeing more people brought to justice. We are seeing our police—one of the most outstanding police services in the world—bring these people to justice.

There is one thing that concerns me—and no doubt the Attorney will take this up with his colleague the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services. I hope that once this legislation is proclaimed the Queensland Police Service does not have to implement this tool within its existing budget. There is no doubt there will be further budgetary constraints on the Queensland Police Service that will have to be addressed due to the costs involved in using this tool and the technology that is available. No doubt these things cost money and there are also costs in terms of expertise in training and whatever else. I know that under certain legislation the police can use these powers now in emergency situations, but we have to make certain that as a result of this legislation the police are not subjected to a budget burden that will retard their use of the powers.

There have been many arguments over a long period of time about the reasons this legislation has not been brought forward and implemented in Queensland, because of regulation that has been governed by the federal government. But that is behind us now. I think the one good thing is that this parliament has given bipartisan support to this legislation and has taken a bipartisan approach to bringing criminals in our state to justice.

Recently I had occasion to write to the Attorney about another issue in relation to a constituent of mine. The Attorney responded very quickly, very ably and very responsibly. It gave me great faith that the new Attorney certainly has his hands on the wheel and will be looking at ways to make our state safer and ensure the people who uphold the law are treated in a responsible way and given an opportunity to go about their business without the criminal element interfering in their everyday lives.

This is a fantastic piece of legislation—one that we have been waiting for for a long while. As we progress through the 21st century, with the interception technology that is available to us now via the internet and other communications technology, I believe that we will see our law enforcement agencies a jump in front of the criminal element who are out there retarding the good things happening in this state. It gives me great pleasure to support this piece of legislation.

Mr MOORHEAD (Waterford—ALP) (2.44 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Telecommunications Interception Bill 2009. This bill gets the balance right: providing the police and the Crime and Misconduct Commission with all the tools they need to investigate crime while ensuring that Queenslanders are protected from unnecessary intrusion on their privacy.

This bill will give Queensland's law enforcement agencies access to the important investigative tool of telephone interception. Telephone interception, commonly known as phone tapping, provides an opportunity for law enforcement agencies to gather evidence to prosecute serious offences where other evidence might be unable to be corroborated or may be insubstantial.

Of course, telephone interception is most effective on those criminal enterprises that require conspiracy—organised crime, drug distribution and police corruption. These offences are often protected by a code of silence amongst offenders to avoid detection. Telephone interception is also central to the detection of those offences committed by internet usage, such as child pornography and cybercrime offences.

In 2006 the Commonwealth government made amendments to the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979 to confirm that law enforcement agencies can lawfully access emails and communications on a person's computer or mobile phone once they are available to the intended recipient through the normal state search warrants. So our law enforcement agencies have already had access to that power. The different regime that this bill introduces will ensure that law enforcement agencies can have access to real-time interception of these communications rather than requiring investigating officers to wait until the communication has been completed.

One of the greatest challenges facing communities in Queensland, across Australia and overseas is the abuse of illicit drugs. Our hospital emergency departments are doing their best to deal with people who are affected by drug psychosis and the other ill-effects of drug misuse. But illicit drugs cannot get to market without a distribution network. It is the investigation of these types of networks, which rely on telephone communication, that will be supported by telephone interception powers. With this new tool at their disposal, police will be able to target these drug networks at their source.

Telephone interception powers for our police will also see a reduction in reliance on other less effective and sometimes more risky investigation methods such as the placement of listening devices and visual surveillance. But we should always remember that telephone interception powers are intrusive. I think every law-abiding Queenslander wants to be assured that they can talk freely and frankly over the telephone without fear that government officers are listening to their conversations. The

misuse of a power so intrusive on a person's privacy would be abhorrent to Queenslanders. In our democratic society, it is important that intrusions on our privacy are limited to those circumstances where it is absolutely necessary.

This bill ensures the powers of telephone interception are accompanied by checks and balances to protect Queenslanders from their misuse. Importantly, accountability mechanisms are in place both before and after the use of telephone interception powers. It is only the Queensland Police Service and the Crime and Misconduct Commission that will be able to apply for warrants for telecommunications interception. To obtain a warrant, these agencies will need to satisfy a federal judge or a member of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal that the telecommunications intercepted would be likely to assist with the investigation of a serious offence. These judicial officers will always retain an overriding discretion whether to issue a warrant in a particular circumstance.

As well, it is only serious offences for which warrants can be obtained. What is a serious offence is defined by the Commonwealth Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act and includes offences such as murder, drug importation and exportation, child pornography as well as bribery and corruption. Obviously, this intrusive investigation technique must be justified by the gravity of the offence. The people of Queensland will not have to worry that their speeding offences will be the basis of telephone tapping.

Obviously one of the most concerning elements of telephone interception is that, by its very nature, the warrant must be issued without the affected party having an opportunity to make submissions on the issue of the warrant. The key front-end accountability mechanism contained in this legislation, and not anywhere else in Australia, is that the Public Interest Monitor, an independent statutory officer, will be provided an opportunity to participate in applications for a warrant.

This is the key issue that has held up this legislation until today. The previous Liberal federal government would not provide this simple and effective front-end accountability. It took the Rudd Labor government to put aside political game playing and allow Queensland's appropriate checks and balances to accompany this legislation.

The previous proposals put by the now Deputy Leader of the Opposition failed on this important front-end accountability. This is quite ironic, I thought, given that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition went to the recent election promising to front-end jobs but refusing to front-end accountability. LNP members come into this parliament and talk about accountability again and again, but I must say that when it comes to this most intrusive power they failed to put in place this basic measure of accountability. There is considerable back-end accountability on the recording and reporting of warrants but by this time it is too late. This bill ensures that checks are in place before a person's privacy is intruded upon rather than looking at whether the intrusion was justified after the damage has been done.

I notice that the speaking list shows that the member for Everton is speaking after me. He is a first-term member so I do not think he has been here to see a previous private member's bill on this issue. As a second-term member, I have only seen it once but this issue has been debated a number of times and I understand that the member for Southern Downs, the now Deputy Leader of the Opposition, has been able to make the same speech every time.

But today this government has delivered on telephone interception powers with appropriate checks and balances. The contribution by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition showed that he is someone flailing around for relevance when the state government has been able to deliver on it. The 'chief justice for Yelarbon' was here to deliver the same old speech on telephone interception powers that we heard last year and the term before that.

The Labor Party's position on this issue has been clear and consistent. We have always said that these powers will be introduced when the Public Interest Monitor is permitted by the federal government to participate. So when the federal government stood up and delivered that, so did we. We stood up to our end of the bargain, and that is what this bill is. This bill gets the balance right—supporting our law enforcement agencies while ensuring that our constituents are protected from undue interference in their privacy.

Mr WATT (Everton—ALP) (2.52 pm): Like my colleague the member for Waterford, I also rise to speak in support of the Telecommunications Interception Bill. This bill complements the Commonwealth legislation which provides a national scheme for the legal interception of telecommunications for use in criminal investigations. The Commonwealth legislation ensures that the same accountability measures apply to all law enforcement agencies—right across the nation—which use the telecommunications interception powers that it bestows. The measures that must be followed include requirements regarding the keeping of records of agencies' use of the powers and reporting on agencies' use of the powers. Queensland is the only state or territory in Australia that does not currently have legislation that complements the Commonwealth regime. It is true that this has prevented Queensland law enforcement agencies from obtaining warrants to intercept telecommunications to investigate serious crimes occurring only within Queensland's state borders. The decision not to have such legislation in Queensland was not a decision taken lightly.

This government has a proud record in fighting crime. We have increased our police numbers to over 10,000. We sit above the national average for our police to population ratio. We have established new task forces to fight crime in particular areas and communities. We have armed our police force with the latest equipment to protect them in the line of duty. As a result of these measures, crime rates in Queensland have fallen. Since 2000-01, the overall crime rate in Queensland has dropped by 24 per cent. Since 2003-04, offences against property have dropped by 30 per cent. They are massive reductions in the level of crime that is being inflicted on Queenslanders each year.

In light of this commitment to fighting crime, the Queensland government's decision to not introduce complementary legislation regarding telephone tapping must have been based on a good reason. And the reason was a good one. We on this side of the House believe that citizens have a right to privacy and that there needs to be checks and balances against the abuse of powers by each arm of government, especially when those powers are as intrusive as telephone tapping. We have checks and balances on the actions of the parliament, the executive and the judiciary. Similarly, there needs to be checks and balances on our law enforcement agencies, including our Police Service and the CMC.

Unfortunately, that concern has not been shared by the opposition and, until recently, was not shared by the federal government. The Commonwealth legislation provides only what is called back-end accountability, meaning that law enforcement agencies' use of telecommunications interception powers is only inspected after they have been used. The Commonwealth does not currently provide for any accountability measures at the front end of the interception process, before they are used.

The Leader of the Opposition and other speakers from the opposition today have mentioned that the opposition has previously introduced a number of private members' bills seeking to complement the Commonwealth legislation. The Beattie and Bligh governments opposed those private members' bills and held out against pressure from the previous Howard federal government to introduce complementary legislation. As I have mentioned on a couple of occasions, this was for good reason. The Commonwealth's legislation and the private members' bills introduced by the opposition previously contained inadequate protections against the misuse of these intrusive phone-tapping powers.

The key protection that the Beattie and Bligh governments have wanted to see included in this legislation for some time now is the use of a Public Interest Monitor, known as a PIM. That is a very important protection against the misuse of these powers. From our point of view, the PIM plays a role at the application stage, when law enforcement agencies are applying for warrants to make use of telephone-tapping powers. The PIM is involved in the application stage to ensure that those powers are only granted when reasonable. The PIM has the ability to object to the misuse of those powers and to argue that there is insufficient reason for a warrant to be granted, and there are various other protections against the misuse.

I heard the Leader of the Opposition call our steadfast support for the role of the PIM at the application stage a squabble. We think it is far more important than that and far more serious than a mere squabble. I found it very interesting to hear the Leader of the Opposition, as a former member of the Liberal Party—that party that ceases to exist in Queensland anymore—take that stand. I would have thought that a Liberal—a capital 'L' Liberal, someone who is committed to the rights of individuals—would support the use of a PIM in this important process. I am very surprised that any former member of the Liberal Party would support legislation without these kinds of protections against misuse by the state against individuals.

Mr Moorhead: Moggill's next.

Mr WATT: Yes, we will be very interested to hear what the member for Moggill has to say on this, as someone who also held the exalted position of Leader of the Liberal Party in a former career stage.

We have consistently supported the PIM and we continue to do so today. We are very gratified and pleased to see that we at last have a federal government with the good sense to see that the PIM has an important role in this process. As I mentioned, the previous Howard federal government steadfastly opposed our request to have the role of the PIM inserted in the Commonwealth legislation. I suppose, when we think about it, it is not really surprising that the Howard government opposed the involvement of the PIM. After all, this was the government that presided over the Haneef affair.

Members will remember the incident involving the former Queensland based doctor, Dr Mohamed Haneef, whom it was ultimately demonstrated was subject to trumped-up accusations of being involved in a terrorist activity. I had a look today again at the report of the inquiry into the Haneef affair, and it confirmed my thoughts that telephone tapping was one of the mechanisms used by the Federal Police in their investigation of Dr Haneef. We can only wonder what would have happened to that investigation and whether it would have proceeded as far as it did had a PIM been involved in the application by the Federal Police for phone-tapping powers.

When looking at that report, I was even more interested to see what act of parliament was used by the Federal Police to seek the telephone-tapping warrants and what act those warrants were granted under. It was the Commonwealth Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act. That is the very act that does not provide for a PIM. It is the very act that Queensland legislation must be consistent with to survive a constitutional challenge.

I think all Australians were disappointed by what happened in the Haneef affair. We are all in support of our law enforcement agencies taking action to keep our communities safe. As I have already mentioned, the Queensland government has a proud record in fighting crime and making our communities safer, but the Haneef affair does show that our law enforcement agencies do not always get it right—just as parliament does not get it right all of the time and just as the executive does not get it right all of the time.

Just as it is important for the activities of politicians to be subject to oversight, whether that be by the Auditor-General or the CMC, it is also important for our law enforcement agencies to be subject to proper scrutiny of their activities, especially activities as invasive as telephone tapping. That is exactly what the PIM does. Even with the PIM, a judge retains the power to grant a warrant for telephone tapping. The judge can still grant that warrant even if the PIM objects to it, but at least the public interest is protected by ensuring that there are some checks and balances in the granting of these warrants.

I am very pleased, as I mentioned, that the federal government last year agreed to amend this legislation to provide for Queensland's use of the PIM. The PIM is an important guardian of the public interest to make sure that these invasive powers are not misused. I am very pleased to be able to speak in support of a bill which will have the role of the PIM set down in legislation to protect the rights of Queenslanders while at the same time allowing our law enforcement agencies to get on with the job of keeping our community safe. I commend the bill to the House.

Dr FLEGG (Moggill—LNP) (3.00 pm): Before I begin my speech on this bill, I want to place on record the severe impact that Brisbane's flooding is currently having on my electorate, which currently has all its major roads cut. Many residents are cut off completely and are unable to get in or out. One of our local schools has been evacuated, and there is considerable impact on the lives of people from this pretty severe weather event that we are experiencing here in Brisbane.

I have spoken in this place in previous debates on telephone interception powers. It has really been a disgrace that Queensland has dragged the chain in providing this essential tool for crime fighting when the other states of Australia have been so far ahead. It is pretty amazing that, having previously twice tried to get this government to support telephone interception powers, both the Beattie and the Bligh governments have rejected opposition proposals to do so repeatedly. Here belatedly we are debating their own proposal.

They have spent that time hiding behind things such as the Public Interest Monitor, but the overriding consideration here today is that we do face in this country, and particularly in this state, serious problems relating to law enforcement, organised crime and official corruption. We have seen within Queensland an array of people charged with or convicted of matters relating to official corruption. This has occurred in a setting where the CMC has basically had one hand tied behind its back in fighting it. In Western Australia where these powers exist we have seen the extent to which it has protected the interests of Western Australian citizens by allowing some of these matters to be investigated and prosecuted.

There is an issue in this state with organised crime, and there is a serious issue in this state with drug trafficking, with amphetamine production and with illegal bkie gangs. We cannot expect the police force or the CMC of this state to fight those very well organised criminal opponents if we do not allow them what is basically an accepted practice in policing for the fighting of organised crime and official corruption.

We can have an ongoing debate in relation to privacy matters and the like. No doubt no member in this chamber would like the feeling that somebody is monitoring their telephone calls. There is a legitimate argument in relation to protecting people if there is political or other misuse of such powers, but the reality is that these are powers that we do need to have in this state. The price of not having them may already be quite high. The opposition is very pleased to see that finally the government has accepted something that for years now it has been rejecting. We will never know what has gone on in this state undiscovered because our enforcement agencies did not have the tools they needed to fight it.

I think it is a matter of record that both the Police Service and the CMC have been calling for these powers. I do not believe for a minute they are calling on them because they want to listen in to everybody's conversation. They are our state's professional law enforcement bodies, and they are the ones who understand what tools are necessary to enforce the law. It is a bit late and it is certainly something that Queensland needs, but certainly on this side of the House we have strong support for the use of these powers by our law enforcement, particularly as we are moving into a high-tech world. The issue of identity fraud is a major issue in this country. I am aware of cases, as I am sure other members are, of substantial organised identity fraud, of fraud associated with electronic banking, teller machines and the like, and these are growing trends.

They are coming out of organised crime—in some cases, overseas organised crime gangs such as Asian based crime gangs. I think the average man on the street in Queensland would like to feel that we have given our law enforcement agencies the best weapons to try to defend them. I think as time

goes on and technology improves these issues will become more and more important. It is pleasing to see that today, albeit too late and albeit having rejected a number of opposition attempts to bring in these powers, the government has finally done so.

Mr STEVENS (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (3.07 pm): I rise to speak to the Telecommunications Interception Bill 2009. I am glad that it has finally been introduced into the House. I am very pleased to support the bill. It has been a long time coming. We have tried to put it through before, but finally the government has come to its senses and brought this much-needed legislation into the House.

We live in a very different world from the one that I grew up in, and I can see now the need for surveillance and interception powers to be given to the police and other law enforcement agencies. The legal system that we have today quite clearly gives every opportunity for the accused person to make sure that they are innocent until proven guilty. And that is a good thing. We have one of the best legal systems based on that premise. But it allows all the you-beaut genius solicitors in the courts at every opportunity to use every inch of the law to make sure that their clients are not convicted with every means at their disposal. To combat those capacities that those you-beaut solicitors have in this day and age, we need every opportunity for our law enforcement agencies to be able to prove their case beyond any reasonable doubt. From my perspective, it is all good news in this legislation.

From the Gold Coast's point of view, we are a hive of activity. In the entertainment and night-life industry, we do attract certain people who will flout this state's laws and this country's laws in relation to—

Mr Wallace: Do they pay their restaurant bill?

Mr STEVENS: I take the interjection from the member for Townsville, or wherever you are from.

Mr Wallace: Thuringowa.

Mr STEVENS: Thuringowa. It slipped my mind for the moment.

Mr Moorhead interjected.

Mr STEVENS: Yes, they do end up paying a lot of money for the drugs, which obviously the member feels is a good thing to do.

Mr O'Brien: Do they pay their restaurant bills?

Mr STEVENS: They pay their restaurant bills, as we do. The people of the Gold Coast are concerned about the bikie groups that are moving to the Gold Coast and the drug dealers who are taking over certain places and selling their illicit goods. This legislation will give our law enforcement agencies the opportunity to prove beyond reasonable doubt that these people are carrying on these activities and should be removed from our society.

The objectives of the bill seek to allow the Queensland Police Service and the Crime and Misconduct Commission to apply for telecommunication interception warrants under the Commonwealth Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979 for use in the investigation of serious and heinous crimes. Only those who are guilty in this society of ours should fear this legislation.

The bill was first introduced into parliament on 10 February this year but, due to the state election being called and the subsequent dissolution of parliament, it has been reintroduced into the 53rd Parliament. I am proud that it is back before the House.

The Crime and Misconduct Commission, the Queensland Police Service, the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee and the opposition have called for telecommunication interception laws to be implemented in Queensland for many, many years. There is a need for the loosening of the restrictions that have bound these law enforcement agencies.

Currently, law enforcement agencies in Queensland do not have direct access to telecommunication interception powers and this has restricted their accessible powers to telecommunications interception. Some of the cases that we have before the courts now might have been aided greatly had this legislation been in place previously.

Currently, law enforcement agencies in Queensland do not have direct access to telecommunication interception powers. This will be changed as a result of this legislation passing through the House. The Telecommunications Interception Bill 2009 is required so as to comply with the Commonwealth's Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979 with regard to the record-keeping, reporting and inspection obligations imposed under the Commonwealth act when engaging in intercepting telecommunications under a telecommunications interception warrant.

This bill gives law enforcement agencies the access to apply for telecommunication interception warrants under the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979. There are limitations to current listening and surveillance devices used by law enforcement agencies. The current ones can pick up only one side of a conversation, not both sides. They need to be physically installed by an officer who is trained in this area.

There are concerns about the limitations of not being able to utilise a telecommunications interception device when investigating crimes relating to paedophilia on the internet. These limits have substantial effects on law enforcement agencies, such as the CMC, to investigate and eventually prosecute internet predators and paedophiles.

It is also the objective of this bill to ensure there is a front-line role for the Queensland Public Interest Monitor—the PIM—prior to the approval of a telecommunications interception warrant. The government has been hiding behind the Queensland Public Interest Monitor for quite some time and used it as a reason for not introducing this legislation in the 52nd Parliament. I now believe it has been forced to do something given the amazing amount of illegal bikie activity going on under this government's nose. Nothing has been done about it. It has finally given in to public and media pressure to proceed with this surveillance legislation.

The Public Interest Monitor, which was created under the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act and the Crime and Misconduct Act, is the inspecting entity of the Queensland Police Service, which ensures that applications for intrusive enforcement powers, such as surveillance powers and covert search powers, come before it for scrutiny and to determine the appropriateness of the granting of these powers. This means that the Queensland Police Service and the Crime and Misconduct Commission are to consult with the Public Interest Monitor regarding applications they have before them for telecommunications interception warrants. Personally, I believe that this scrutiny can only be a good thing. It will ensure that the powers that are obtained as part of a telecommunications interception warrant are not misused.

Some of the offences for which telecommunications interception warrants may be obtained and issued to the appropriate law enforcement officer are: murder, kidnapping and similar offences; serious drug import and export offences; acts of terrorism; child pornography; specified offences involving loss of life, injury and trafficking in prescribed substances where the offence carries a minimum of seven years imprisonment; specified offences involving planning and organising such as theft, handling stolen goods, bribery or corruption of government officers and tax evasion which are punishable by at least seven years imprisonment; money laundering offences; telecommunications offences; and computer related crimes.

The issue of terrorism is a major area of concern—this has been brought home recently to the Gold Coast—where the use of telecommunication interception powers and warrants would be very useful, as communication interception is the key to eliminating the development of any potential terrorist activity. The monitoring of such acts is fraught with danger, as we have seen. Telecommunication interception between parties is critical for successful apprehension.

One of the reservations I do have regarding the granting of these telecommunication interception warrants is that all of us have a democratic right to privacy. We must not go to the extreme when utilising these powers. We certainly do not want to see a repeat of the early American days of J Edgar Hoover having power over all his politicians—according to American history—through the misuse of his telephone interception powers.

Mr Moorhead interjected.

Mr STEVENS: I am happy for you to listen to my conversations.

Mr Hoolihan interjected.

Mr STEVENS: I am sorry about the tips; unfortunately of late they have been a little bit wanting.

Privacy for the community is of utmost importance. If a person has nothing to hide, there is no problem. My concern is that one person might be rightly monitored and apprehended but we must ensure that, because of association, the other party in the communication loop is not caught up and considered guilty just by association. These legislative changes will bring Queensland into line with a national scheme which streamlines telecommunication interception powers.

I have to say that that great Labor icon in the west, Brian Burke, is a classic example of the reluctance to see these interception powers introduced previously. I notice that the lobbyist legislation will be coming through shortly as well. Maybe there is some connection with those sorts of things. I can assure members that as an opposition we have no problems with telephone-tapping powers being used wherever necessary. Specific evidence is critical to making a case, and the use of telecommunication interception powers can be a necessary procedure to use for this purpose.

I would also like to comment that in government the LNP and former coalition introduced bills to give law enforcement agencies telecommunication interception powers. I will run through those bills that have been presented by the LNP and coalition since 1998. When it was in government it brought in the Telecommunications (Interceptions) Queensland Bill, which lapsed due to the election that year. Whilst in opposition, in 2003 it brought in the Telecommunication (Interceptions) Queensland Bill, which lapsed at the 2003 election. We have been very lucky in having all these early elections! In 2004, the Terrorism and Organised Crime Surveillance Bill was voted down by the government.

In 2007 the Terrorism, Organised Crime and Anti-Corruption Surveillance Bill was also voted down by the government. The Labor Party has failed the people of Queensland, and its failure to support past bills introduced by the opposition has had consequences that we are seeing today. There is a lady on the Gold Coast who is very lucky the police were using interception powers in another case because it saved her life in a case that has been to court. The husband and his lover have been convicted of plotting. That was discovered just by accident. This legislation will give the opportunity for other people's lives to be saved. I am pleased that the government has finally realised the need for this legislation, and it has been a long time coming. Again, the Bligh Labor government has followed the good legislative directions set by the Liberal National Party. I am very happy to support this bill as it goes through the House.

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—LNP) (3.20 pm): I am pleased to rise today to speak to the Telecommunications Interception Bill 2009. This bill has finally made it to the House and, quite frankly, it is an absolute disgrace that it has taken so long. The only way that Queensland law enforcement officers were able to access telephone interception powers was when there was a joint Federal Police investigation underway in Queensland and we could piggyback onto those operations. In fact, those instances showed that TI powers were, of course, very good. This government is reactionary, and that is the problem we have all the way along the line. It has to wait until we are in crisis before something gets done. We are in crisis in relation to drugs and crime. Motorcycle gangs are completely out of control, and finally the government realised that it had to try to get this legislation through.

It is the same with the state's finances. You get into trouble and then you spend and spend and spend. It is the same with water: you are in trouble and then you have to go out and spend. Now that we are in trouble with crime, you have to go out and finally do something about it. And what have you achieved? The Commonwealth legislation that has been in place in other jurisdictions around Australia has very tight conditions which monitor and record the interception applications and the processes. Annual reports go to the Commonwealth minister and the Commonwealth minister also has to do a report each year. In other jurisdictions the Ombudsman is doing the reporting at the back end. So given that you have all of the documentation there what you have done is that you have basically held out for some philosophical—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ryan): Order! I remind the member about the use of the word 'you' and ask you to direct your comments through the chair.

Mr HOBBS: The government has held out for philosophical reasons only while crime continues to grow. How many people out there have had their lives destroyed by drugs because you people have not had the guts or the courage to put in place this legislation? You only used the excuse in terms of having the PIM in the legislation, and you know as well as I do—I have been here long enough to know—that Premier Peter Beattie was totally opposed to TI powers. He was the only one. Many members on the other side wanted to see some of these powers come in, but because he had some philosophical belief he basically held it up for that time. The reality is that it is not going to make a damned bit of difference whether or not the PIM is in the legislation. The reality is that the applications will be approved and will go ahead and you will not even know until later on, and that is the simple reality of the issue. Sure you can say that you have the accountability in the legislation, but the reality is that the drug problem is out of control and motorcycle gangs are riding up and down the streets everywhere, and what are you doing? You are all sound asleep!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HOBBS: The government has been sound asleep, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have to pull you up again and remind you about the use of the word 'you'. Direct your comments through the chair.

Mr HOBBS: The government has been asleep at the wheel, like it has on many other issues. Will the government fund this? That is the question I ask the government: will it fund it? Will it have the courage and the guts to find the money? We are talking about real money, and this is an issue that the minister has to ensure happens. We are passing a bill through the House today which we all support. While it is late, we support the process the government has undertaken. But is the government going to put in place all of the funding that is required for this? Those opposite might hope they do, but I will bet that there is going to be some short-changing in Treasury when it happens.

This bill will require all of the necessary interception information technology. It needs all of the technical support, a monitoring unit, a systems administration unit, a legal and affidavit preparation unit, evidence preparation, record management, and transcription. There will be specialist costs such as interception lines being set up, connections, communication maintenance, associated fees, software maintenance and office running costs. There will be millions and millions of dollars involved in this. Had the government put this in place earlier when the finances were better, it would be a lot easier. We need an assurance today that these telecommunications interception processes will in fact be fully funded to ensure that the legislation is effective.

One issue that has not been mentioned is that obviously these powers are to be used for serious crime and serious offences, and that is obviously quite reasonable. I do not think that anyone should feel sorry for people who are involved in this type of activity when we think about the dreadful flow-on impact it has on our children, our kids and our grandkids who are involved in this type of thing—the victims of this sort of crime. I do not think we should be easy on those people who ruin those lives at all. We have been the butt of jokes around Australia because we have not been able to keep up the pace in terms of fighting crime in this state.

When talking to judges and lawyers down south about this issue and our lack of telecommunications interception powers, they shake their heads and say, 'You haven't got TI powers in Queensland! Why haven't you got them?' In response we say, 'Oh well, there's some philosophical reason for it.' They would say—and they did say—'Oh well, it's no wonder then a lot of the drugs syndicates and crime people are heading to Queensland, is it?' That is what was happening. They were heading up here. They are here now; let us hope we can make sure that we can reduce the impact that these people have on the lives of Queenslanders. It is a disgrace that it has taken so long for this legislation to be introduced. There have been flimsy excuses, but let us hope that this legislation is fully funded so that it can become a workable piece of legislation.

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (3.27 pm): I have to say that the member for Warrego tells a pretty good fairytale, because I listened to the same speech that he listened to and there were no such comments made. Perhaps he might like to sell it to Enid Blyton and we will publish it for children in the future.

In relation to the Telecommunications Interception Bill, there will be a number of people who will stand up in this House today and talk about the bill that the state parliament has introduced. But how many, other than looking in the dictionary, really know that the act that we have to comply with is the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979? Before anyone stands up and talks about how good this is, I suggest that every one of them run off and have a look at it, in particular section 63. It is okay to talk about back-end accountability, but the good part about this is that Queensland has held out steadfastly—and I do not doubt that there will be all sorts of other ignorant claims made—for the PIM, which is an up-front accountability. The PIM has to be consulted before any application is made. I do not believe that this act in the way that the PIM is being used still fully protects the individual, but we are bound by what the Commonwealth has passed. The Commonwealth passed its own act in February, I think, of this year which allowed this as mirror legislation to proceed. There was some claim made about Queensland dragging the chain. Sadly, Queensland has had to drag the chain of the Howard government for the last 11 years in relation to telephone interception because it would not agree.

That allowed the Howard government to treat people like the Commonwealth police treated Mohamed Haneef. How many people in this House would like to be treated the way Haneef was treated? At least, at the front end, the PIM will know that someone is going to have a warrant issued that will impinge on their freedoms.

Mr Schwarten: Hobbs wouldn't want it. He wouldn't want to be treated like that.

Mr HOOLIHAN: Nobody really understands how little freedom was granted by the Howard government. It did not want any freedom. If members looked at some of the Commonwealth terrorist legislation, they would be terrified to see that they lived in a country that allowed that sort of legislation to be passed by our parliament. I am not a bleeding heart. We have to protect our citizens, which is the aim of a true democracy. But in doing that, you cannot trample over the rights and privileges that are granted in a democracy.

Regardless of the ridiculous comments that are made in this House, Queensland is a democracy. Of all of the states, Queensland held out to allow its citizens to have some protection. We sit here and listen to comments like those we just heard made by the member for Mermaid Beach. He uses words, but he knows absolutely nothing about that of which he speaks. It is almost like fairy floss. It looks like there is something there, but there is not very much substance. I agree with the member about listening to his tips, because none of the horses he backs win.

The time for this bill has come. It came because the Rudd government, in conjunction with the Bligh government, reached an agreement with the PIM, which only Queensland has. No other state has a PIM, because no other state wanted it. Perhaps they did not want to treat their citizens fairly. But we have a PIM, and the PIM's role is included in this bill. As I said, I believe that there are still areas where this bill does not fully protect the individual but, as I said, we are bound by the Commonwealth act.

The bill will give power to our Police Service and to the CMC. All of those powers will be tempered by a common-sense approach, which is set out in this bill, and will be protected by the PIM.

Mrs SCOTT (Woodridge—ALP) (3.32 pm): The Telecommunications Interception Bill brings two things to law enforcement in Queensland. Firstly, it enables both the police and the CMC to have the powers to gather evidence, through undercover surveillance, through our telecommunications network, of serious crime. On the other hand, the bill puts in place safeguards to ensure that there is adequate protection in the system to ensure there are no inappropriate breaches.

The sticking point to the introduction of this additional crime-fighting measure has been the request to the federal government for a change in its legislation to allow Queensland to have the oversight of the Public Interest Monitor to warrants. It is a very serious matter to intercept private communication between individuals without their knowledge. If the public are to have confidence in these latest measures—which we all admit are very invasive—then we need to ensure that we have these safeguards. Although the inaction of the Howard government to amend the federal legislation had continued for some five years, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has agreed that the Commonwealth will amend the laws to include the involvement of the Public Interest Monitor.

The ability of our law enforcement agencies to disrupt and bring before the courts those involved in organised crime, drug trafficking and many forms of corruption and crime networks that use the internet, such as paedophilia networks, will be greatly enhanced by the addition of these interception powers. Some six years ago or so I dealt with a case involving the partner and child of a serious offender who was involved in an outlaw motorcycle gang. That experience gave me an insight into this world of crime. These people are ruthless and violent and their networks, like the tentacles of an octopus, extend everywhere.

The amount of drug trafficking in Queensland is extensive and our young people are being preyed upon, often in a very sinister way. Our law enforcement agencies need to have every avenue and every tool at their disposal to fight against these extensive crime networks—but not in a *carte blanche* way where there are no checks and balances. This bill provides that watchdog provision in the role of the Public Interest Monitor. I have pleasure in adding my support for this legislation.

Ms CROFT (Broadwater—ALP) (3.34 pm): It gives me great pleasure to speak in support of the Telecommunications Interception Bill 2009. This legislation will enable the Queensland Police Service and the Crime and Misconduct Commission to apply for telecommunications interception warrants under the Commonwealth Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979 for the investigation of serious offences.

The federal government has established a telecommunications interception regime that will allow state law enforcement agencies to access telecommunications interception warrants but only where there are appropriate state provisions in place to ensure that the recording, reporting and inspection obligations outlined in the Commonwealth legislation are followed. This bill sets out those obligations.

The bill is divided into three substantive procedural parts. Part 3 imposes the substantial record-keeping obligations on the Queensland Police Service and the Crime and Misconduct Commission in respect of any warrants they seek to have issued. They must make records of each interception and the use made of intercepted information and report such information to the state minister in relation to each warrant. In addition, they must report annually on the numbers of applications made and warrants issued and provide information about the effectiveness of the warrants. The state minister must give copies of the reports to the federal Attorney-General, who is required to table a report annually in the Commonwealth parliament containing the information provided in the state annual reports.

The unique aspect of this proposed Queensland legislation is the involvement of the Public Interest Monitor in the application process. The PIM is appointed under the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 and the Crime and Misconduct Act and it already plays an important role in applications involving intrusive state law enforcement powers. For example, the PIM is consulted before, and is present at, hearings of applications brought by Queensland authorities in respect of surveillance powers and covert search powers. Additionally, the PIM has been provided a further role in hearing applications for terrorism related control orders and preventive detention orders.

The PIM is important in providing the high standard of checks and balances to these powers that the Queensland public expects and deserves. For five years, this government lobbied the Howard government to include this important safeguard in the Queensland telecommunications interception legislation and for five years this request was rejected out of hand. That is why we were so pleased when the Rudd government was elected to office in Canberra. There were a number of measures where we had no cooperation from the Howard government in providing the best possible laws for the people of Queensland. This was a significant issue. Prime Minister Rudd immediately saw the benefits of the Queensland scheme and approved the involvement of the PIM as we had requested.

On 3 December 2008, barely a year after Kevin Rudd was elected, the federal government introduced legislation to support the proposed Queensland regime. The Commonwealth amendment act replicates this bill's provisions concerning the PIM and further provides protection for laws in Queensland that authorise or require PIM involvement.

The safeguards provided in the bill are twofold. The PIM has involvement at the front end, as I have outlined previously, by being consulted before, and being present at, hearings for warrants. However, there is a further inspection role after warrants have been issued that further protects the public interest.

Together with part 3, part 4 of the bill provides the back-end accountability requirements established under the Commonwealth's legislation. Part 4 establishes inspecting entities to inspect both the QPS and Crime and Misconduct Commission records, and ascertain and report on the agency's compliance with its obligations under part 3. The PIM will be responsible for inspecting and reporting on the QPS and the Parliamentary CMC will provide the same function in respect of the CMC.

Telecommunications interception is a highly effective tool for law enforcement agencies. Some of the real benefits are the access to highly probative and useful investigative material and also, importantly, the potential to protect our law enforcement agencies from safety risks. Our Queensland police and CMC investigators often place themselves at considerable risk when investigating organised crime and serious criminal offences, and any tools that can help minimise those risks must be welcomed. However, telephone interception is also highly intrusive and a significant impost on the rights of citizens. That is why our government has insisted on such robust measures to protect the privacy of Queenslanders when considering this legislation. This government is satisfied that the bill brings the correct balance of rights and obligations to provide our law enforcement officers with the most effective tool yet in their arsenal of powers to investigate serious crime in this state.

I would like to congratulate the Attorney-General, the police minister and the Premier for the way in which they have worked to bring this legislation finally to the House. Their departments have also worked closely with Commonwealth authorities in developing both this and the Commonwealth legislation and are to be commended for the collaborative way in which they have approached this task. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—LNP) (3.41 pm): Today I rise in the House to contribute to the debate on the Telecommunications Interception Bill 2009, which was reintroduced by the Premier, the Hon. Anna Bligh, the member for South Brisbane, on 22 April 2009. In the explanatory notes we learn that the bill addresses two objectives. It will enable the QPS and the Crime and Misconduct Commission to apply for telecommunications interception warrants under the Commonwealth Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979, otherwise known as the Commonwealth act, for the investigation of serious offences. Secondly, it will do so in a manner that provides a role for Queensland's Public Interest Monitor, or PIM, prior to and at hearings of applications for interception warrants to represent the public interest and test the validity of applications. This bill will achieve its objectives by providing for the recording, reporting and inspection regime required by the Commonwealth act. In addition, it requires the involvement of the PIM in the interception warrant application process.

As honourable members have already heard from the Leader of the Opposition, the honourable member for Surfers Paradise, and other LNP members, we on this side of the House support the bill. As a matter of fact, we have a long history of supporting telecommunications interception by complying with section 35 of the Commonwealth Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979. We understood the need for a national scheme to allow our law enforcers to intercept telecommunications in a lawful manner and to ensure a degree of uniformity in relation to supervisory and accountability requirements.

On four occasions the opposition has offered provisions that would have complied with the federal government act as it stood. In the past decade three private members' bills were introduced by the opposition and one bill was introduced while in government but lapsed due to a general election being held—the Telecommunications (Interception) Queensland Bill 1998. When in opposition in 2003 we introduced the Telecommunications (Interception) Queensland Bill, in 2004 the Terrorism and Organised Crime Surveillance Bill and in 2007 the Terrorism, Organised Crime and Anti-Corruption Bill. All of those were voted down by the Labor government.

Despite strong recommendations back in 1999 from the Queensland Crime and Misconduct Commission and the Queensland Police Service for improved measures to interrupt and identify grave, unlawful activities, Labor would not budge. It would not budge even though it was noted that Queensland's crime investigation capacities were restricted by the lack of interception powers. It really is disgraceful that the Labor government has taken so long to introduce this legislation when it had so many legitimate opportunities to do so over the past 10 years. To deny Queenslanders legislation that is so important for detection and disruption of organised crime is plainly immoral.

'Come to Queensland', Premier Beattie would coax. Come to Queensland because we are soft on crime! The bad guys must have been rubbing their hands together with glee. These are bad guys and girls that we are talking about. Murder, kidnapping, serious drug import and export offences, acts of terrorism, child pornography and money laundering are just a few of the offences for which interception warrants may be obtained. However, I wish to highlight the fact that in Queensland our hardworking police have had to do without these powers, while the rest of the country has had them for a number of years.

Once again the government has let down our dedicated and under-resourced police by not making it a priority to bring Queensland laws into line with the rest of the country. Since my election as a member of the Queensland parliament, of which I am duly proud, on numerous occasions it has come to my attention that one of Labor's trademarks—shall we say it is in its DNA—is to deliberately let

Queensland trail behind the rest of Australia. Despite the Smart State catchcry of the past decade, there were many instances in which Queensland was quite simply playing catch-up. Here we have yet another example of that.

In September 2008, the Police Service Administration and Other Legislation Amendment Bill was debated and passed, allowing Queensland police to participate in national information-sharing initiatives and to facilitate the exchange of information between the QPS and other police services in the Commonwealth. The electorate of Currumbin joins the Tweed at the New South Wales border, and the removal of those existing legislative barriers, while most welcome, was a very overdue move. The frustration for our police in not being able to track intelligence in a seamless way and bring criminals before the courts because of this hindrance was often relayed to me by officers.

We have already heard government members ranting and raving about the involvement of the Public Interest Monitor being the reason they could not proceed with legislation in years gone by. The real reason is that they did not have the political will to advance the cause for law enforcement as did other states in Australia. We have actually heard government speakers accuse the opposition of political game playing, when in truth they have been playing the game to the detriment of the general public for years. If it was good enough for other states to adopt earlier legislation, why not Queensland?

In 2007 the Commonwealth Attorney-General's report observed, amongst a raft of other items, that telecommunications interception has proven extremely useful in investigating major drug cases, particularly where it is necessary to identify targets in organised crime. With this history in mind, I ask the question of this government: how many criminals could have been put behind bars during the period of this government's inaction to implement these laws? How many drug dealers could have been locked up and deaths from avoidable overdoses prevented? How many paedophiles and serious sex offenders could have been intercepted and removed from our suburbs? How many innocent children need not have been molested and their young lives scarred forever? Overall, how many lives could have been saved if this government had actually upheld its responsibilities and obligations to protect the people of Queensland? I would suggest that, if available, the number would shock the House and, even more, the victims, their families and friends.

Last weekend the *Gold Coast Bulletin* published an article that other members have mentioned, titled 'Phone bug saves life in murder plot'. The article outlines how the life of a Gold Coast woman was saved by Victoria Police who had bugged a public phone as part of a completely unrelated investigation. According to the report, the woman's husband used this very phone in Melbourne to ring his lover and outline his plan to drown his wife on the Gold Coast, making it look like an accident. Drownings do occur on the Gold Coast and they are a very tragic thing, but for somebody to plan to deliberately drown another person is disgraceful indeed. This man's lover's comments indicate quite clearly that she knew full well of his intentions to create a drowning accident for his wife. He was subsequently arrested on the Gold Coast and extradited to Melbourne to face charges of conspiring to murder and has since been found guilty by the Supreme Court of Victoria. This is a good example of why Queensland needs these laws.

The effect of organised crime in Queensland, and particularly organised motorcycle gangs, could have been seriously curtailed on the Gold Coast if these laws had been available years ago. It is widely thought that members of organised gangs, such as the Lone Wolf bikie gang, located unfortunately in my electorate in Currumbin, have chosen to move to the Gold Coast and Queensland because we lacked telephone-tapping powers that are in place in other states.

Bikies have featured prominently in the news in recent times as the number of gang members have faced our courts over a range of heinous crimes. Their shocking acts of violence have instilled fear into law-abiding citizens and caused the Premier to announce that her government will bring in tough new laws to combat their lawless activities. We are still waiting to hear just what form the new laws will take. However, the legislation before us today is a move in the right direction.

Perhaps these telephone interception powers could have saved Mr Holmes, from my Currumbin electorate, from barbaric torture. Honourable members may remember this story. A father of three, David Holmes was associated with the Lone Wolf bikie club. He was abducted from his Elanora home at 5 am on 3 November 2007 and taken to the Currumbin rock pools, situated in the very tranquil Currumbin Valley. After he had been tortured for seven hours by several assailants, Mr Holmes suffered the trauma of having both earlobes cut off with a Stanley knife. Members of this bikie gang cut off his entire left ear and left him bleeding profusely in a gully miles from home.

Although Mr Holmes refused to lay charges, his assailants have been charged with kidnapping, torture, grievous bodily harm, acts intended to maim and possession of a dangerous drug. Whilst the message here is pretty clear—do not mix or mess with bikies—the question is raised as to whether such vicious acts could have been stopped if the QPS had access to the powers that we speak on in the House today. Would this man and his family have had to go through all this pain and suffering?

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms van Litsenburg): Order! Could the member enlighten the House whether this matter is still before the court?

Mrs STUCKEY: No, it is not before the court. They have been charged.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Have they been convicted?

Mrs STUCKEY: They have. They have been convicted. They have been charged with all of these offences, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr Dick: If they are not convicted, you shouldn't be talking about it. It is sub judice. If it is before the courts, you shouldn't talk about it.

Mrs STUCKEY: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am quoting exactly from newspaper articles that have been in the paper this week.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: If the matter is before the court, it is sub judice and should not be spoken about in the House.

Mrs STUCKEY: When our police have been—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs STUCKEY: I am not speaking about it.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Perhaps we need to just retract those comments.

Mrs STUCKEY: I am more than happy to retract what has not been said publicly in a newspaper, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Anything that is sub judice should not be spoken about.

Mrs STUCKEY: I am more than happy to withdraw anything that has not been publicly said.

Mr Messenger: Do we have freedom of speech in this parliament anymore?

Mrs STUCKEY: I thought we had freedom of speech. It is to be hoped that police will be able to infiltrate the activities of these sorts of individuals earlier if they have access to this legislation.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Burnett, your comments are a reflection on the chair. Would you please rescind them?

Mr Messenger: I withdraw them, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Currumbin.

Mrs STUCKEY: May I continue? Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Without doubt, this legislation does raise significant issues of privacy which the opposition has considerable respect for. I note that these are acknowledged in the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee's *Alert Digest* of February 2009, where it makes some considerations and references to the minister as well. I would like to close my short contribution with the words of the honourable member for Gregory, and that is that this legislation will take the handcuffs off the police and place them firmly on the criminals, and we are very pleased to support it.

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (3.54 pm): The Telecommunications Interception Bill 2009 will enable the Queensland Police Service and the Crime and Misconduct Commission to investigate some very serious offences. The bill will bring Queensland into line with the Commonwealth, whose legislation allows interception of this type to be used as a vehicle to record, report and investigate these same offences. It also means that the same forms of suitability and accountability will be required when undertaking interception with a warrant.

At the moment Queensland is the only jurisdiction which does not have legislation to complement the Commonwealth's Telecommunications (Interception Access) Act. This means that the Queensland Police Service and the CMC are unable to perform as agents of interception—that is, to gain a warrant to perform this action. Even more important, I believe, is the fact that after the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee made its recommendations to enact the telecommunications interception legislation, the PCMC also recommended that these laws must allow the Public Interest Monitor to participate in the application process for an interception warrant. As the opposition well knows, this is the very reason we have not supported past events.

The PIM must be the participating independent body utilised to protect any possible discrimination occurring. This is an added safeguard to prevent unnecessary interceptions, and the fact that an amendment will be made to overcome any invalid jurisdictional issues is to be commended. Representing the public interest in such applications is mature and is unique in Australia. The fact that organised crime and criminal networks are more sophisticated only means that it is so much harder for law enforcement agencies to target them without these interception capabilities. And Queensland, as I said, is the only state in Australia without this tool to combat crime and corruption.

Let us remember, too, that we are not talking about shoplifting here but the investigation of serious offences like murder, kidnapping or terrorism, as has been mentioned. This action is cost effective, and it is a secure investigative tool that will contribute magnificently to successfully completing crime investigations, while at the same time ensuring privacy and the protection of civil liberties.

Ms BATES (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (3.56 pm): I rise to support the introduction of the Telecommunications Interception Bill 2009. The opposition does not oppose this bill, given that the main objective is to finally enable the Queensland Police Service, the QPS, and the Queensland Crime and Misconduct Commission, the CMC, the same powers that every other state in Australia currently has to use telecommunications interception to assist in the investigation of serious crimes.

This bill satisfies the requirements of the Commonwealth Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979, the T(I&A) Act. The absence of Queensland legislation meant the QPS and the CMC were not recognised as interception agencies and therefore were unable to obtain a warrant under the T(I&A) Act to intercept telecommunications for serious offences. The Commonwealth act sought to establish a comprehensive national scheme for lawfully intercepting telecommunications and required that states had their own complementary legislation which complied with the T(I&A) Act.

For 10 years, the CMC, the QPS, the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee and the Liberal National Party have lobbied for this legislation in Queensland. However, the Queensland government had not allowed the use of telecommunications laws to be enacted unless it allowed for an independent body to become involved in the process to obtain a warrant. In every other state the Ombudsman has provided the back-end support, ensuring that interception agencies complied with the law. No other state has demanded a further layer of bureaucratic red tape of accountability in the warrant application process. This new layer of red tape has, until now, been inconsistent with the Commonwealth's T(I&A) Act and would therefore have been invalid under the Commonwealth Constitution.

In December 2008, the Commonwealth amended legislation to allow an additional independent body, other than the Ombudsman, the powers to obtain telecommunication warrants. The Commonwealth's Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979 allows for government law enforcement agencies to apply to operate a telephone interception. Under this act, state law enforcement agencies can apply for a warrant to intercept telecommunications whilst investigating criminal activity. As far back as 2001, state law enforcement agencies such as the QPS have battled to get telephone-tapping powers similar to their other state and federal counterparts.

Telephone interception is an important tool of law enforcement and in the wake of increased crime activities in every state it is preposterous that Queenslanders have had to wait 10 years for the Labor government to introduce this legislation. Only now has this government decided that it needs to curtail organised criminal activity in response to alleged crime links between bikie gangs, yet those opposite voted against similar private members' bills by the LNP. This legislation should have been passed 10 years ago with or without the PIM as another fortress for crime fighters to deal with. Every other state in the country utilises the services of the Ombudsman, but this state Labor government has held us back in antiquity. So much for the Smart State!

For Queensland to be the only state in the country without these powers, even when it has been on the agenda and ignored by the government, has meant that organised crime and violent crime may well have been able to flourish with the tacit approval of this government, whilst those opposite sat on their hands and refused to listen to experts such as the QPU and the CMC. One wonders what secrets may have been revealed over the past 10 years that this government sought to hide if these telephone-tapping powers had been introduced.

Why did this government ignore repeated calls from the state's top crime-fighting agencies for telephone powers to combat organised crime? As far back as 2001, my colleague the member for Southern Downs, Lawrence Springborg, sought to introduce a solution to this stalemate of an independent monitor by a show-cause clause to a Supreme Court judge. Why is it that the Ombudsman is all that is required to tap phones in any other state legislation but Queensland held out and wanted another gatekeeper as well? It begs the question that the government of the day does not trust the Ombudsman to carry out the very same duties the government has delegated him.

Again, in October 2003 Lawrence Springborg introduced a private member's bill—the Telecommunications (Interception) Queensland Bill 2003—to increase police powers to tap phones for serious offences such as drug trafficking, and yet again the bill was defeated by those opposite. In 2004, the Queensland Crime and Misconduct Commission, the CMC, continued the push to get powers to intercept telecommunications, and indeed in the same year it released a report claiming that Queensland's current telecommunications laws were impeding police investigations into organised crime networks. That report stated—

The absence of TI powers severely impeded the capability of Queensland law enforcement to make serious inroads into organised crime markets and effectively target key organised groups.

The last major report into organised crime in this state was the 1999 Project KRYSTAL report, and there have been many changes to organised crime activities since this report was published. As far back as 1985, the Commonwealth announced it would give the states the power to tap phones as part of a crackdown on Australia's illegal drug trade. However, our law enforcement agencies have been unable to utilise these powers due to the state Labor government pushing for a request to allow a monitor, such as the Public Interest Monitor.

It is all too easy to blame the federal government for not allowing amendments to the Commonwealth act as the reason it has taken Queensland 10 years to enact this legislation. If it was good enough for other states, it should have been good enough for Queensland. This is typical of the attitude of this government and its 'too little, too late' approach on tough issues such as law and order. It can be summed up by the flippant comments made by former Premier Peter Beattie. It was reported—

'There is no need to change the laws because adequate (Federal Government) protection currently exists,' Mr Beattie said. 'How many authorities do you want to tap your phone?'

That is from the AAP on 5 October 2001. Now, this government wants to establish a role for the Queensland Public Interest Monitor in the telecommunications interception warrant application process.

First, we have a government that has stalled on this legislation for 10 years, citing that we already had the protection under the Commonwealth—which only applies to crime where it crosses state and federal bodies—and the government has held up applications and pleas from those in the know to add yet another layer of bureaucracy on top of the difficulties of obtaining a warrant for this purpose, when every other state has no problems with the Ombudsman being the referee and umpire. The Commonwealth Attorney-General's annual report for the year ending 30 June 2007 observed—

There remains a consistent view among agencies that telecommunications interception continues to be an extremely valuable investigative tool. Agencies have again noted that evidence gathered through the execution of a telecommunications interception warrant can lead to the successful conclusion of an investigation in circumstances where alternative evidence is uncorroborated, unavailable or insubstantial.

In particular, telecommunications interception has proven extremely useful in investigating major drug cases, particularly where it is necessary to identify targets in organised crime. Interception is also vital in the investigation of offences that by their nature utilise the Internet, such as child pornography and cybercrime offences.

Further, Mr Anthony Blunn AO, in his 2005 *Report of the review of the regulation of access to communications*, said—

Access to telecommunications data is, and for the foreseeable future will remain, fundamental to effective security and law enforcement.

I refer to the Queensland Parliamentary Library's research brief titled "Telephone Tapping" Powers in Queensland', which said that in the past the CMC has argued that where there was no joint operation between federal and state agencies it has been unable to gain access to intercepted information obtained by interstate or Commonwealth interception agencies. Historically, the CMC has had to resort to using covert techniques, which puts its operations and operatives at higher risk due to the lack of telecommunications interception powers.

Examples of alternative detection and investigation measures used by the QPS under the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 of surveillance devices include listening devices, visual surveillance and tracking devices to investigate indictable offences under the authority of a warrant issued by the Supreme Court of Queensland. Surveillance devices versus telecommunications interception have their limitation, and indeed placing listening devices can place the officer installing them at risk and even then record only one side of the conversation, whereas telecommunications interception can capture both sides of a telephone conversation, making it much more useful than mere listening devices.

Serious offences where telecommunications interception warrants can be sought are defined in section 5D of the T(I&A) Act and include: murder, kidnapping and similar offences; serious drug import and export offences and other serious drug offences; acts of terrorism and related specific offences; child pornography related offences; specified offences involving loss of life, injury, or trafficking in prescribed substances where the offence carries a minimum of seven years in prison; specified offences involving planning and organising for theft, handling stolen goods, bribery or corruption of government officers, tax evasion et cetera and which are punishable by a minimum of seven years in prison; money laundering offences; telecommunications offences; certain computer related offences; offences related to people smuggling with exploitation, slavery, sexual servitude and deceptive recruiting; certain child sex tourism type offences; and ancillary offences such as aiding, abetting and conspiring to commit other serious offences.

This bill is merely the private member's bill brought to parliament on 9 October 2003 by Lawrence Springborg, though without the additional bureaucracy. The opposition has tried four times to introduce this legislation, but each time those opposite voted it down. When the coalition was in government in 1998, the Telecommunications (Interception) Queensland Bill 1998 lapsed due to the election. When we were in opposition in 2003, the Telecommunications (Interception) Queensland Bill 2003 lapsed due to the election. In 2004, the Terrorism and Organised Crime Surveillance Bill 2004 was voted down. In 2007, the Terrorism, Organised Crime and Anti-Corruption Surveillance Bill 2007 was also voted down.

The only difference in this legislation is that the PIM, and not the Ombudsman or a Supreme Court judge, performs the principal inspector role. So why has it taken the Beattie-Bligh Labor government 10 years to bring forward this legislation? In 2004 Premier Beattie told parliament that the Queensland government could not introduce telephone interception powers with appropriate safeguards

due to constitutional limitations. That the Commonwealth had to alter its own legislation just for the Smart State is ludicrous when every other state in this country has been utilising telecommunications interception to fight crime for years, whilst Queensland sat on its hands.

Since 2004, when the private member's bill put up by the coalition had lapsed, the Liberal National Party has introduced further private members' bills seeking to provide the CMC and the QPS with the telecommunications interception powers that everybody else had. The Terrorism and Organised Crime Surveillance Bill 2004, introduced by Mr Springborg, said that constitutional limitations meant that under his bill the PIM would have no involvement at the application stage but would provide back-end accountability through inspections and reports. Mr Springborg said that the back-end safeguards proposed by the opposition, such as inspecting and reporting, were the same as those under telecommunications interception laws of any other Australian jurisdictions. In relation to other Australian state laws which did not have a front end for their inspectors, he stated—

If all of these issues about ... lowering of the rights, standards and liberties of people at least were so great, one would wonder why there has not been a universal revocation of telephone interception powers in other Australian jurisdictions.

When the Public Interest Monitor—the PIM—was established in 1977 by the then coalition government under the PPR Act, its intention was not to bog the QPS or the CMC down with additional constraints. In fact, it was introduced to allow warrants for listening devices. At that time it was applicable under state law only and had no application elsewhere. Where the Ombudsman had held this role in telecommunications interception warrants in every other state, the inclusion of the PIM as another layer of bureaucracy is likely to significantly increase the PIM's workload and there would need to be careful consideration given on how best to implement these powers.

When introducing the amendments into the House of Representatives, the Commonwealth Attorney-General said that the T(I&A) Act already requires the decision maker to consider a number of matters before issuing an interception warrant, including the public interest in protecting people's privacy from excessive or unnecessary intrusion. It was noted that any submission by the PIM would be an additional consideration to be taken into account by the decision maker, but it can be outweighed by other matters that must be considered.

Will the inclusion of another layer of Labor bureaucracy hold up urgent warrants and entangle the QPS and the CMC in further red tape when they have effectively been in the Dark Age for 10 years with no access to interception warrants? This Labor government has played politics for too long on TI powers. We have to question just how many lives could have been saved and how many young people could have been spared from drug addiction had we had these powers sooner.

In my electorate the local police in Mudgeeraba do a fantastic job with already limited resources. The thin blue line is stretched on the Gold Coast with police to resident ratio far and away below the rest of the state. Police have already had to deal with resourcing issues. The fact that this government has taken so long to introduce this bill to provide them with the same tools to fight organised crime as other states is appalling. I support this bill, which unfortunately has been a long time coming, and I am certain that our crime-fighting heroes will also welcome liberation from the archaic and backward lack of legislation in the Smart State.

Mr DICKSON (Buderim—LNP) (4.11 pm): I rise today to speak to the Telecommunications Interception Bill 2009. At the outset I would like to point out that it is the opposition which initially introduced this bill. We have tried on at least three occasions to have this bill introduced into the House to give the law enforcement agencies telecommunication interception powers.

The policy objectives of the Telecommunications Interception Bill 2009 are to enable the Queensland Police Service and the Crime and Misconduct Commission to apply for a telecommunications interception warrant under the Commonwealth Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979 for the investigation of serious offences and to do so in a manner that provides a role for the Queensland Public Interest Monitor, PIM, prior to and at hearings of applications for interception warrants to represent the public interest and to test the validity of applications.

The Commonwealth's T(I&A) Act requires amendment to recognise the Public Interest Monitor's involvement in the interception warrant application process under the Queensland legislation. In December 2008 the Commonwealth introduced legislation to clear the way for Queensland to enact telecommunications interception legislation that gives the PIM a role in the interception warrant application process. The proposed role for the PIM and its provision for a front-end accountability role is unique to Queensland. No other legislation provides a front-end layer of accountability to enable an independent body to participate in the warrant application process. The coalition is happy to support legislation that allows an independent body such as Queensland's PIM to participate in the application process for an interception warrant in order to represent the public interest.

Currently, Queensland is the only state not to have telecommunication interception legislation, the absence of which means that the QPS and CMC cannot be declared to be interception agencies as only an interception agency can obtain an interception warrant under the T(I&A) Act. Neither the QPS nor the CMC can currently obtain a warrant to authorise the interception of telecommunications to assist them in the investigation of serious offences within Queensland.

The CMC has had its hands tied during investigations where in some instances it is often unable to gain access to intercepted information obtained by interstate or Commonwealth interception agencies. This then forces the CMC to resort to the use of covert operatives, who are placed at a higher risk because of the limits on the intelligence able to be obtained due to the lack of telecommunications interception powers. This legislation will enable the police to utilise available technologies to enhance investigation outcomes and crime prevention. Digital telecommunications and technology give criminals the tools to coordinate their criminal activities which mainly go undiscovered by police. In particular, the mobile phone has become an extremely effective and relatively inexpensive tool in the carrying out of crimes.

The bill will provide access to technology for police in order for them to maintain an edge over the criminal element. Telecommunications interception is also a valuable tool to police in siege and hostage situations. These situations often require urgent and immediate dialogue between the negotiator and the subject.

The Queensland Police Service does a terrific job and is the primary law enforcement agency in this state. It provides assistance to the community when necessary in times of emergency, disaster and crisis. It has served the people of Queensland well, and until now has been hobbled by the lack of interception laws. The government has indicated that there will be considerable costs in introducing telecommunications interception capabilities for the QPS and the CMC. These costs relate to a federal telecommunications interception scheme buy-in fee of up to \$1.1 million; annual contributions to the scheme of up to \$110,000; procuring and developing the necessary interception information technology; establishing premises for monitoring; recruiting and training staff for communications and technical support; a monitoring unit; a systems administration unit and a legal and affidavit preparation unit; evidence preparation; record management and transcription; specialist costs; and the additional imposts placed on the PIM and the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Commissioner. However, this is common-sense and important legislation that is long overdue for Queensland. I have to ask why the government has delayed the introduction of this bill into the House.

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (4.16 pm): It is with pleasure that I rise in support of the Telecommunications Interception Bill 2009. This bill will enable the Queensland Police Service and the Crime and Misconduct Commission to apply for telecommunications interception warrants under the Commonwealth Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979. Telephone-tapping powers are certainly a strong police power. While I am sure they are a very effective tool in crime fighting, to the wider public they can be seen as a concern without proper checks and balances. This concern is not a reflection on our Queensland Police Service. In fact, there are many surveys that show public confidence in our Police Service is high. This is a legitimate concern in knowing that they, ordinary citizens, have some rights and protection under these strong powers.

Telecommunications interception is governed by the federal regime set up in the Commonwealth act. For many years the state Labor government fought with the federal Howard government to ensure we had those proper checks and balances. I have always supported police having phone-tapping powers but only with the safeguards needed for people's privacy. The state Labor government has always supported telephone-tapping powers as long as it was with the safeguard of the Public Interest Monitor, the PIM.

Today, with the support of the Rudd federal government, that is what we are delivering. These powers will be subject to the involvement of the Public Interest Monitor, an independent barrister who represents the public interest. I have met with a PIM officer who spoke about their role and the work that they do. I can assure honourable members they certainly made me aware of just how much they are needed.

The Public Interest Monitor appears before judges when law enforcement agencies are applying for surveillance device warrants or covert search warrants. Now the PIM can be used when applying for telephone-tapping powers. What this means is the PIM will represent the public interest by testing applications for phone tapping against the statutory criteria. They can cross-examine witnesses and make submissions to judges. As I said, the meeting I had with the PIM certainly made me more aware of why we really should have this protection in place to ensure the tool is being used responsibly and in a situation where it is warranted. I think that members of the community expect a representative like this in place representing their interests.

At various times over the years when this topic has been in the media or on the parliamentary agenda I have deliberately raised it at meetings and with people around the Springwood electorate. When I spoke about phone-tapping laws to people in the community, they all agreed the power was necessary but they also wanted to know there were appropriate checks and balances and that there is some form of protection for them.

This bill strikes that correct balance. The checks and balances are not just related to the role of the PIM. The bill also sets out obligations on the QPS and CMC to keep comprehensive documents relating to interception warrants. They will need to make records of each interception and where this

information is used. The bill also establishes inspecting entities to inspect QPS and CMC records and ascertain and report on the agency's compliance. These obligations also add to strengthening the checks and balances.

Another matter raised with me when discussing this issue was for what type of offences or when could police use this power. Telecommunication interception warrants can be applied for in the investigation of a serious offence. Murder, kidnapping, child pornography, armed hold-ups and drug offences are certainly included and readily come to the mind of those in the community. Other offences include money laundering, cybercrime or computer related offences. I am sure as more and more people use their computers for a wide variety of activities in their everyday lives that we will see more and more people become victims. Another crime is tax evasion. There are quite a range of crimes where the community would expect these powers to be used.

I am extremely pleased to see the police get this power, and having the PIM involved in this process is certainly unique to Queensland—unique, but, I believe, very necessary. I congratulate the previous Attorney-General and the previous police minister for continuing to take up the fight to ensure we get this unique safeguard. I thank the Prime Minister for having the common sense to work with the state government on this very important police power and very important community safety tool. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—LNP) (4.21 pm): The Telecommunications Interception Bill before the House states that it has two objectives. They are: firstly, to enable the Queensland Police Service and the Crime and Misconduct Commission to apply for telecommunication interception powers under the Commonwealth Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979; and, secondly, to provide a role for the Queensland Public Interest Monitor prior to and at hearings of applications for interception warrants.

Presently, Queensland is the only state in this country that does not have access to interception powers as a consequence of the Labor government's insistence on the Public Interest Monitor being part of the process of obtaining warrants. As such, the Crime and Misconduct Commission and state Police Service have been hindered in their effective and efficient use in fighting serious crime, with untold consequences to Queensland and Queenslanders.

Legally, the ability to intercept a telephone conversation is purely the province of the federal government, which has for many years had a regime under Commonwealth legislation to allow state based law enforcement agencies to better track, monitor, collect evidence and prosecute those who are suspected and ultimately convicted of serious crimes. The legislation derives in essence from section 34, which states that state law enforcement agencies cannot access interception warrants unless the federal Attorney-General makes a declaration under that section committing them to do so. That declaration can only occur if the state body has provided for the agency to comply with recording, reporting and inspection obligations stipulated in section 35(1) of the Commonwealth act. As stated in the explanatory notes, this bill will achieve its first objective by providing for the recording, reporting and inspection regime required by the Commonwealth legislation.

The second objective of the bill is achieved by involving the PIM as stated in the explanatory notes by: firstly, requiring the QPS and the CMC to consult with the PIM before making an application under the Commonwealth act; secondly, entitling the PIM to appear and make submissions to hearings on the warrants; thirdly, requiring the QPS and CMC to fully disclose to the PIM all relevant matters, both favourable and adverse, to the issuing of a warrant; and, fourthly, enabling the PIM to report to the state minister about any noncompliance by the QPS or CMC with the state or federal acts.

In the past, this Labor government has delayed the use of this very important tool on the basis that it required the Public Interest Monitor to be a part of the process before it would allow the police and the CMC to access telecommunication interception powers. Despite numerous attempts and requests from the opposition and even following the introduction of a number of bills by the opposition, the government steadfastly refused to provide this essential tool to our law enforcement officers. It was not until December 2008 that the federal Attorney-General introduced legislation into the lower house which removed the concern about Queensland legislation being deemed unconstitutional and in conflict with the federal act.

I want to consider in particular the role the CMC has in this state in protecting Queenslanders from serious crime and have the House consider what this state and Queenslanders have missed as a consequence of this government's intransigent attitude to the PIM. The website of the Crime and Misconduct Commission states that crime matters come to it through the Crime Reference Committee, which comprises six members—the chairperson of the CMC; the assistant commissioner, Crime; the Queensland Police Commissioner; the Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Guardian; and two members of the community. It is charged with the investigation of major crime and together with the Queensland Police Service encompasses organised crime, paedophilia and other serious crimes.

When we consider the Commonwealth legislation, interception warrants can also only be granted for what it terms 'serious crime', including murder, kidnapping, drug importation, child pornography, serious fraud and the like—in essence, exactly what would be considered major crime in Queensland and would have a significant impact upon Queenslanders. When we stop and consider the types of crime that interception warrants are granted for under the Commonwealth act, we simply have to ask ourselves why, when every other state in this country has had interception powers for some time via the Commonwealth legislation, Queensland has failed to provide that level of protection not just against the immediate impact of the crime but also against the long-term impact of being a victim of such serious crime.

Why would a state hold back from the CMC and the QPS the power to phone-tap in relation to child pornography? Why would a state government withhold the tool deemed essential by the CMC and the QPS to arrest those people who are involved in child pornography? Under the Crime and Misconduct Act, major crime encompasses organised crime involving offences which carry a sentence of not less than seven years imprisonment, paedophilia involving sexual offences against children or child pornography or serious crime where the penalty is not less than 14 years imprisonment.

This is a further reinforcement of the serious nature of criminal activity that the CMC and the QPS deal with. Again we have to ask the question: why has it taken so long for this government to react to significant and repeated requests from the CMC and the QPS for this very simple but critical tool to be given to them? The Premier made this comment in her second reading speech—

The Queensland government lobbied the former Howard government for five years for the inclusion of the PIM in the warrant application process for Queensland telecommunications interception powers.

The Premier's statement implies that, prior to five years ago, there was no push to provide Queensland law enforcement agencies with telecommunication interception powers. It implies that during the length of time that this Labor government has been in power in this state telecommunication interception powers did not become relevant, except in the past five years. That is a clear implication from the terms used by the Premier in her second reading speech.

When we read the document *Project KRYSTAL: a strategic assessment of organised crime in Queensland*, published jointly by the Queensland Crime Commission and the Queensland Police Service in June 1999, we get a very clear picture about the status of organised crime or serious crime at that point in time in Queensland and, more particularly, how those bodies believe those issues should be tackled. The foreword to this document says in part—

No law enforcement crusade against organised crime can be properly planned or executed without first having a clear, up-to-date and accurate understanding of what organised crime in the modern Queensland concept really is, and what can realistically be done to counteract it.

It goes on again in the foreword to say—

Organised criminal activity cannot be effectively countered or eventually defeated unless law enforcement is given the powers, resources and support it needs from government, or until the community as a whole becomes less ambivalent in its attitude towards and more hostile in its stance against the threat organised crime represents to our way of life.

The document then goes on to deal with a number of areas as at June 1999, including organised crime, and provides background material to what it terms Italian organised crime, Russian organised crime, outlaw motorcycle gangs, Romanian organised crime and the list goes on and on. Of interest, it deals in some depth with illicit drugs and in its recommendations provides potential solutions. Of recent times the media has been full of outlaw motorcycle gang issues, particularly in New South Wales, and certainly Queensland has, of recent times, had its fair share of such incidents. Page 23 of the Project KRYSTAL document states in relation to outlaw motorcycle gangs—

It has long been believed within the law enforcement community that OMCGs engage in a diverse range of organised criminal activities as a group. Numerous national and state intelligence assessments conducted during the past decade have supported this notion.

It goes on—

The involvement of OMCG members in criminal activities is beyond doubt or dispute.

It goes on—

OMCG members have been known to sub-contract activities that form part of a core criminal activity to non-OMCG members, for example, the purchasing of precursor chemicals used in the production of amphetamine, amphetamine 'cooking' and cannabis crop sitting.

As I said earlier, there is also a significant discussion with regard to illicit drugs including heroin, amphetamines, cannabis, cocaine, stimulant and depressant drugs, steroids and pharmaceuticals. In fact, the question of drugs is looked into at page 43 and this comment is made—

Nightclubs have been identified as the best source of early warning indicators of drug consumption. As noted previously, a range of drugs are distributed through some nightclubs and other licensed premises throughout Queensland.

We in this state at this point in time have a tendency to believe that the issues facing our nightclubs, outlaw motorcycle gangs and indeed organised crime activities are in essence events of recent times as opposed to an historical continuation of problems that have been arising in this state and ongoing for years. Project KRYSTAL puts paid to that, bearing in mind that it was produced almost exactly 10 years ago—June 1999. It states in the document that it is an abridged version of the results of the investigation. One can only contemplate what the full document contains by way of evidence and details of the criminal establishment of our community as of the date of its production. The telling point in this report, which, as I said, is from June 1999, is contained in the recommendations paragraph and reads—

That law enforcement agencies seek legislative changes—particularly in the area of telecommunications interception, civil based recovery of proceeds of crime, and covert operations/witness anonymity—and appropriate resources to support them.

Surprisingly enough, it appears that in June 1999 the Queensland Crime Commission and the Queensland Police Service put it to the Labor government in a clear, concise document that they required telecommunications interception powers under the Commonwealth legislation to do what they do best—that is, deal with serious crime in this state. Yet here we are in almost June of 2009—10 years later—with little having been done to provide the law enforcement officers of this state with this very important power and, equally importantly, to protect the people of this state from organised crime and serious crime.

This government has now delivered to Queensland and to the QPS the powers they need. So when we consider the lost 10 years since the report was issued, we have to ask: what was the cost of the delay and how many have suffered by this government's attitude, which has not been taken up by any other jurisdiction in the Commonwealth? I am certain the Attorney-General has read the Project KRYSTAL report and is well aware of its terms, but the document clearly indicates as far back as 10 years ago—this was a step that has been echoed on many occasions since then by the CMC and the Police Service—that telephone interception powers were a clear tool needed.

When one reads the document and reads the figures—10 years old now—of the profits that organised crime derives as a consequence of their actions, one can almost guarantee a tenfold increase in those figures. We have lost 10 years in this state and we have lost many Queenslanders and we have lost many young people because this government has sat and done nothing at a time when technology has moved forward and at a time when we have been chasing our own tail and failing to give the law enforcement agencies of Queensland what they want—what they need—to beat back the tide of criminal activity in Queensland. Though we support the bill, the feeling on this side of the House is that it is almost too late because so much damage has been done by a government bereft of an understanding of what is needed to deal with organised crime in Queensland.

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—LNP) (4.35 pm): I am happy to speak on the Telecommunications Interception Bill 2009. This is a bill that is finally going to give Queensland police the powers to lawfully intercept phone calls. This bill seeks to bring Queensland into line with the rest of Australia's states and territories, and at the moment Queensland's law enforcement agencies do not have direct access to telecommunications interception powers. Had the government adopted the bills introduced by the LNP and the former coalition on three previous occasions, our law enforcement bodies may already have these powers. The failure of the Labor government to support such powers has resulted in a growth in organised and serious drug crime over the past 11 years. Why has it taken this government so long to introduce this essential legislation?

Queensland's law enforcement bodies could have had these powers if this government had supported Jeff Seeney's Terrorism, Organised Crime and Anti-Corruption Surveillance Bill in 2007. This government also had the chance to support Lawrence Springborg's Terrorism and Organised Crime Surveillance Bill in 2004 and his Telecommunications (Interception) Queensland Bill in 2003. But, as we know, it did not. The Borbidge government in March 1998 first introduced the Telecommunications (Interception) Queensland Bill 1998 which lapsed in May 1998 after the election. It has taken this government 11 years since that first Borbidge government bill to get up to speed with the opposition on this matter—11 years to finally give our law enforcers the laws which could have brought a lot of criminals before the courts.

The federal Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act has been in action since 1979 and sought to establish a comprehensive national scheme for the lawful interception of telecommunications. Virtually every other state and territory in Australia has already put telephone interception powers into their jurisdiction, and it really begs the question: why? Why has this Labor government taken so long to finally give in and introduce these powers in question? It really begs the question of who and what this government has been trying to protect for all of these years.

For too long Queensland law enforcement agencies have been left out in the cold on this matter and it should not have taken this long to be given the legislative right to join the nation's fight against crime. Law enforcement agencies in Queensland have been calling for these powers but have been consistently ignored by this government. Frankly, it is appalling that it has taken this long to give the Queensland Police Service and the Crime and Misconduct Commission these powers. The federal

T(I&A) Act ensures that all Commonwealth, state and territory law enforcement bodies covered are subject to equivalent supervisory and accountability requirements when engaging in intercepting telecommunications under a telecommunications interception warrant. Due to constitutional implications, if a state's law enforcement agencies want to intercept telecommunications, the Commonwealth T(I&A) Act requires that the relevant state has complementary legislation complying with the record-keeping, reporting and inspection obligations imposed under that T(I&A) Act. At present, Queensland is the only jurisdiction not to have such legislation, the absence of which means that the Queensland Police Service and the Crime and Misconduct Commission cannot be declared to be interception agencies.

As only an interception agency can obtain an interception warrant under the T(I&A) Act, neither the Queensland Police Service nor the Crime and Misconduct Commission can currently obtain a warrant to authorise the interception of telecommunications to assist them in the investigation of serious offences in Queensland. For many years, the CMC, the Queensland Police Service and the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee, as well as the Queensland opposition, have been calling for telecommunications interception laws to be enacted in Queensland. However, the Queensland government has not been willing to introduce telecommunications interception legislation unless it allows an independent body, Queensland's Public Interest Monitor—or PIM as it is referred to—to participate in the application process for an interception warrant in order to represent the public interest.

Under the Commonwealth's T(I&A) Act and under the telecommunications interception legislation in other Australian jurisdictions, an independent body such as the Ombudsman provides back-end accountability through inspecting and reporting on interception agencies' compliance with the law. However, no other legislation provides a front-end layer of accountability to enable an independent body to participate in the warrant application process. The problem is that Queensland legislation purporting to allow the involvement of the PIM in the warrant application process may be inconsistent with the Commonwealth's T(I&A) Act, which does not provide any role for an independent body in that process. This means that the Queensland legislation may be invalid under section 109 of the Commonwealth Constitution.

To overcome the constitutional difficulties that could arise from Queensland's PIM providing this extra level of accountability, the Commonwealth's T(I&A) Act requires amendment to recognise the PIM's involvement in the interception warrant application process under the Queensland legislation. In December 2008, the Commonwealth introduced legislation to clear the way for Queensland to enact telecommunications interception legislation that gives the PIM a role in the interception warrant application process. The Telecommunications Interception Bill 2009 establishes the PIM as an inspecting agency to ascertain and report on the agency's compliance with the obligation under the bill.

In the past, both the Queensland Police Service and the CMC were specified to be eligible authorities under the T(I&A) Act. This makes it possible in some circumstances for a Commonwealth or interstate interception agency to communicate relevant information to the Queensland Police Service or to the CMC that has been obtained under a warrant granted to that Commonwealth or interstate interception agency.

The CMC has long argued that where an investigation does not have an interjurisdictional aspect, or does not occur through a joint operation, it is often unable to gain access to intercepted information obtained by interstate or Commonwealth interception agencies. That means that the CMC, owing to the lack of telecommunications interception powers, has had to resort to the use of covert operatives, who are placed at higher risk because of the limits on the intelligence able to be obtained on targets and their associates. How many more criminals would have been caught if both the Queensland Police Service and the CMC had had the power to intercept phone calls? It is about time that this government gave those powers to our law enforcement bodies.

This bill will achieve its first objectives by providing for the recording, the reporting and the inspection regime required by the Commonwealth act. The bill also sets out the guidelines that the Queensland Police Service and the CMC must follow in the course of getting these telecommunication interception warrants.

Privacy issues have been addressed with the inclusion of the Public Interest Monitor—and these are serious issues. However, it is only people who are trying to hide something who really should be concerned about privacy and the Public Interest Monitor. This bill provides a role for the PIM prior to, and at hearings of, applications for interception warrants to represent the public interest and to test the validity of applications. The PIM will be given the necessary powers to appear at hearings and question any person giving information to the issuing authority, which will be an eligible judge of the Federal Court or a nominated member of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

Warrants will be applied for under the Commonwealth T(I&A) Act—the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979—for the investigation of serious offences. Those serious offences include offences such as murder, kidnapping, drug importation, terrorism offences, child pornography, slavery, people trafficking and money laundering to name just a few. Officers of the Queensland Police

Service or the CMC intending to apply for an interception warrant must notify the PIM of the application and give a copy of the application, plus a copy of the supporting affidavit, to the PIM. The applying officer must also make full disclosure to the PIM of all matters, whether favourable or unfavourable, relevant to the application.

The bill also gives the PIM the powers, when it considers it appropriate, to give the minister responsible a report on any noncompliance by the QPS or the CMC with the legislation, or the T(I&A) Act, excluding any warrant information. I have spoken with several police officers who have outlined the very real need for this type of legislation. Sophisticated technology for such purposes has been available for many years and, with the increase in a very sophisticated level of crime, this technology is essential as a crime enforcement measure. It will be a valuable tool in combating organised crime—the types of organised crime that I mentioned earlier, drug trafficking and all the other various organised underworld crime.

Drug trafficking is an indictment on our society and its cost to our community is enormous. It is a cost to human lives, it is a cost to families and it is a cost to the economy. But most importantly, it causes the carnage and wreckage of so many young people's lives across Australia—and these numbers are not reducing; they are growing.

On another issue, last week I was very privileged to be present at the opening of the new police station at Ayr last week, albeit being the third attempt to do so. At that opening, I was very pleased to be able to acknowledge the work that our local police do. Officers in the Burdekin are kept very busy patrolling an area of 945 square kilometres. I thank every one of them for doing such a tremendous, yet often thankless job. They, and all the other police officers, are often underacknowledged for the service that they provide to our communities. Police officers often go beyond their call of duty to help residents in need and I thank them for being so community minded. Across the state, Queensland police officers continue to hold the public's confidence—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Order! I ask the member to come back to the purpose of the bill.

Mrs MENKENS: According to the CMC's latest survey of public perceptions of Queensland police, across the state Queensland police officers continue to hold the public's confidence, despite their increasing workloads. More than 90 per cent of people considered that police were generally well behaved and the public's view of police honesty is at its highest in almost 20 years. These findings are very encouraging. I know that this legislation will certainly support the work that these police officers are doing. I certainly support the hard work and positive contribution of Queensland police officers, and may I congratulate them all.

The officers in Ayr have been handling well the recent community concerns about an increase in violent activity. I commend them for dealing with these issues promptly. However, there are changing demographics across many communities in regional Queensland. That makes the work of police officers much harder. It is good to see legislation in place to assist them in the work that they are doing. The work that police officers do involves making people feel safer in their homes and tackling the issues of violence and juvenile crime in many areas. I applaud the local officer for what has been achieved so far and I urge all local communities to help police in combating the spike in crimes. Communities can help through supplying information to the police and calling the station promptly if they see an offence being committed. When the community stands up and says, 'Enough is enough' and works with the police force, there can be positive results. I also call on the Police Service to acknowledge the many years of loyal and meritorious service that Senior Sergeant Mick Isle has given to the Ayr community.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Order! Member for Burdekin, we are talking about the Telecommunications Interception Bill. I ask you to return to the clauses of the bill.

Mr MESSENGER: I rise on a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: A point of order has arisen. Please take a seat, member Burdekin.

Mr MESSENGER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I would seek your clarification. Standing order 236 states—

A member shall not refer to matters irrelevant to the subjects of the debate or engage in tedious repetition during the debate.

The clarification I ask is whether you are suggesting that the member for Burdekin's reference to matters involving police is not relevant to this debate?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. I will take that under consideration. I call the member for Burdekin to continue in relation to the clauses of the bill we are discussing today, not the local sergeant she was discussing a moment ago, unless it has some relevance to this particular debate.

Mrs MENKENS: I thought this involved the Police Service and police, bearing in mind that police are in our local community and this is a resource and a tool that assists all of our Police Service.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I appreciate that, member for Burdekin. I have listened closely to your speech so far. If you can point out to me where you are discussing the bill and the clauses associated with that, I am happy for you to continue in that frame.

Mrs MENKENS: Because this is legislation that will assist the police.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Certainly. If you continue in that frame in relation to the clause of the bill, that will be very good. Thank you very much.

Mrs MENKENS: This afternoon we have been debating a bill that will bring in real change that I hope will assist local police such as Senior Sergeant Mick Isle who has given to the Ayr community loyal and meritorious service for many years. As a result of this bill, Queensland law enforcement bodies will finally have the authority and additional resources to tap the phones of hardened criminals. It will assist our local police and police right across Queensland who have served, strong and hard, for so many years. I support this very long overdue piece of legislation.

Debate, on motion of Mrs Menkens, adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

South-East Queensland Floods

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (4.51 pm), by leave: We have what is shaping up to be a serious situation emerging in South-East Queensland. I felt it was important for me to update the House on circumstances arising right across the region. Without a doubt, the drought in South-East Queensland is over. We have now experienced the heaviest May rainfall in 15 years across the catchment, with up to 300 millimetres of rainfall in some areas in just the past 24 hours. I have been advised by the Bureau of Meteorology that South-East Queensland has received one-third of its average annual rainfall in the past 24 hours and we expect another 100 millilitres over the next 24 hours, taking the region to half of its annual average rainfall. At noon today the combined dam storage levels had increased to 66 per cent and it is possible that they will reach 70 per cent overnight.

While many Queenslanders have waited for this rain, it does appear that it is coming at a cost to a number of households and businesses. I have just chaired the State Disaster Coordination Management Group, where the Deputy Premier and I were briefed by police, Queensland Health, Emergency Services and the department of transport. We had a hook-up with all of the councils across South-East Queensland. Today there have been road closures in the Sunshine Coast, Moreton Bay, Brisbane City, Ipswich, Logan and Gold Coast areas. At least 50 roads and streets in and around Brisbane are now closed or affected seriously by floodwaters, including the major arterials of the Bruce Highway, Gympie Road, the Ipswich Motorway and the Gateway Motorway. This morning heavy rain in the Caboolture area led to the Bruce Highway being cut off in both directions. The highway is still cut southbound with traffic being diverted into other local roads and delays are significant. Peak-hour traffic is expected to be extremely heavy throughout Brisbane due to numerous road closures and water across roadways. Motorists are asked to exercise extreme caution and remain patient. There have been 22 swift-water rescues in Brisbane today. Now more than ever I appeal to motorists to take care and to families to make sure that their children are nowhere near parks and drains.

The severity of the rainfall and the heavy winds has had a number of serious consequences. A short time ago I was advised that approximately 54 people are stuck in around 20 vehicles in floodwaters at Downey Park behind the Royal Brisbane Hospital at Windsor. Fire crews are now working to source rafts to rescue people from their vehicles. Conditions mean that parents have been asked to collect their children early from schools on the Sunshine Coast and Moreton Bay and access to hospitals has been impaired and homes have now been flooded. Flooding in and around Caboolture and Redcliffe has impacted on both hospitals. While there is no flooding at the hospitals themselves, a number of roads in the areas are now closed and schools and businesses have been impacted, which has had a flow-on effect on staff. Queensland Health has cancelled all elective surgery at the Redcliffe and Caboolture Hospitals as many staff are now unable to access the hospitals. Both hospitals are continuing to liaise with the Royal Brisbane Hospital to take any necessary cases.

In Red Hill, rising water levels at Ithaca Creek have caused students at Ithaca TAFE to be sent home. A number of other schools are impacted. Aspley, Kenmore, Pullenvale, Redbank Plains and Brookfield schools are now completely stranded. There are 481 students remaining at those schools with 65 staff and seven parents. Arrangements are in place now for all of those people to stay at the schools overnight. Nineteen Aspley Special School students and 14 staff camping on Bribie Island have been cut off and efforts are now being made to find them overnight accommodation on the island.

Meanwhile, we have had reports of flooding in the basement of the Supreme and District Court building in George Street. Even here at parliament, *Hansard* reporting may be delayed as some parliamentary staff have been sent home so they are not caught and isolated by floodwaters. I am

advised that the updated *Hansard* will be available early tomorrow. Paniyiri, the Greek festival that was to be held in my own electorate this weekend, has been postponed. Indeed there will be many other postponements or cancellations of major events.

There have been major blackouts across the region. Power supply to around 40,000 homes and businesses has been cut since last night. Currently, about 19,000 homes and businesses remain without power and one-third of these are in the Gold Coast region. Energex has put on extra crews and they are working to restore power as safely and as quickly as possible. As is always the case, our state emergency services have responded magnificently already. My latest advice is that there have been over 2,300 calls to the SES hotline since 5 pm yesterday afternoon. Crews have responded to more than 550 jobs, most of which have involved sandbagging and temporary roof repairs, and 230 of them were in Brisbane. Currently there are more than 130 SES volunteers in the field and Emergency Management Queensland is bringing SES volunteers in from outside Brisbane to support local volunteers. Local disaster management groups in the Sunshine Coast, the Gold Coast, Moreton Bay and Brisbane councils have been activated.

The advice from the Bureau of Meteorology is that the worst of the storms is likely to be over on the Sunshine Coast, but the weather system from that area is moving south. Currently the main areas of concern are Bribie Island, Deception Bay, Caboolture, Brisbane and areas south of Brisbane. The bureau advises us that there is an upper low east of Charleville. It will head east over the next two days and the worst may be yet to come, with gale force winds expected on Thursday night and Friday across the region. Very high seas are also expected, with dangerous beach conditions. Landslides have been reported at Mount Nebo and Mount Glorious, and heavy rains are expected to continue over the next day. There have been some evacuations of residents at The Gap due to a landslide. A second low pressure system may develop on Thursday, with more potential for strong winds and rain.

The State Disaster Coordination Management Centre has now been opened at Kedron. It will remain open and continue to monitor the situation. Plans are in place to deal with the community's needs should conditions worsen overnight. A number of members who are in the chamber and a number who are not represent electorates directly affected by this situation, so I thought it important to update the House. These are very rapidly changing circumstances and many families and individuals will only now be returning to their homes from work. The full extent of damage to property is likely to become known over the next couple of hours.

I expect that our emergency services workers, police, council workers and volunteers are going to have a very rough night. I know that our thoughts will be with them as they are out there keeping the people we represent safe. I wish them all the best of luck as they go about their duties and responsibilities. Overnight we will continue to assess the situation, but already I think it is very good advice that those people in the south-east region who do not need to be on our roads should not be. People who do not need to be going out in vehicles should remain at home. The roads are becoming increasingly clogged, which is making it very difficult for emergency services vehicles and personnel to access people who need assistance.

I will continue to keep the House updated and I know that members from all sides of the chamber join with me in hoping that this situation does not turn out to be any more critical than I have already outlined. I will be briefing the Prime Minister on the situation later this evening.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS INTERCEPTION BILL

Second Reading

Resumed from p. 439, on motion of Ms Bligh—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Dr DOUGLAS (Gaven—LNP) (5.00 pm): My thoughts are with everyone, and if there is anything I can do to help anyone who is affected please ask.

This bill is long overdue and it has been a longstanding policy of the LNP and its predecessor, the coalition. This bill will enable the Police Service to apply for a telecommunications interception warrant. We support the bill.

There is an old Chinese proverb that says, 'Conquering others requires force. Conquering oneself requires strength.' What this bill does is give our modern Police Service a known modern tool of phone tapping that will provide them with the ability to monitor, investigate and collect evidence via the telephone interception mechanism. The ability of the police to obtain these warrants is sufficiently limited by a range of appropriate checks and balances. These checks and balances have been extensively trialled throughout Australia. This is known information.

The bill itself and its details have been extensively summarised by the majority of preceding speakers, so I will not go through them. The member for Mermaid Beach has discussed the role of the PIM and the indications for the awarding of an appropriate warrant. It goes without saying that

Queensland is now in line with the rest of the Australian states. So much for the Smart State claim by speaker after speaker, day after day, year after year in successive parliaments by those on the other side of the House.

In spite of the claims by the member for Waterford today and even yesterday, this bill is very similar to that introduced by the member for Southern Downs in 2003 and subsequently in 2004—the Terrorism and Organised Crime Surveillance Bill. It was a tragedy that this bill was opposed because it was needed urgently then to deal with the change in crime that had occurred and was occurring at the time. One might say that this was a 'known known'. There were few excuses to delay or to obstruct the bill then, and to say that the government now knows that organised crime figures are using the telephone and that the timing of this bill is now appropriate is laughable. Can anyone seriously believe this?

The major excuse that needs clarification is that given by the Premier herself in her second reading speech. The Premier said—

The Queensland government lobbied the former coalition federal government for five years for the inclusion of the PIM in the warrant application process for Queensland telecommunications interception powers.

So I gather that John Howard is to blame and that the Queensland version of the PIM was such a good idea that the police were denied the tools to do their job effectively in a modern world. I heard the member for Keppel saying this afternoon that Queensland held out legitimately for the inclusion of the PIM and that this has saved us but that he is 'not a bleeding heart'. He should tell that to some Gold Coast constituents. But he would say, 'But we have the PIM.'

A horrific incident on the Gold Coast, reported in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* last weekend, clearly shows how a person's life can be saved due to phone-tapping powers. A man has been convicted for planning to drown his wife and was picked up by police when he discussed his murder plot with his accomplice lover on the phone—and it was an accidental intercept. On the weekend of 16 and 17 May 2009 the *Gold Coast Bulletin's* Andrew MacDonald reported Victorian Detective Sergeant Stuart Bailey as saying—

I certainly believe and the jury also believe that without the intervention of Victoria Police and Queensland police this woman would have been murdered.

The Queensland Police Service have welcomed this legislation, with Commissioner Bob Atkinson stating in a Queensland Police Service media release dated 28 August 2008—

Phone tapping will be a valuable tool in tackling major crime in Queensland to which we presently do not have access.

Local police on the Gold Coast need this legislation and it is desperately overdue. More than half of all major incidents involving police in Queensland over the Anzac weekend occurred on the Gold Coast—in fact, 65 per cent. Recent figures from the Police Service annual reports from 1998-99 and 2007-08 show the Queensland average of one police officer for every 429 people. However, the gap between the Gold Coast and the state average is alarming, with the Gold Coast having only one police officer for every 628 people, and the majority of those are in Surfers Paradise. This ratio is nearly 50 per cent below the state average. Furthermore, in 1997 the Gold Coast had one police officer for every 627 people. Overwhelmingly, the majority of those were in Surfers Paradise. This is how far the Gold Coast police numbers have progressed in nine years. It really is disgraceful to see such figures as these.

I hope the government understands the urgency I am highlighting here. We need the Gold Coast to be attended to as a priority for increased and better policing measures and resources. We need a Gold Coast based organised crime squad. We need a permanent Gold Coast based drug squad. We need to double the number of tactical crime squad officers. We need this not only to accommodate the abovementioned inadequacies, which already fall short of state averages, but also to accommodate for the increasing population growth we are experiencing on the Gold Coast and to address the nature of the crime.

The current war we face is not only the global financial crisis but also the drug crisis, and it is this bill that targets this crisis specifically. In case people have not noticed what is going on in the world, the drugs business is a very significant problem. My experience with crime is a 20-year history of a direct connection with the corrective services department and its predecessors as a medical officer in a variety of prisons in addition to my job as a general practitioner. What I learnt in that time is that, to get a conviction, police and parallel organisations need evidence. Crime is not always easy to detect, investigate and prosecute. Criminals are not all stupid, illiterate, lacking organisation and unfamiliar with the modern tools of life. Criminals need to be caught, prosecuted and placed in custodial environments where appropriate.

Australia has a long history of managing crime. For those who may not know, we began as a penal colony just over 200 years ago. Lots of dedicated, experienced officers toiled for years to get modern tools to manage crime in Australia. It has been a foolish, face-saving, ideologically driven mistake to oppose phone tapping in the past in Queensland. The Labor government has avoided its responsibility and has referred its reason to oppose on the basis of the PIM. So let us have a look at the PIM.

I would like to first look at the tenets of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 in section 740, relating to those who can be monitored. It states—

- (1) The Governor in Council may appoint a person (the *public interest monitor*) to monitor—
 - (a) applications for, and the use of, surveillance device warrants, retrieval warrants and covert search warrants; and
 - (b) applications for approvals of the use of surveillance devices under emergency authorisations.

And this is who can be appointed. Section 740 continues—

- (2) The Governor in Council may also appoint as many deputy public interest monitors as the Minister considers necessary.
- (3) The Governor in Council may, in the appointment, fix terms and conditions of the appointment.
- (4) The *Public Service Act 1996* does not apply to the appointment of a monitor.

So who cannot be appointed? These are the people who are specifically excluded. I am sure members have heard this. Section 740 continues—

- (5) A monitor must not be a person who is, or who is a member of, or who is employed in or by or to help, any of the following—
 - (a) the director of public prosecutions;
 - (b) the office of the director of public prosecutions;
 - (c) CMC;
 - (d) the police service;
 - (e) the Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Guardian.

Why would this bill oppose some of these groups being appointed to the PIM? Do some honourable members, particularly on the other side of this House, not realise that it is the norm for those at the coalface in many differing professions to be involved in regulation, investigation and observation of serious offences in all manner of areas? Either the PIM is being set up to fail or it is being inserted as a dangerous obstruction or, worse still, it will end up as a useless rubber stamp. If any of these scenarios are correct—and I suspect option 3 will become the norm—then it is practically a redundant step and a rate-limiting one that could cost lives.

Already we have groups seeking to limit or impede the powers of telephone taps and the PIM. Primarily, this has come from the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties in its submission regarding the PIM in particular. Initially, the council said in a media release—

The PIM should have the right as part of its statutory functions to enter the live monitoring room from time to time so as to monitor continued compliance by police officers with the conditions of warrants that have been issued. I consider that such function could be undertaken without interference with police officers in the course of their operational duties.

Also—

These observations apply with equal force to the PIM's role in monitoring the new telephone tap regime.

This quote also comes from Mr O'Gorman, representing the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties. The media release said—

Mr O'Gorman also called on the Premier to ensure that proper consultation with stakeholders other than the QPS and the CMC occurs before the telephone tap powers are introduced ...

It goes without saying that this bill should have come in after the Stewart royal commission and probably more comprehensively in 1998, and that was well covered by the member for Caloundra. One can only wonder what lives may have been saved and what crime may have been avoided or resolved.

The good thing is that this bill empowers the police to use modern day tools to track and monitor crime. Sadly, crime still occurs despite the fact that we live in a society that has cradle to grave welfare, free health care and longevity and a lifestyle that is the envy of every other country in the world.

The balance between privacy and legitimate intrusion in our personal lives is always a difficult issue. It is not until the situation affects one as an individual that one might say the intrusion was unwarranted. In reality, the majority of people will never be monitored nor even considered for monitoring, as has been stated by the member for Burdekin today.

The law requires evidence to sustain a legal case against an individual. Phone-tapping powers gather evidence and that evidence then incriminates the offending individual by their own words. I accept the Commonwealth act is now complemented by the Queensland legislation we have here today, once it is passed.

It disappoints me to hear the member for Waterford criticise not only the honourable intent of the member for Southern Downs but also his contribution to this legislation coming forward. His claim was based around the checks and balances implemented, he believed, by this new bill. This argument is not only simplistic; it is based around the idea that the retrospectoscope is more powerful than accepting known information at the time and building on it. If this type of logic were to be endorsed—and I would say we should not—then no progress would ever be made. I can say this as a doctor: our medical

knowledge builds and progresses on the shoulders of the giants who have preceded us. We have learned not to deride them and we use the retrospectoscope to review the known and accepted practices and see what changes need to be made. In other words, we build on both the progress and the mistakes of the past.

This absolute and resolute defence of the PIM as the moral custodian of what is right and wrong in the rightfulness of the application of warrants is itself unwarranted. It would seem to me that the government and its members believe that the PIM has the capacity to protect the rights of the individual. I might put it to honourable members that the PIM is only one method. It appears to have impeded legitimate attempts repeatedly by the police to do their job correctly. It has been imposed at this late stage. It will be interesting to see how effective or ineffective it will be to protect people's rights. This was given as the reason to delay the implementation of this act.

What about the rights of the public to have their rights protected? Why did we shackle our police when other states had such powers? So, looking forward and ignoring the retrospectoscope of government members, modern organised crime requires at least some modern tools to collect evidence, for evidence is what is needed to convict a criminal or prosecute a crime.

All agencies called for these powers and this government and previous Labor governments ignored them. I am pleased the government has put it forward today and I am pleased it has come forward early. I would not even ask why it did not occur, I would stop blaming people, but I would implore members to please never let this happen again.

Hon. NS ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (5.14 pm): I am pleased to speak in support of the Telecommunications Interception Bill 2009. Telecommunications interception has long been recognised as an appropriate and effective tool for fighting serious and organised crime. With the passing of this bill, the police will be able to gather vital evidence by telephone communication methods, which are less likely to be compromised during installation and monitoring.

The bill will allow the Queensland Police Service and the Crime and Misconduct Commission to lawfully and independently intercept and monitor telecommunications services, landlines, mobile phones, the internet, SMS messaging and other evolving forms of communications which are used by criminals involved in serious, major and organised crime. Importantly, Queensland agencies will no longer need to enter into joint arrangements with other agencies to gain access to telecommunications intercepts.

In certain circumstances, telecommunications interception will be able to be used in the investigation of serious criminal offences including murder, kidnapping, serious drug offences, terrorism and corruption. Other offences for which telecommunications interception may be used include offences punishable by maximum periods of at least seven years imprisonment where the offence involves risk of loss of life or serious injury, serious damage to property, child pornography, serious loss of revenue to state or federal governments, or organised crime involving certain other offences.

Telecommunications interception will substantially enhance law enforcement outcomes in Queensland by enabling both the Queensland Police Service and the Crime and Misconduct Commission to be declared 'intercepting agencies' under the Commonwealth government's Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979. Telecommunications interception will also assist in increasing timely pleas of guilty and convictions for serious and major criminal offences, which will cut down on court preparation and appearance.

The Victorian police have undertaken comprehensive research on the use of telecommunications interception material in criminal prosecutions. That research has shown the following: Victorian prosecutors use telecommunications interception evidence in 85 per cent of serious criminal cases where such evidence is available; over the past decade, prosecutors have gained a 93 per cent conviction rate on prosecutions where telecommunications interception is produced as evidence in serious crime; and in 90 per cent of successful prosecution cases when the accused pleads not guilty in the first instance, the plea changed to guilty with the introduction of telecommunications interception evidence.

Through the timely delivery of relevant and accurate information captured through telecommunications interception, senior police will be much better placed to make informed decisions which will impact on the conduct and direction of major policing operations, including investigation time frames and resource deployment. Importantly, telecommunications interception will contribute towards enhancing overall community safety whilst also minimising the physical risks normally associated with the placement of undercover and surveillance operatives in the field. It will also assist in the safeguarding of covert methodologies utilised in sensitive police operations targeting major and organised crime.

The incidence of serious, major and organised crime in Queensland is a significant concern for this government and the general community. This bill will ensure that our law enforcement agencies have the technological tools needed to be effective in the fight against organised crime. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (5.18 pm): At the outset, I express my surprise at some of the comments made by the honourable member for Gaven in relation to his concern as to why all sorts of people, including policemen, should not be appointed to be the Public Interest Monitor. As we know, the Public Interest Monitor and the deputies are all lawyers—indeed, they are practising barristers—as indeed they should be, bearing in mind what their functions are. Their functions are to appear at court applications before a Supreme Court judge, to make an application to a judge, to put a submission to a judge, to examine witnesses, to cross-examine witnesses. That is what barristers do. It is not the function of other people, no matter what their talents might be.

I am surprised that the honourable member for Gaven, bearing in mind his legal pedigree in terms of his highly talented relatives, would not know that. No doubt it will be a topic they can converse on when they get together at Christmas at the coast.

I was absent at a committee meeting earlier this afternoon, but before I left prior to lunch the member for Southern Downs, Mr Springborg, made some comments in relation to me with respect to being opposed to the introduction of this bill—'railing against it', to use his words—for a long time. The fact is that the communication from this Prime Minister, Mr Rudd, was only to hand by the government I think either at the end of last year or early this year, but it was not a long time ago and certainly not a long time ago in terms of the timing of the state election.

Once that communication came to us—that is, that the Commonwealth after all these years finally agreed to Queensland's position—Queensland of course was in a position to proceed with this legislation, with which I thoroughly concur. I want to make that point very clear. At the time the election was called, that legislation was at the stage of being prepared.

Listening to members of the old National Party particularly but also, worryingly, some former Liberals, I think they are still in the mindset that the police can do no wrong. They have this blind faith in the Police Service. They fail to realise that in every organisation there are always bad apples. The history of the Queensland police force, as it then was prior to Fitzgerald, indicated that the bad apples were there in greater concentration than in other areas of life.

That was certainly my observation as a practising lawyer over a number of decades in Queensland. Those of us who did live through that Joh era would be understandably very cautious about allowing police to have unfettered power to listen in to telephone conversations. I find it amazing that some of my friends opposite apparently would have been quite happy for that to happen to their own conversations—conversations with their wives, their friends and their factional colleagues within their party. Think about it. Would you like a policeman on the other end of the phone listening to every word that you are saying? It pays sometimes to personalise these things before you give away your rights and your liberties.

I am old enough to remember what happened in years gone by, and I owe it to this House to relate those circumstances briefly to the House, to remind it of Queensland's recent history. God forbid that it might occur again in the future, but these things did happen. Tonight we are debating the balancing of rights—the rights of the community on the one hand to be safe; to bring up our children in safety without the fear of terrorist attacks, without the fear of organised crime, without the fear of the scourge of drugs being spread unrestricted. I understand that and I have that fear. Many of us have children and we all share those concerns. But we also have to balance that against the rights and liberties that we as individuals, as members of society, are giving up in return.

I think the recent history under the Howard government indicates that it felt very strongly that the price was worth paying. Perhaps because of what happened on September 11 in the United States and what happened in Bali and elsewhere the federal government felt that the price was worth paying—that we have to give up our civil liberties because the safety of the community is absolutely paramount. We in Queensland, I feel, accepted that that was true but we also felt that you could have the best of both worlds—that you could have a system which did include a provision for fairness and a fetter against uncontrolled power being given to the police, to ASIO, to the CMC or whoever it might be.

This bill that we now see embodies what Queensland has always said it wanted—that is, what is called a front-end provision, whereby the PIM is involved before warrants are issued, and a back end, whereby an audit process is undertaken. The Parliamentary Library has prepared a tremendous brief on this occasion, as it has done in the past. I point to that brief and I also point to the reservation of one of our committees of this House—the PCMC—which has indicated that it has some concerns about the limited effect of that back-end process. I was not here but I have been told that the honourable member for Everton described very well today how the law was deficient in the Haneef case. That is something that very few people would think was not a serious breach of civil liberty in this country.

I think it is fair to say that we all want organised crime controlled. We all want these pests and these evil people brought to justice, and we all want them defeated. But it is a question of what price we want to pay for it. What I am saying is this: in trying to achieve these ends, we ought to be careful not to discard the rights and privileges that have been hard won over centuries. The right to engage in private communications in confidence without Big Brother playing a part in them is an important right and one that we should cherish before we abandon it too lightly.

I was not alive during the Second World War, during the time of Nazi Germany, but there are many films, especially recently, which indicate the tactics of the Gestapo. In my own lifetime, totalitarian communism ruled large parts of the world and this was the everyday way in which they operated to control society. We have seen the worst of the McCarthy era. I think Australians a long time ago—half a century ago—demonstrated at the ballot box during the referendum to ban the Communist Party what they felt was fair and what was reasonable in terms of elimination of certain rights and liberties.

Australians have a track record in this regard. It goes back perhaps to our convict past. There is an innate value, I think, in the Australian psyche valuing liberty. There is a certain anti-authoritarianism perhaps, but it goes back to those convict days. It goes back to the attitude of the miners, particularly the miners at Eureka. It goes back to the willingness of the diggers in the First World War to fight against the bullies from Germany who were pillaging in Belgium, as they saw it at the time. It goes back to the attitude of our World War II diggers, who saw the same happening again with Germany and again with Japan as well. These were the foundations of the belief that many Australians have when it comes to their attitude to rights and liberties.

I think it behoves us here in this House tonight to bear that in mind when we hear some of the rhetoric from the other side asking why we did not do this five years ago or 10 years ago. What I am trying to get across to the House is that there are people in this House—thank God there are—who do value the rights and liberties that have been hard won, hard fought for and heavily defended by Australians who have fought and many died so that those rights and liberties would stay in place.

I do at times share that healthy suspicion, if not distrust, of authority. I think that this House was right to proceed cautiously as it did and, in fact, refuse to budge in defence of Queensland's rights in this regard even though it was alone amongst the states. I think that it is naive in the extreme to believe that all police, CMC members and ASIO members will do the right thing all the time. The Haneef case shows us that people are human and do make mistakes. That is a very recent and obvious example.

Debate, on motion of Ms Male, adjourned.

MOTION

Drug Free Australia Report; Referral to Social Development Committee

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (5.30 pm): I move—

That the *Cannabis: suicide, schizophrenia and other ill-effects* research paper published by Drug Free Australia Ltd be referred to the Social Development Committee for investigation and report.

To make sure that there is no uncertainty about which report I am referring to, the report is identified as the first edition, March 2009. I believe we have a real problem with cannabis use in Australia, Queensland and the electorates of all 89 members of this House, which has a direct linkage to mental problems, schizophrenia, cancer and health related matters.

Earlier in my life when I was a solicitor I remember doing a lot of Legal Aid work working as a duty solicitor at the Nambour Courthouse representing young people who were brought before the courts for their marijuana use. Yes, they were fined and life moved on. I still know those people. I often meet them in the street in Nambour and we chat; we talk about how they are going. Unfortunately, many have moved on to become patients who are in and out of our psychiatric wards. They say, 'Yes, I'm coping well. I'm sticking to my medication, Peter. I'm doing the best I can, but I was only there recently.' What concerns me is that so many people in our community seem to have the view that marijuana use is not a problem. They view it as a recreational drug which is not a problem and that everyone does it. I believe there is a real problem.

When I was reading the report prepared by Drug Free Australia it really brought home to me the significance of the issues in our community. Perhaps I can take a few moments to quote from the summary. It states—

Cannabis is the most commonly used illicit drug in Australia, with one in three aged 14 years and older using the drug in their lifetime. With the age of first use declining and the potency and popularity of the drug increasing there is clear incentive to ensure we understand the ramifications of its use on our health and communities.

This paper seeks to provide an introduction to the available literature on cannabis and the issues arising from cannabis use today, including: a description of the drug and its use; the increased potency of cannabis in the market; cannabis as a 'gateway' to harder drug use; the issues of dependence and withdrawal; the significant cannabis harms on mental health, brain function and development, and physical conditions such as cancer; and, the problems encountered when trying to quit cannabis and the generally poor outcomes today.

The paper also provides recommendations on how we can effectively answer the questions surrounding cannabis use in Australia. That was one of the highlights of this report. There are real recommendations that I believe our government, along with all governments in Australia, can relate to and have the capacity to respond to.

When the new Social Development Committee was created there was unanimous support in this House from all members. In the Premier's own words she said—

I look forward to considering the fresh ideas that I am confident these committees will generate on ways to tackle some of the biggest and most complex issues facing Queenslanders.

I believe that this matter falls clearly and squarely within the parameters of what was intended by the Premier and this parliament when it supported the introduction of the new Social Development Committee.

At midday today I had the opportunity of attending the launch of the school chaplaincy program by the member for Sandgate at which the Minister for Education spoke. Members from right across the political spectrum attended. The government, the opposition and the crossbenches were all there because we are aware of the wonderful work that our school chaplains do. Many of them are dealing daily with the issue of drug abuse in our schools.

Immediately prior to the commencement of this debate what was the bill that we were debating? What was it called? It was called the Telecommunications Interception Bill 2009. What are the issues? They are organised crime, drug abuse and law enforcement agencies. In this the second last parliamentary sitting week before the Treasurer brings down the next state government budget I believe that it is very timely that this matter is being discussed this evening because I believe the cost to Queensland taxpayers is massive and is underestimated by this government and many in our community. I believe that the problems directly impact on a number of state government responsibilities: health, police and corrective services, communities, child safety, education and Treasury to mention a few. I believe that it is time that we had a whole-of-government response to this issue.

Recently I was speaking with a specialist dealing with mental health. We were talking about the connection between marijuana use and mental problems. He said to me, 'Peter, we are waiting for the tsunami to hit.' I believe that if we open our eyes and ears the evidence in relation to the problems in our respective communities is clearly before us, be it in North Queensland, our Aboriginal communities, the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast or Western Queensland. I believe that if we open our eyes and ears we will see the problems that are occurring in the electorate of every member. I challenge every member of this House to think deeply about their own family networks and the people that they know who have been affected directly and indirectly by the misuse of marijuana.

If I can take members back to the research paper, there are 14 pages of references to articles and reports for members to consider. There are contributions from Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe. Unfortunately, there was not a lot from Queensland. I found reference to a Queensland government drug strategy report in 2006 and there was reference to two Queensland Criminal Justice Commission reports. I am not saying that our departments are not thinking about it or doing anything about it, but I think that this document contains a massive wealth of information to assist our state government to come to grips with the problem and try to find a way forward. The research paper identifies some of the significant problems. There are two pages of recommendations. I suppose the challenge that we have, if we really want to grasp the opportunity that the Premier referred to in the formation of this new committee, is to see how strongly we can respond to this problem in our community.

I take members to the actual powers of the Social Development Committee. I realise that we had a debate about this and some members chose to share their reservations and concerns. I believe that the committee does have the capacity to investigate matters referred to it by the parliament. That is what we are talking about tonight: specifically referring a matter to this new committee for it to investigate. This new committee has the power to seek information from ministers of the Crown. Our very own ministers could be called to address the committee. Our very own directors-general, departmental staff, chief executive officers of state government bodies can be called to address this committee and respond to questions. It is not often that we have the opportunity to bring these people before us to get information. I believe the committee has real power and real teeth. I do not believe any minister, director-general or departmental officer would be game to refuse to cooperate or would try to hinder this committee in investigating this very important matter.

I acknowledge clause 8 of the bill and I will use an example which I think is relevant. Say a young person is brought before the court and is waiting for an outcome. In any event that matter would be sub judice and it would be totally inappropriate for members of this House to comment on a matter currently before a court.

I do not have any real reservations about the current exclusions. However, I do acknowledge that some members of the opposition do. I urge them to support this bill and to give this committee a chance. Quite frankly, if this committee cannot come up with some real life, new solutions it stays limited.

I go back to the executive recommendations, which I hope members will study. There is a whole gambit of recommendations. Some are very provocative. One recommendation states—

That drug testing in schools be encouraged, giving a clear message that drug use, including cannabis, is not permitted. Many youngsters do not see cannabis as a drug or that it will harm them.

That is pretty provocative. Let us look at it. I can remember when we first started talking about random roadside breath testing. I conclude by using these words. When our Governor opened parliament on 21 April she said—

Honourable Members, you have been called together to make decisions on matters relating to the welfare and governance of our State.

I commend this motion to the House.

(Time expired)

Mrs CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (5.40 pm): I rise to second the motion. I advise the House that I am a member of the Social Development Committee. For many years debate has raged over the risk of marijuana. As the previous speaker the member for Nicklin has stated, marijuana was defended as a recreational drug. In the year 2000 we debated legislation that included an increase in the amount of marijuana that a person could possess before it was considered an offence. I remember using these bags to demonstrate the difference between 20 grams and 30 grams of marijuana. This is not marijuana, but it is 20 and 30 grams.

Mr SPEAKER: I am relieved!

Mrs CUNNINGHAM: At the time the Cancer Foundation stated that marijuana users could be at a greater risk of cancer than tobacco smokers. The article in the *Courier-Mail* went on to say that THC had possible tumour-promoting activities as well as resulting in an increased risk of developing cancer. There is not only an addictive side; there is a huge medical side to the use of marijuana that I believe also needs to be investigated.

There have been contrasting and conflicting medical experts' opinions and also academic opinions, but this document that the member for Nicklin has referred to has presented a lot of food for thought. It states that the National Centre on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University found that children who use drugs, including cannabis, are up to 266 times more likely to use cocaine than those who do not use any of the gateway drugs identified. Cannabis has been known and identified as a gateway drug, leading to the use of more and stronger drugs to get a greater kick. It has also been argued, this document says, that 20 per cent of the population carries a high risk genetic variant that produces a weaker COMT enzyme, which is responsible for the breakdown of dopamine in the brain. Henquet argues that the excessive amount of dopamine released by cannabis use places those with weaker COMT enzymes at 10 times greater risk of developing psychosis and of developing schizophrenia later in life. Schizophrenia is not the only mental illness that is linked to cannabis use. It is also linked to an increased occurrence of bipolar and other psychological illnesses.

I know of two young men brought up in exactly the same household and who lived the same lifestyle. One, however, had a history of marijuana use but did not use heavier drugs. He has a significant schizophrenia problem now. I and the people who love him greatly believe that it is directly attributed to that drug use. There does not seem to be any other precursor. This young man's life has been altered forever. His prospects in life have been changed. He now has significant episodes of psychotic events and also phobias. It would take a pretty strong argument for people who know him to believe that this cannabis use was not a significant contributor to his current health condition.

Mental health issues in our community regularly highlight deficiencies in mental health services. The member for Nicklin talked about the tsunami of problems that are expected in the future. With the evidence in this document along with other mounting medical evidence and data, if we have an opportunity to address the problem of cannabis use and abuse with a prospect of improving the quality of life of both young and older people in our community, we should not miss it in any way, shape or form. I certainly commend this parliament's consideration of this report and any other ancillary information. I believe it can only add to the quality of our future and our children's future.

Hon. PT LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for Health) (5.45 pm): I welcome the motion moved by the member for Nicklin and I can indicate that the government will support it. This is a very good endorsement of and the first job for the new system of parliamentary committees. We are committed to establishing a stronger bipartisan system capable of the complex challenges that we face as a society. We could get no better example of that than this.

Drugs do not discriminate when it comes to one's political philosophy, one's family whether they are wealthy or poor, one's location—country or city—one's religion or one's background. Drugs affect everyone in society. Indeed, they even affect many more people than just their direct consumers.

When I was at university a long time ago—25 or 30 years ago—marijuana smoking was thought as a bit funny, a bit smart and a bit trendy. The jury went out, has long been in and it is far from any of those. We now know that, like many other things that are smoked, marijuana is a carcinogen. It has many other serious effects on users including effects on mental health, brain function and development and physical health. People who smoke cannabis are more likely than others to experience depression and can also be prone to short-term and severe anxiety and panic symptoms. It is the most widely used illicit drug in the world.

In 2007-08 Queensland Health provided more than 12,000 episodes of care for people who reported an illicit drug as a primary drug of concern. Of those, 46 per cent were for cannabis, 33 per cent for opioids and 18 per cent for amphetamines including less than two per cent for methamphetamines. Queensland of course is part of the National Drug Strategy.

There is some good news. A National Drug Strategy Household Survey report indicated some reduction in the use of cannabis from 2004 to 2007 but also 40 per cent of the population aged 14 or above had used illicit drugs at some time in their life, with 13.4 per cent having done so in the previous 12 months. So it is a serious concern. I say this as well: it is not just a concern to people who are users.

Every couple of years I go out in the field with my local police and ambulance officers and I now go to many emergency departments. They tell me that as the death toll from motor vehicle accidents has come down, the people who are disproportionately represented in our emergency departments are people who are victims or, indeed, perpetrators of violent events as a result of the consumption of drugs. I have been with ambulance officers when people have presented with severe mental health issues, many of them due to the consumption of drugs and their effects. It is not just a question of the people who are the individual consumers. They of course have every right to human dignity and to our devotion to help them cure their addiction. But it affects families as well. Nothing is more sobering or concerning than when an elderly mother or father tells us what has happened to their children. Their lives have fallen apart because of an addiction to drugs. They have moved back into home and the parents have had to sell everything or the children have stolen from their parents. I have heard of an elderly mother in her seventies or eighties being terrified of attacks of violence or the mood swings of her child. There are children who no longer have the support that is required due to mental health issues as a result of drugs. That has to stop and we have to do more about that.

I am very supportive of referring this matter to a bipartisan committee. It is not a Labor issue, it is not an LNP issue, it is not an Independent issue; it is a societal issue that we need to address. It has been a long time since I have been a member of a parliamentary committee. I have chaired the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee, as it then was. Most people in the community would not understand the very good work that parliamentary committees do. Most of that work is done in an atmosphere of mutual cooperation. My deputy chair was Vince Lester, who was from the then National Party. He was great to work with. The work that is done is not done in a politically partisan fashion. It is important that we can now demonstrate to the community that we have the ability to address such issues as a parliament.

Committees have a diversity of background in relation to their membership and also a diversity of philosophy. They can also take evidence from people. But can I say that their task is not necessarily easy. There will be solutions that will be hard to reach. We talk about establishing drug rehabilitation centres and the like. Some people in the community do not want them in particular places. Often that is for quite legitimate reasons. Often it is a case of nimbyism. We need to understand that we have to take the good with the bad. Some of the decisions that will be made will not necessarily be politically popular. That is why bipartisanship is important. I commend the motion to the House.

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (5.50 pm): It is always a great pleasure to support the member for Nicklin, whose interest in social outcomes for his constituency is well known. I must say that I have always enjoyed the member's cooperation, particularly when it comes to finding solutions to everyday problems. The report to which the member's motion refers relates to one of those everyday problems that, as chair of the Social Development Committee, I am more than happy to accept. This issue is exactly what these committees are set up to address. I am sure that I not only speak on behalf of the government. After listening to the contribution by the member for Gladstone, I am sure I can say that we will get the support for this motion from all members of the Social Development Committee.

The Social Development Committee is asked to report on and monitor issues in the policy areas of health, education and training, social welfare services, community development, housing, child safety and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy. We know that cannabis use in many Indigenous communities is very much out of control and that it is an issue we will have to do something about in the near future rather than later on.

The first task of this committee is to inquire into the prevention of chronic diseases. As part of the resolution to establish the committee, the parliament directed my committee to consider the impact of chronic diseases on Queensland communities and the steps that can be taken to reduce the incidence of chronic diseases in those same communities. In undertaking that inquiry, the committee has to consider things such as programs that might work to help those communities, how we can enhance service delivery, how we can develop better cooperation and foster cooperative approaches, the impacts of potential investments in new and innovative research, and programs that can encourage children and young people to develop and maintain individual responsibility for the things that they do. The committee also has to monitor and report on the Family Responsibilities Commission, the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian and the Health Quality and Complaints Commission. I think this report will fit very nicely into the work that the committee has to do.

I have read the report. I would like to stress that the committee will look at the research that is available on this issue. So much effort has gone into the study of marijuana use, cannabis use and the effects of that use on communities and on individuals. I have a very strong personal interest in the prevention of cannabis use and its dire effects. I was a high school teacher in a couple of high schools in Townsville and I was a lecturer at James Cook University. Of course, I am a mother of four of my own children and three others. As a member of a very large family and in my own immediate family, I have had the life experience of having to deal with the consequences of habitual cannabis use. So I am more than happy to take part in anything that might prevent young people from engaging in cannabis use in the first place. Two of my direct family members fall into the categories that the report describes. Family members around those who are the users are thoroughly affected by the use of cannabis, and members can be sure that none of that is in a good way. We know—and I know in my family—that the brain is the primary target of frequent cannabis use.

We know also—and it says this in this report as well—that there are at least 1,500 chemicals found in cannabis smoke. These days, the potency of cannabis is much greater than it ever was. It is very addictive. As the member for Gladstone said, schizophrenia and mental illness are direct consequences of cannabis use. Marijuana use impairs memory and cognitive function. There is no doubt that we need to find effective treatments for cannabis misuse. We just cannot underestimate the power of prevention.

So the recommendations in this report are very much worthy of investigation. I really look forward to working with my committee members and, hopefully, with the member for Nicklin to explore some of the strategies to reduce this insidious level of cannabis use and its very devastating long-term effects.

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—LNP) (5.56 pm): At the outset can I say that I am also a member of the committee which is the subject of the motion before the House tonight. I can also say that the opposition will support the motion before the House, as it is based on common sense and decency. The committee in its charter has the obligation to monitor and report on issues in relation to health, social welfare services and community development.

When one reads the report one understands that it is, firstly, thoroughly researched; secondly, provides recommendations that can be taken on board by the committee; and, thirdly, the recommendations can then be used by that committee to put in train legislation and other initiatives to assist not only those who use the cannabis but also family members in the wider community who deal with the consequences that flow from that cannabis use.

As we know, no-one in this House would ever endorse the use of cannabis as a good drug. No-one in this House would ever indicate that cannabis is a social drug, a recreational drug or in any way to be used as a stimulant of any sort. I abhor the use of the term 'recreational drug'. That term plays down the social, medical and long-term impacts of the use of a substance that literally shreds the brain, destroys the individual, destroys the family and destroys the community in which we reside.

Our law acknowledges that cannabis is a dangerous drug under the Drugs Misuse Act. Under the regulations, it is a schedule 2 drug that carries a penalty for supply of between 15 and 20 years imprisonment. This House has acknowledged the dangers associated with the use of this drug. Tonight, this House, in a bipartisan approach, will push that issue forward and place it before a committee so that that committee can present, as the Minister for Health said, a unified front and provide a united voice for the people of Queensland to say that we are serious about this matter and put forward solutions that will have a short-, medium- and long-term impact.

The report refers to cannabis as a gateway drug—a drug that is used initially by young men and women and also by not-so-young men and women. Let us be careful about this issue. We seem to ascribe the use of this drug to young teenagers and young people in their 20s. The use of this drug is not so isolated. It is a drug that impacts all age groups in our community. The long-term impact will be the use of other, stronger, quicker and equally destructive drugs such as heroin, amphetamines and ecstasy.

The report goes on to explain that, by way of research, there are clear links with the use of this drug to schizophrenia, mood disorders, bipolar disorder and suicidal tendencies in our young people in this great state of ours. Can members imagine, as a parent, receiving a phone call telling them that their 19-year-old son or daughter suicided because he or she used cannabis on an ongoing basis? We could never live with that. No parent anticipates outliving their child or children. We could never come to grips with the question, 'What more could I have done, as a parent, to prevent that from happening?'

That is one of the issues that this committee can look at, grapple with and maybe come to terms with through a range of initiatives to assist parents to deal with what they go through when their children are drug users. You cannot anticipate a young, vital person of 21, 22 or 27 becoming a mindless zombie; a person who throws away their life by the use of drugs; a person who steals from their own family to feed their habit; a person who is so paranoid that every time they see a car near them they believe it is a police car trailing them. Can we imagine how a parent feels as they watch their child go through that? Can we imagine what a community suffers as it endures the agony of increased crime so that a young person or not-so-young person can feed their addiction? Families are torn apart by the use

of what some people term a 'soft' drug. There is nothing more insidious in this society than the use of any illegal drug that takes away a competent, young and virile life and shreds a family in the process. The opposition strongly supports this motion.

Ms FARMER (Bulimba—ALP) (6.00 pm): I would also like to support this motion. I speak from personal experience in recognising the importance of this issue and the motion that has been put forward. Reducing both the use of and the harms associated with illicit drug use remains a priority for the Queensland government. Queensland, along with all the other Australian states and territories, has endorsed the National Drug Strategy 2004-2009, which prioritises concern about illicit drugs. In general, in Australia illicit drug use declined between 2004 and 2007, according to the National Drug Strategy Household Survey. Clearly, the prioritisation for action under the National Drug Strategy has been having a positive effect. The 2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey reported that almost 40 per cent of the population aged 14 years or older have used an illicit drug at some time in their life, with 13.4 per cent having done so in the past 12 months. The latter figure represents a significant fall from 15.3 per cent in 2004.

The government has shown its commitment to national drug strategies already and has already raised discussions on innovative and coordinated government policies and public education programs aimed at curtailing drug use. Queensland Health offers a range of treatment programs, including those targeting people who have been picked up early and require only a brief intervention and educational session, through to those who require residential rehabilitation and others who need long-term outpatient care on the opioid treatment program.

The Bligh Labor government also promotes greater cooperation between mental health and drug and alcohol services. As part of its commitment to the COAG mental health agenda, the Bligh government has commenced the implementation of a pilot dual diagnosis intervention program at six sites across Queensland. This program involves the delivery of a training package targeting both mental health and drug and alcohol service delivery staff, as well as protocols for more integrated service delivery. This program and other district level activities designed to better coordinate efforts across services is supported by a workforce of 15 dedicated dual diagnosis positions within districts, expanding to 18 in 2008 and 2009. Queensland Health is also developing statewide guidelines for the assessment and management of patients with dual diagnoses and is currently developing a proposal for a clinical exchange program between mental health and drug and alcohol services at three sites.

The research paper entitled *Cannabis: suicide, schizophrenia and other ill-effects*, produced by Drug Free Australia, presents us with an opportunity to better understand the consequences of acute and chronic cannabis use. Previous speakers have referred to the statement in the paper that cannabis is a gateway drug—that is, it has the tendency to introduce the user to other illicit drugs. Therefore, it is critical that, regardless of what the government is doing around a range of effective strategies, it must avail itself of any opportunities to thoroughly explore cannabis use and assess our responses to ensure that as a government we are doing everything we can to safeguard individuals and the community at large from the effects of cannabis use.

The 2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey reported a notable drop in cannabis use, from 11.3 per cent in 2004 to 9.1 per cent in 2007. This is the lowest level since 1993. However, cannabis remains the most widely used illicit drug in Australia. Around 30 per cent of the population have tried cannabis at some time. Among people under 35 years of age, around 50 per cent have tried it at some time and 28 per cent have used it in the last year. Of particular concern is that the group with the highest prevalence for cannabis use is aged 14 to 24, with rates in this age group approximately double the rate of the entire Queensland population aged over 14 years.

However, some of the findings that particularly alarm me as a parent, which arise from the growing body of evidence around cannabis use and which are referred to in the paper, include the fact that the age of first use is declining. As the parent of an eight-year-old girl I share the concerns that are often raised with me by parents in the Bulimba electorate. They say that their greatest concern for their young children growing into teenagers is that they will become dependent on drugs. Early-onset users are shown to have an elevated risk of substance use disorder and are more likely to become dependent. A 2005 report, *Cannabis dependence and mental health perception amongst people diverted by police after arrest for cannabis-related offending behaviour in Australia*—

(Time expired)

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (6.06 pm): I do not know how many people in this room have actually read the report. I do not think anyone needs to read this report to know exactly how our communities and our kids are affected by cannabis use. If I were to be honest I would have to say that I probably would know a cannabis plant if I saw one. I have never seen it in its dry form. I have never seen the resin or the oil. I know that the member for Gladstone has some very suspicious little bags here. She will not let me smell them just to be sure, but I trust her when she tells me it is herbs!

Mrs Cunningham: She said 'herbs', not 'hers'.

Mrs PRATT: I do beg your pardon. It is herbs. We all know people in our communities who are affected by this scourge. The daughter of a very close friend of mine was once a very vibrant, confident young woman who was brilliant in her field. Literally she worked her way around the world and had a fantastic time. However, when she returned to Australia she looked like a skeleton. She was just a shadow of her former self. She was erratic, unstable, very moody and very childlike. It was one of the most disturbing things I had seen in a long time.

In my community, for the 11 years I have been a member of parliament one woman has fought consistently to try to get mental health services for her son. She does not want the little bandaid solutions that she has been able to access over the years; she needs real help. Her son admits that it is all because of marijuana. That is how it started. He is a schizophrenic. He hears voices telling him to go down to our local mall and kill people. It is a frightening thing, yet still he cannot get any help. He knows and accepts that he is in trouble. Unfortunately, the authorities do not seem to think there is an issue, even though he feels that in time he may do something that he does not really want to do.

Marijuana affects one's cognitive abilities, career status, social life, and physical and mental health. It affects our communities in many ways. In the short term, people take a lot of holidays from their work. They have more accidents at work. Today I looked at the internet, which shows thousands of reports that can be accessed. It is not like there is no research to tell us these things. The report I looked at surveyed people in a post office and found that 85 per cent had more injuries and 75 per cent had an increase in absenteeism if they were taking marijuana.

It affects families. I have seen the families of the young woman and the man I spoke about torn apart. I have seen marriages torn apart. I have seen fathers disown their children and mothers torn to shreds trying to keep the fathers and sons together with them. It is a devastating thing to see people torn apart like that. It is a terrible thing for a father to disown his son.

This drug, this horrible insidious creeping drug, affects our police force to such an extent that their hands can sometimes be tied when it comes to other things because they are so involved in getting drug pushers and trying to contain the scourge. It affects our health system because users inflict a heavy burden on society that we cannot seem to control. It affects family services because of family break-up and the effect on children of having parents who are on drugs. It affects the education system, and it goes on and on.

It is only those of us who are aware of the issue who can make a difference. We know that there is a lot of research out there. It is everywhere. We know what the answers are or what the possible answers are. We have to start implementing those answers. We do not have to do any more research. We do not have to go and investigate any further. We just have to act. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr RYAN (Morayfield—ALP) (6.11 pm): I rise to speak in support of the motion moved by the member for Nicklin. I commend the member for Nicklin on the genuineness that he has exhibited in both his comments in relation to this motion and his comments in the debate yesterday on the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill. Clearly the member for Nicklin, unlike the opposition, recognises the great potential of the new committee structure.

The motion moved by the member for Nicklin refers the *Cannabis—suicide, schizophrenia and other ill-effects* research paper to the Social Development Committee for investigation and report to the House. This research paper focuses on the mental and physical risks of cannabis consumption and contains a specific consideration of the implications for young people. The research paper states that there is overwhelming evidence that the age of first cannabis use is directly connected to progression to heavier drug use.

The research paper recommends, among other things, the implementation of effective preventative drug education in schools, the resourcing of a long-term anticannabis campaign, increased penalties for the offences of supply and sale of drugs to young people, noncustodial diversion programs for young people convicted of drug offences and roadside drug testing. The research paper and its recommendations raise an important matter about cannabis use, young people and government policy responses. Currently the state government has a number of policies which are along similar lines to the recommendations made in the research paper. For instance, Education Queensland has a drug education and prevention program and from December 2007 random roadside drug testing was introduced by the state government.

The government is constantly reviewing its policies in relation to other substances including tobacco. For instance, the review of Queensland's tobacco laws was recently conducted with a particular focus on the smoke-free enclosed and outdoor places provisions of the legislation. The recommendations share some similarities with those recommendations in the research paper which is the subject of this motion. Those recommendations resulted in the government in 2008 announcing a ban on smoking in cars with children under the age of 16 years and a transfer of power to local governments to regulate smoking at pedestrian malls and at public transport waiting points. Also, Quit Smoking mass media campaigns and the Quitline service are in place to encourage and support smokers to quit.

The investigation and report by the Social Development Committee of the recommendations of the research paper will be of great benefit to the parliament and the government in analysing current policy responses to cannabis use. Irrespective of what members of the opposition stated yesterday in the Parliament of Queensland Amendment Bill debate about their scepticism to the changes to the structure of the parliamentary committee system, I agree with the view of the member for Nicklin that the changes are a 'definite improvement' on the previous structure. The reality is that the new committee structure provides great opportunities for new ideas to be considered and discussed and for honourable members to refer matters for investigation to the relevant committee.

The focus of the motion moved by the member for Nicklin raises an important matter about drugs—in this instance, cannabis and how governments can respond to its use. It is a testimony to the new committee structure that members of this House are able to identify important and contemporary issues and for the House to refer those matters to the committee for investigation when possible. Of course members of the opposition do not share this total confidence in the new structure. Members opposite are inherently suspicious of this progressive, constructive and contemporary reform. But this motion and the Labor Party's support of it emphasises how misguided these suspicions are. The fact of the matter is that the new structure is a positive and progressive improvement for development of new ideas for the parliament and, in turn, for the government. I commend the member for Nicklin on his motion and I commend the motion to the House.

Mr FOLEY (Maryborough—Ind) (6.16 pm): I rise to congratulate the member for Nicklin on this very, very important motion. I have a personal interest in this paper. People may not realise but Herschel Mills Baker, who was the driving force behind this, is a Maryborough resident, and I have worked with him over the last three years to bring this paper to its present form. It has been significantly peer reviewed both internationally and in Australia and even in our local area.

Cannabis—suicide, schizophrenia and other ill-effects is an excellent paper which is easy to read and simply sets out what the major issues are. The task of getting the paper properly peer reviewed has been a laborious journey for Mr Mills Baker, but we felt that this was important for the credibility of the document.

We launched the paper in the last parliamentary sitting week, and I have now circulated a copy of this paper to each member of parliament. It is a living document. It can be found on the Drug Free Australia website, which I could not recommend highly enough to members of this parliament as a wonderful resource for the community to use for information on drugs and their impact on young Australians. I was disappointed that only one government member, the member for Capalaba, attended the launch, but we are tight for time in this parliament and there are a lot of competing voices for our interest.

Drug induced psychosis is an absolutely hideous problem in our country. We only have to pick up the newspaper to see the number of criminal cases involving murder and other very, very serious crimes that are committed as a result of drug induced psychosis. The old myth that this is just related to harder drugs has now been seriously dispelled by this paper. The problem with cannabis use is that the earlier you start the worse it gets. Kids as young as eight and nine are now smoking dope—perhaps it is through their brothers and sisters. It is regarded as a cool thing to do. It is really scary when we consider that the evidence shows that one in four young people smoking dope will develop serious mental health issues such as schizophrenia, depression, bipolar disorder and what we would call amotivational syndrome.

The smoking of cannabis is, pardon the pun, a smoking gun and we would not want to play Russian roulette with four bullets in the gun, one of them being a live round and the other three being blanks. That is basically what people are doing when they start smoking cannabis at a young age. One in four is an absolutely horrific statistic. One can only imagine the cost to the public health system if one in four young people who smoke marijuana develop schizophrenia and other serious issues. This has a lifelong impact on their families, it has an impact on crimes that are committed as illicit drugs are used, especially where it is a gateway drug, and it has an impact because of the sheer cost involved in caring for someone with schizophrenia through their life.

The increased potency of marijuana is another thing that people do not realise. Because of hydroponics growth throughout the world now, we have seen the THC content in cannabis rise from 0.5 per cent up to, in some cases, 30 per cent. When we have that major uplift in the strength of a drug, we see serious health consequences.

When I first moved to Maryborough, I met a friend who was a brilliant singer-songwriter. His life has been hobbled and nobbled by the use of cannabis. He has found it very difficult to obtain and keep employment, he has had a marriage breakdown, and his wasted life and wasted potential can be squarely sheeted home to marijuana use.

As a pastor in my other life, I dealt so often with the heartbreak of suicide and the families who had to deal with the mental health issues of their kids who had become addicted to drugs. We need to get a copy of this paper into the hands of every chaplain in every Queensland school so they can use it

as a resource. I commend the paper to the House. I commend the website. Everyone need get on to that and appreciate what it says. I also want to once again commend the member for Nicklin for his foresight and the great use of this paper.

Ms DARLING (Sandgate—ALP) (6.21 pm): Mr Speaker, I would like to start by letting you know that I listened very carefully to your wise words of counsel this morning, as I always do. I was very keenly ready to participate in an active debate. I listened to every speaker in this evening's debate very carefully ready to rebut, but I am not sad on this occasion to say that I actually agree with every previous speaker. I am sorry this is perhaps not the debate we were expecting for a Wednesday night, but it is with great pleasure that I recommend that all members of this place support the motion put by the member for Nicklin.

Let me tell the House some of the things that speakers on the other side of the chamber have said that I agree with. I definitely agree with the member for Nicklin's recommendation that we refer this to the Social Development Committee so they can have a much closer look at the entire report. It is certainly worthy of bipartisan consideration. I agree with the member for Gladstone that cannabis in particular has a lot of impacts on mental health and is quite devastating to the community. I agree with the member for Caloundra that the term 'party drug' is a terrible term and a very misleading term and I would love to scrap it from our vocabulary.

I agree with the member for Nanango that there is plenty of research out there on the impact of marijuana, and it is important that people take heed of it and that we pool our resources together to do all we can to protect the community. I agree with the member for Maryborough that community safety is a real concern and we need to look at the impact on kids. What struck me as a mother was that the information in the report shows that the age of the first use of cannabis is actually decreasing—and that should be of concern to everybody—and that the potency and popularity of the drug is increasing. I have to say that I am a bit of a control freak and that half a cold and flu tablet sends me into a spin. I think it is important that kids not only develop self-discipline but that they have a really good respect for themselves and their bodies and understand how to get, I guess, a natural adrenaline high.

The government is concerned about not just cannabis but also alcohol, tobacco, ice and a variety of other drugs that are starting to dribble their way into the community—actually it is becoming more of a flood, isn't it. The Ice-Breaker Strategy, for example, was launched by the government in November 2006, with \$4.8 million going towards programs that target methamphetamine use. There have been intervention teams in the Cairns, Gold Coast and Royal Brisbane hospital emergency departments treating over 350 patients per month. What is distressing is that in 2007-08 Queensland Health's alcohol and drug services treated 2,292 people as a result of amphetamine type substance use. That is almost 10 per cent of all presentations.

I want to also mention the *Queensland Drug Strategy*, which has some distressing statistics. It states—

It is estimated that 80% of dependent drug users experience some level of mental health distress or problems. In particular, the misuse of alcohol, cannabis and psychostimulants is associated with affective, anxiety and psychotic disorders.

I recommend that members look at the *Queensland Drug Strategy* so they can see some of the programs we are putting in place.

The Bligh Labor government acknowledges that there is a huge job and that we cannot do it on our own. It is the dedicated work of the non-government organisations who work with alcohol and drug treatment in Queensland that really supports us through this. Queensland Health has a number of agreements with non-government organisations, with an annual investment of \$18 million to the NGO sector. I want to take the time to make sure we recognise our unsung heroes who are working day by day on a case-by-case basis to support people through drug rehabilitation. There is obviously an enormous cost to families, hospitals, police services and healthy communities. I am pleased that the Social Development Committee will receive its first referral. I have faith that those committee members will treat this with the seriousness it deserves. I commend the motion to the House.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Mr SPEAKER: I thank all honourable members for the spirit in which they entered into our trial of not reading a speech. I am not expecting the next one will be so civil, but if this has started a civil trend that is wonderful too.

Sitting suspended from 6.26 pm to 7.30 pm.

MOTION

Order of Business

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (7.30 pm): I move—

That government business order of the day No. 2 be postponed.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Resumed from p. 408.

Mr MOORHEAD (Waterford—ALP) (7.31 pm): I should start my speech tonight by congratulating the member for Logan on his election as Speaker. It is great to see that Logan City has had not only a Premier in recent history and senior members but has now taken over the legislature as well. The influence of Logan can already be seen with our Burundian drummers at the opening of parliament to celebrate Logan's migrant and, in particular, humanitarian contribution to the state of Queensland.

I am humbled to be returned to this place as the representative of the Waterford electorate. There are few greater honours than to be chosen by your fellow community members to represent them in the government of our state. In 2006 I went to the Waterford electorate asking people to put their faith in me and what I could do if I was elected. In 2009 I went to the Waterford electorate with 2½ years of hard work by which I would be judged. During that time I believe I have delivered on my commitment to be accessible to local residents and to build better services in our area. The strong support of my electorate, with a small swing of 0.2 per cent to Labor and 66.5 per cent of the two-party preferred vote, will again drive me forward to work even harder to deliver a better way of life for the people I represent.

While I am proud of what we have achieved locally over the last term, this was an election about the future. Anna Bligh and Labor went to the people of Queensland with a plan to build jobs for Queenslanders and to make sure Queensland comes through these tough economic times with better schools, hospitals and roads. Compare this to the out-of-touch LNP, which plans to demolish 12,000 public sector jobs and freeze projects at a time when Queenslanders are concerned for their jobs and their children's employment future.

There was a stark choice for the electorate on 21 March, and the people of Queensland chose jobs, not job cuts. Labor's \$17 billion infrastructure program will not only create local jobs but will also deliver infrastructure to growing outer urban areas like Logan. For the Waterford electorate this means the upgrade of the M1 to the Loganlea Road interchange, a second right-hand turn lane from Kingston Road into Loganlea Road, \$4.4 million in school classroom upgrades as well as almost \$60 million for 18 new emergency department beds, 22 mental health beds and improved specialist outpatient facilities at the Logan Hospital.

When I spoke to local residents during the election campaign, they were clear that they expected better services from their state government. That is a message that I have heard loud and clear, particularly when it comes to health services. Growth in the Logan area has seen increasing pressure on the Logan Hospital emergency department, and the \$60 million upgrade announced by the Premier at the Logan Hospital during the election campaign will increase the capacity in the emergency department as well as the mental health ward, and I am sure it will be warmly welcomed by residents. I again thank the people of Waterford for the faith they have shown in me and the Labor government. I will work every day for the next three years to repay that faith.

As everyone in this place knows, election campaigns are built on the hard work of many volunteers. Whether it be stuffing envelopes, helping postal voters or delivering letters to the top of the hill at Tanah Merah, campaign workers each make their own valuable contribution to our democratic process. I was overwhelmed by the number of people who were prepared to give up their own time to support my local campaign. Many of these people are Labor's true believers who have dedicated their lives to building a fairer society for the working people of Queensland.

I also want to say a particular thanks to those people for whom this campaign was their first experience of politics. Some of our army of volunteers had not necessarily supported or even voted Labor before, but committed to building a stronger local community they came out in support of my local campaign. I hope that this is the first of many political campaigns for them.

For fear of missing someone, I will not name the very many people to whom I am grateful for their assistance during the election campaign. I thank you all. But I must thank my partner, Siobhan, for her constant support since being elected, during this campaign and for allowing me to commit to this job for another term even after she knew what was involved. Siobhan is a source of support and advice in my

life, even if at times I may not take that advice or at least take it very well. I know that Siobhan shares my passion for ensuring that every Queenslanders can lead a life of dignity and respect, and only this can explain her putting up with me for the term of the last parliament.

I am also grateful for the support of the Queensland union movement for whom politics is an avenue to provide better industrial and social outcomes for their members. I want to particularly thank the construction division of the CFMEU, the AFULE, and my union, the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union. While I am grateful for the support of workers in the manufacturing industry, now is the time when manufacturing workers need the support of all levels of government not only to protect existing jobs but also to develop a competitive and dynamic manufacturing industry that can provide Queenslanders with the highest skilled and better paid jobs of the future.

The effect of the global economic crisis is felt acutely in our manufacturing sector. Queensland and Australia must ensure that we have the policy settings right to make our manufacturing sector competitive on the world stage, resilient to global economic conditions and focused on continuous improvement.

On 27 April 2007 then opposition leader Kevin Rudd told the Australian people that he wanted to lead an Australia that made things. This is a simple but clear policy. It is a core belief of Labor. I want Queensland to be the state that makes things—a view that is shared by the Bligh government. The manufacturing industry must be central to creating jobs in Queensland. Manufacturing provides a higher proportion of full-time jobs, greater spending on research and development, and higher levels of apprenticeship and training opportunities than industry generally.

Queensland's manufacturing industries employ more people than mining and more people than tourism. Despite the myths of Queensland being reliant on coal, wheat and beef, Queensland's largest employer is the manufacturing sector, with almost 200,000 jobs and making up nine per cent of our gross state product. Queensland is already leading the way with an initiative to support the growth in manufacturing. The Bligh government's advanced manufacturing action plan provides strong strategic direction for the growth of investment and research in the sector while encouraging our manufacturers to look beyond the Queensland market.

QMI Solutions, a partnership between the state government and universities, assists local manufacturers to adopt best practice and lean manufacturing principles, and assists in the diffusion of new technology into Queensland industries. This technology diffusion, with technologies such as advanced moulding technology, helps Queensland manufacturing stay ahead of our interstate and overseas competitors.

QMI's industry capability network also ensures that local suppliers are getting access to major projects in Queensland. I know that the Bligh government's election commitment of a \$6.54 million expansion to the industry capability network will create local jobs by ensuring local businesses are getting more and more of the state government's \$17 billion in infrastructure spending this year. But one of our biggest challenges is to make Queensland's young people understand that manufacturing provides exciting, challenging and rewarding careers.

The image of manufacturing employment as hot, dirty, repetitive and male is out of touch with the reality of modern manufacturing. The Bligh government's Create it, Make it, Live it strategy will encourage young people to look to the manufacturing industry as a rewarding career opportunity.

While the state government has a strong record of promoting manufacturing jobs in Queensland, there is always more to do. Our competitors are always looking for opportunities and so should we. We must always invest in research and development and ensure that those technologies are being delivered to the shop floor of Queensland industry.

This term of parliament will see Queensland face the challenges of a global economic recession, the first since World War II. The Bligh government has the policies and the team to make sure we come through this time stronger, not weaker, and manufacturing will be part of the strength in the Queensland economy.

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Local Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (7.40 pm): I am indeed privileged to be here tonight in this House and to speak in the address-in-reply as the member for Cairns. I am pleased to say that the reasons I stood at the last election with hopes of retaining the seat of Cairns were the very same reasons that led to me stand in 1988 when I was first elected and at elections since. One of those reasons is the very deep love that I have for the city in which I live. I care about its present and its future. I believe that the very best job in the world is that of representing in state parliament the interests of the people of Cairns and the region of Far North Queensland. As a member from a marginal seat there is not a day that goes by that I take this job for granted.

It was made sharply clear to me during the election campaign that there are those who are dissatisfied with one or other of our government's policies, those who want some things delivered by this government that cannot be delivered and who campaigned loudly in favour of a change of government.

Retaining my seat as the member for Cairns is due in large part to Premier Anna Bligh and to the key policies that she presented to Cairns. Those policies demonstrated that she and the Labor team were on the mark in terms of the key deliverables for the people of Cairns.

I am sorry to inform honourable members that Cairns is in some difficulty at this time. We are all aware that unemployment is biting in communities around Queensland, Australia and overseas, but I have to say that unemployment is biting more severely in our region than it is in other regions. The last ABS statistics reported that a month ago unemployment had risen to 11.8 per cent in the city of Cairns. Many individuals and families are being sorely affected by the downturn in the economy. It is an easy and glib response for those who do not stop to think or do not have the facts before them to say, 'Well, of course. We all understand that. Cairns is a tourist city and tourism is in trouble. What would you expect when people are frightened of losing their jobs or are losing their jobs? A holiday is not going to be a top priority.' In fact, while the tourism industry has had a difficult start to the year it has not been so dreadful. In the circumstances, our numbers have been maintained, particularly in the backpacker market. In fact, the serious troubles that we have in Cairns at the moment relate to the collapse of the construction industry. Those of our key construction companies that are still surviving have done so by pulling back on new projects and therefore as the projects that are currently underway are completed there is no work that will take those construction workers, skilled tradespeople, professional service people and subcontractors forward over the months and years ahead. That is why the people of Cairns voted loudly in support of Anna Bligh and the policies of this government to do all that we can, even in terms of deficit funding, to provide jobs for people during the period ahead.

In Cairns city itself jobs will be focused around a major redevelopment worth \$446 million in relation to the Cairns Base Hospital. This redevelopment is already underway. I was pleased to join health professionals in opening the new diabetes centre on the Cairns North site. Many of us joined in pouring over the plans for the redevelopment which includes a strongly lobbied for and widely welcomed announcement of radiation oncology services, which redevelopment will be completed by the end of next year. Other necessary services need expansion, particularly renal and diabetes services and cardiac services. Most of these expansions will be housed in a new twin clinical services building that will take some further years before it reaches completion.

The \$446 million project is backed by many other state-led projects. We already have a commitment to around \$1 billion worth of infrastructure and projects in Cairns and the urban region around Cairns. That will provide a considerable number of jobs over the coming years. However, it is my job to make it plain to all, in particular to the government, that we will need further projects to keep us going over the years ahead, particularly with the worrying level of unemployment that we are already facing.

In life there is pretty much always a silver lining. At the moment in Cairns the silver lining in industry terms is in the marine sector where over the years we have developed a high level of international expertise in boat refits. Our marine sector is quite vibrant and is taking advantage of the availability of skilled tradesmen who months ago may otherwise have been busy with work in the mining or other industries.

The other silver lining is that for some 10 years now the leadership of Cairns in business and state government has been working hard on the diversification of the regional economy. I have no doubt that that work will pay off and that the other industries that can survive during this difficult period, some of which will even grow, may be cushioned a little from the blow of the collapse of the construction industry and the other difficult economic factors that lie ahead.

Tourism will recover because we have a destination that is on par with few others in terms of tropical destinations. It is important that the state government's cruise liner terminal upgrade project worth some \$11 million proceeds and proceeds soon. It is important that we do construct, as we have said we will, the Cairns Marine Training Centre, a marine training centre that will be not only for those who come from Cairns and the far north but, in fact, for all Australians and even international students.

The good news that was part of the government's policy in the fields of arts and sports, public housing, child safety and, in particular, increased police numbers, all contributed to the people of Cairns giving the Bligh government the tick, as it were, in terms of governing for the city of Cairns over the three years ahead.

It would be very pleasing for the people of Cairns to hear that their region is noted and frequently considered in this parliament. It is sometimes said by those who live in Cairns and the far north, and I know in other regions around Queensland, 'All those people in Brisbane in government and in the Public Service do not know or understand our region. They do not care about us. They are preoccupied with the south-east corner.'

I am pleased to say that *Hansard* shows how very often Cairns is mentioned along with all of the regions along the coast from Cairns to Coolangatta and in Western Queensland. There is no doubt that the reason the parliament is so conscious of the size of our state, of the spread of our regions and of regional cities like Cairns is that many members on both sides of the House who represent regional areas of Queensland make sure we speak firmly and loudly.

I was particularly proud to be part of a team that was fully returned for the Bligh government. It is arguable whether Jason O'Brien as the member for Cook has the hardest job in this parliament or whether Betty Kiernan, the member for Mount Isa, does. Both electorates are extraordinarily large and difficult. I am proud to be a member of the team from Far North Queensland which includes both of those honourable members. I am proud, too, that Steve Wettenhall, my neighbour from the seat of Barron River, has been returned and is now in his second term and hitting his stride. I am very pleased to welcome Curtis Pitt, the new member for Mulgrave. He has very big shoes to fill. His father of course was a loud and strong member for the seat of Mulgrave and a good mate of mine. He is still missed from this parliament.

May I say to the people of Cairns as much to members of this House that in the three years ahead I again give my absolute, clear, unequivocal commitment to work as hard as I can for the city of Cairns, which is without doubt the most beautiful and most liveable city in the fair state of Queensland.

Mrs SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (7.51 pm): It is a privilege to rise in this place to participate in my fourth address-in-reply as the member for Pumicestone. In fact, I have been the only member for Pumicestone. I contested the seat in February 2001 when it was formed in a redistribution and am honoured to have served in the capacity as the local member for the last 8¼ years. I am not sure whether being the first and only member of the same electorate after four elections is a record, but it is one I gratefully hold.

I take this opportunity to congratulate all elected members and trust that new members find their role as fulfilling as I find mine. Some of my colleagues were not returned, and I miss them and their valuable contribution in this place. They were hardworking, decent members and I wish them all well in whatever endeavours they may choose in the future. I want to extend my congratulations to the Speaker and members who were elevated to the ministry in the Bligh government.

There has been a lot of profound change since my last address-in-reply in October 2006, particularly on a political front. Peter Beattie retired and Anna Bligh became the first female Premier of Queensland. Labor's Kevin Rudd was sworn in as Prime Minister and Allan Sutherland was sworn in as the mayor of the new Moreton Bay Regional Council. When Labor won federally in 2007 my husband of 29 years, Jon Sullivan, was elected as the federal member for Longman. Apart from a few streets, my new electorate of Pumicestone is almost entirely within Longman. With these changes has come a level of cooperation between all levels of government that I have never experienced before. This support has seen projects funded that would never have happened before, and now that we are all working together we are getting things done. What a breath of fresh air that has been—local, state and federal working together to achieve the best outcomes for our local area.

I want to say a big thankyou to the federal member, Jon Sullivan, and Mayor Allan Sutherland for their cooperation and support. Things are getting done, issues are being addressed quicker and the community is benefitting as a whole. I want to wholeheartedly thank the staff of both their offices because they go out of their way to help. Of course, some of the local councillors have been the most helpful and eager to work with the state and federal governments as well to benefit the community. I would also like to acknowledge in particular the hard work and support of Councillor Greg Chippendale and Councillor Chris Whiting. I encourage others to take advantage of this cooperative government approach.

I want to thank those who supported me in the last election—firstly, my staffers Judi and Amber, who ran the office as usual, coping with the mountain of extra workload an election brings. Both were happy to go the extra mile and hand out for me on election day. They handed out alongside my family members—husband, Jon, and daughters, Casey and Tai, and sister-in-law Jan Sullivan. It was the first time in our political history that we all could get out on the same day at the same election. Between Jon and I we have actually been through 11. Unfortunately, both daughters live permanently in Brisbane and could not vote for me, so I was very grateful for their help. Casey graduated from QUT Law with honours this year and I hope that one day she may follow in our footsteps.

I would like to particularly thank my campaign manager, Ryan Ginard. His patience and understanding kept the campaign on track and on budget. I would like to thank the Bribie Island ALP branch members, particularly Brian and Yvonne Williams, Maurie Doyle, Jim Rayner and Caboolture branch members Carolyn and Jim Duncan, John and Carrie McNaught and Ray Graves. There were many other young Labor members who came up from Brisbane and lent a hand every weekend including Darren Cann, Sarah Shepley, Jessica Pugh, Kate Simpson and James Shannon. My good friends Marilyn Saxby, Laura Harrison, Jim Hutton, Daniel Denton, Steve Walker and George Droutsas have been with me at every election. I say a big thankyou to everyone who did anything for me during the campaign. I am extremely grateful.

There were six candidates this time—a record—and the Liberal National Party has learnt nothing from the last election. It continues to run an unsuitable candidate, and the tricks that he used to try to win this time were pretty colourful indeed. One so-called Independent was running around presenting himself to the public as a Labor member. He obviously was a stooge of the LNP and suspicions were raised when he was seen entering the LNP campaign office regularly. One has to wonder who was paying for his campaign.

There was a deceitful campaign from a small handful of disgruntled people who did not like the green zones put in place in the Moreton Bay Marine Park. They were simply there to prop up the LNP candidate and even had their untruthful signage on the back of the LNP's corflutes. It was purely politically motivated, selfish and a very poorly run campaign. If it had any brains it might have been dangerous.

The oil spill in Moreton Bay was incredibly challenging, but the state government managed it extremely well. If we believed the opposition lines we would think that Anna Bligh could have stopped the ship. Messages organised by the LNP on corflutes on election day suggested that I had done nothing about the oil slick. However, the LNP was nowhere to be seen when I was on the beach at 5 am the morning after the spill with Mayor Allan Sutherland working on strategies to immediately clean up parts of the Bribie Island beach that was affected. I would like to say that after 10 days the beaches were given a clean bill of health. I am very proud of everyone who had anything to do with the clean-up. By then the LNP was obviously desperate. Fortunately the majority of people did not believe any of the nonsense it was peddling. The LNP has to learn that it needs to treat the voters with the respect they deserve.

Meanwhile, I will keep working hard for the electorate I love and serve the constituents to the very best of my ability. A number of issues were raised during the election which I intend to follow up in my fourth term.

There is a desire and need to re-establish a permanent police beat in Beachmere, and I will be working hard to adhere to the wishes of the residents. I propose to become heavily involved in the establishment of a kindergarten at Beachmere. This was a promise made during the election campaign and I am looking forward to working with the community to see that kindergarten come to fruition.

I look forward to seeing all of the current roadworks finished in my electorate. I certainly look forward, as do many other people, to seeing all the current roadworks in my electorate finished. The traffic hold-ups have been somewhat frustrating, but they will eventually have been worth it when we get better and safer roads.

I have an open mind and plan to learn more about voluntary euthanasia. I have been invited to two separate meetings at the local Bribie Island group. I have heard many distressing stories about people dying in prolonged agony. I believe the subject needs to be discussed fully. I suggest members invite themselves to local group meetings as they would be most welcome. Dying with dignity is something that most people advocate, both young and old. In a society in which more people are growing older more rapidly it is an important issue about which I plan to do more research.

Where else would we live but Queensland? It is perhaps not so sunny today, but normally it is sunny one day and better the next. I am certainly looking forward to less rain in the next few days. I am looking forward to the Maroons winning the State of Origin and I am looking forward to the Broncos, who are well placed, winning the 2009 NRL premiership. Who would live anywhere else?

Mr SPEAKER: Before I call the honourable member for Cleveland, I would remind the House that this is the honourable member's first speech in this place. I therefore ask all honourable members to extend to him the full courtesies of the House. I call the honourable member for Cleveland.

Dr ROBINSON (Cleveland—LNP) (7.59 pm): Mr Speaker, fellow members of parliament, family, friends and guests in the gallery and residents of my electorate of Cleveland watching online, I consider it a great privilege and honour to stand here in this grand House before you all today as the new state member for the electorate of Cleveland. I rise in the House to deliver my inaugural speech at the outset of the 53rd Queensland Parliament and during the 150th anniversary year.

The opening of the 53rd Parliament marks the first time in 20 years that the people of Cleveland have been represented by a conservative MP. It is a great honour for me to enter the parliament at this momentous time and in this set of circumstances. I begin by thanking the people of Cleveland for their vote of trust—trust in me and in the LNP to represent them in this House. I am deeply honoured by the support that I received from the people of the Cleveland electorate—from Wellington Point, Ormiston, Birkdale, Cleveland, Thornlands and North Stradbroke Island.

I would also like to acknowledge the LNP leadership team for their solid performance during the election. Their leadership has placed the LNP within striking distance of government at the next election. I would like to thank my campaign team and volunteers for their tireless effort since November 2008. I pay particular tribute to my campaign team, Paul, Shane, Matt, Paul Gordon and Adam, and also the Cleveland SEC, volunteers and friends. I would also like to acknowledge the federal member for Bowman, Andrew Laming. The Redlands is fortunate to have such a hardworking federal member and I wish him well at the next federal election.

May I also especially congratulate Lawrence Springborg, along with Mark McArdle and many other lieutenants, for the successful formation of the LNP as one united conservative force in Queensland. While history does not record the name of Lawrence Springborg as Premier of Queensland, premiers come and go but this party, the LNP, will go on and Lawrence will be known as its founder. The revitalisation of the conservative forces in part was my motivation for running for

parliament. I represent a new breed of conservative Queenslanders with neither Liberal nor National Party background, but conservative and united. The seeds of greatness in the LNP have been sown and may we all nurture and water the seedling as it grows to full maturity. To the new opposition leader, John-Paul Langbroek, he has my full support, and I look forward to him becoming the next Premier of Queensland.

What of the result? Our win in Cleveland was by a narrow margin—155 votes. However, in real terms it is a 5.3 per cent increase in the LNP primary vote and represents a significant turning of the tide. Although after redistribution of the 2006 boundaries the margin was officially 1.3 per cent to Labor, in reality, the polling showed that I was more than five per cent behind when the election was called. Our victory took place against massive union resources of finance and manpower. In every way, we were the underdogs.

But the will of the people was for electoral change. This desire for change is exemplified in a guy called Doug—someone who I never met, but who was not expected to live past the weekend of the election. So he made a special effort to vote before the weekend in case he died before the election.

The reasons for our victory are varied. The win was partly a positive response to the vision that we put to the residents of Cleveland to deliver the infrastructure and services that the people of Cleveland need so as to make Cleveland a better place in which to live. I am committed to protecting and improving the quality of our bayside lifestyle.

The result was also a negative reaction to the government's poor performance in health, education and the economy in particular. Local issues included a lack of infrastructure—roads, the Eastern Busway, train services—the takeover of Redland Water and the permanent exclusion zones for recreational fishers in Moreton Bay. The government is seen by the people of Cleveland as having largely failed and forgotten them. I remember what thousands of Cleveland residents told me and I will not forget. I commit myself to working hard to achieve all that we set out to do. I am writing to relevant ministers about specific commitments made by the government in the hope that they will keep their word to the people of Cleveland.

I am deeply honoured by the fact that I join a small, but not elitist, group of individuals who have represented the people of Cleveland, whether by the name of Cleveland or otherwise, in the Queensland parliament. Between 1929 and 1989, the residents of what is currently known as the electorate of Cleveland were represented in state parliament by conservative MPs from the Country Party and the National Party for all but five of those years. The people were represented by conservative MPs Thomas Plunkett, Robert Harrison, Dick Wood, John Goleby and Paul Clauson and Labor MP Edgar Baldwin. Since 1989, with the encroachment of urbanisation into this rural area and the redefining of boundaries, the seat has been held by Labor MPs Darryl Briskey and Phil Weightman. Today, I honour all of these men for their contributions and it is with pride that my name is added to that distinguished list. I am humbled to think that I have played a part, albeit modest, in returning the region to its conservative home.

The electorate of Cleveland, which has approximately 40,000 residents, is situated within the bayside region of south-east Brisbane known as the Redlands. Previously a rural area on the outskirts of Brisbane, Cleveland has been enveloped by the city in its eastward expansion to the sea. The shire of Redland has become Redland city. Living in various parts of Queensland has helped me see the unique character of Cleveland, which has a culture of its own that must be understood, appreciated, respected and considered in policy formation. The people of mainland Cleveland enjoy a mix of fast-paced urban existence and a relaxed country feel in this coastal electorate. North Stradbroke Island reveals an eclectic mix of beach style living, tourism, other forms of work, and all at a gentle pace until the holiday season sets in. I would like to acknowledge the Quandamooka people as the original inhabitants and custodians of the land of mainland Cleveland and North Stradbroke Island.

Cleveland is also characterised by a diversified and strong small business sector, tourism and various service industries. The magnificent North Stradbroke Island, Cleveland Point, Wellington Point, Whepstead Manor, the Redland Museum, Ormiston House and Norm Price Park are just some of the local icons that characterise the region and the community. I consider myself most fortunate to represent such a beautiful area and great people.

What of my journey and priorities for Cleveland? My journey to state politics has taken more than 25 years since completing my first university degree. While I was inspired to run for parliament by the historic formation of the LNP, my motivation predates this event. In truth, it probably stems from watching one too many episodes of *Yes Minister* and *The Hollowmen*. I guess resistance to my calling to politics was useless and, ultimately, I yielded to my destiny.

In reality, politics is a natural progression from my various roles in community leadership and service and my background has positioned me for this new level of public service. I am a product of the convergence of various forces, including conservative political thought, free enterprise, traditional family values, a sense of social justice and a desire to protect the environment.

I was born in Traralgon, Gippsland, where I lived for the first 17 years of my life. My father, Allen, and mother, Lauris, owned a small business in jewellery and watchmaking. Dad worked very hard to establish the business. Mum was mainly a stay-at-home mum who at times helped dad at work. They had three boys, Mark, Graeme and Michael. I am the eldest. My childhood was a happy one and I was raised in a stable, longstanding, loving and caring home. I thank my mother and father for the home they created and for the start in life they gave me.

After completing year 12 at Traralgon High School in 1980, I moved to Townsville where I studied for three further years to achieve a Bachelor of Science in marine biology and zoology. Over the next 10 years I worked in the education sector as a TAFE science teacher, tutor, lecturer and chaplain. I also met my wife, Julie, at university while she studied social work. We were married in 1985, bought a house and started a family.

After moving to Melbourne in 1993, where we lived for six years, we returned to Queensland, living at Mount Gravatt for two years and then moved to the Redlands, where we have now lived for more than six years. Living in various parts of Queensland has taught me much about our great state. I have loved living in North Queensland, Townsville; visiting Central Queensland, Rockhampton and Yeppoon, where my wife's family still live; visiting Western Queensland cattle stations; and living in Mount Gravatt and for the last six years in the Redlands.

Between 2000 and 2009 I completed a masters degree in international studies at Griffith University and a PhD in cultural studies at the University of Queensland. During that time I have continued to work in various education roles, particularly lecturing in multicultural and intercultural studies. I have also been involved in charity management, working with children and youth. A highlight of this work has been helping to build an orphanage in Indonesia in 2008. Many of the principles that I have learned in my journey are useful in my service of the people of Cleveland. Among others they are family values; educational opportunities; small business; hard work and job creation; balanced growth and sustainability; and social justice and care for the underprivileged.

What of family values? My wife, Julie, and I have been married for 23 years. Julie is the love of my life and true soul mate. She is both my match and my complement. I honour her and I honour her parents, Maurice and Clare Murray, for raising such a well-balanced and lovely woman. These 23 years of marriage have produced seven awesome children: Benjamin 20, Mitchell 18, Laura 17, Melissa 14, Joseph 12, Susannah 10 and Isaac three. Our commitment to each other in marriage, for better and for worse, has formed the secure foundation upon which our family has grown. I am grateful for each of our children. I love each one of them dearly and am truly blessed. Today I am a better man for their love and support. I especially thank my wife, mother and mother-in-law for their support during the election. It has been said that behind every good man is a great woman and a surprised mother-in-law. I am truly a lucky man to have scored the most amazing wife, with the package deal of a great mother-in-law thrown in.

Throughout the campaign people have commented about my large family. Depending on how one looks at it, it is either brilliant family planning or terrible. I was often asked, 'Are you Catholic?', to which I answered, 'No, but I could be.' People have asked whether power blackouts are really that common in the Redlands. Others have suggested I buy a bigger TV. In response I have purchased three TVs, including a plasma screen. I have had suggestions from friend and foe alike about permanent solutions, from simple operations to other solutions that are as subtle as a brick—or two. My wife is here today. She is easy to identify. She is the most red-faced woman in the gallery. I did run this speech by her.

In all seriousness, the family is the basic building block of society. Communities are strong when their families are strong. Keeping our families strong and close has not been without its struggles, but my wife and I have worked hard to create a warm and loving environment in our home. I value my family and they have had a massive influence on me. I would not be able to do what I do without their support. The strong traditional family unit has made our nation great. I believe that governments must enact laws that help families to be strong and stay together. I am passionate about protecting and promoting the welfare of the children and the families of Cleveland.

What about educational opportunities? I am grateful for both the learning and teaching opportunities that I have had. I am most fortunate to have attended fine state primary and high schools, followed by three Queensland universities: James Cook University, Griffith University and the University of Queensland. I believe that good education and training is critical to the future of our children whether, for example, via a TAFE system into a trade or a university into a profession. It concerns me that this government has taken its eyes off the ball when it comes to the education of our children, delivering them the lowest quality education in Australia. Further, I passionately believe that our children are best served by a system that allows for choice between public, independent, Catholic and other private options. I note in the Redlands that 60 per cent of children attend public schools and 40 per cent attend independent and Catholic schools. I am committed to standing up for the education rights of all the children of Cleveland. I am also committed to the teachers of Cleveland and commend them for their service of our children. Unlike the current government, I do not blame them for the low education standards of our children.

What about small business, hard work and job creation? Hardworking local small business is the foundation of job creation and wealth generation. In our state, many millions of jobs have been generated over our history through the productive output of small and medium-sized business. It is the entrepreneurial spirit of ordinary Queenslanders that has contributed to the greatness of this state. The stimulus of small business is needed to create real long-term, sustainable, bread-winning jobs. I call on the government to implement specific measures—for example, payroll tax relief—in the upcoming budget to stimulate small business and to thus produce desperately needed jobs in Cleveland and elsewhere.

The issue of local job creation is of paramount importance to the residents of Cleveland. About 60 per cent of Redlands workers leave Redland City each day to travel to work outside the area. This situation is not primarily due to the recent GFC, but a lack of growth and job creation in the area. The government has exacerbated the problem by continuing the infrastructure drought in the Redlands. Further strain on employment in Cleveland has been caused by the failure of this government to prevent the closure of Fisher & Paykel, costing at least 300 local jobs and the job losses, direct and indirect, caused by the recreational fisher permanent exclusion zones that are part of the government's Moreton Bay Marine Park plan.

What about balanced growth and sustainability? My early experiences in marine sciences and zoology underlie my commitment to the environment. The Redlands should not be forced into extreme development, but needs balanced growth. The residents want progress, but without unnecessary destruction of the environment. The recent excessive clearing of koala habitat by this government to make way for the new Thornlands State School is deplorable and shows that the government is not as ecofriendly as the Treasurer claims; rather they are 'ecowolves in Green's clothing'. Further, residents have cried out for a Moreton Bay Marine Park plan that works for all. The government's policy has already resulted in job losses in Cleveland.

What about social justice and care for the underprivileged? During the second year of my university degree, having come from a non-religious background I embraced Christian faith. I am proud of the Christian heritage of our state and nation. My faith has fuelled my charitable work with children and troubled youth. It has inspired me to work with the poor and needy, both in Queensland and in many developing countries. I am encouraged by the work of both non-faith and faith based groups in my electorate and commit to working with all groups for the betterment of our most vulnerable residents.

I have also been involved in chaplaincy work at universities and continue to serve in my local church, Gateway Church, as a board member. The Redlands, as part of the Bible Belt in south-east Brisbane, is flourishing with churches and Christian groups like the Salvation Army, SU Chaplaincy, Star of the Sea Catholic Church, Cleveland Uniting Church, Redlands Reformed Christian Church, Cleveland Baptist Church and Redlands Fellowship Christian Church. I acknowledge the helpful work of such groups and others in meeting the challenges of homelessness, poverty and domestic violence, among other issues, in the Redlands.

In conclusion, President John F Kennedy penned the following words that I feel are poignant to those who would take up the responsibility of public office wherever in the world they live. He said—

We in this country, in this generation, are by destiny rather than choice the watchmen on the walls of world freedom. We ask, therefore, that we may be worthy of our power and responsibility, that we may exercise our strength with wisdom and restraint, and that we may achieve in our time and for all time the ancient vision of peace on earth, good will toward men. That must always be our goal, and the righteousness of our cause must always underlie our strength. For as was written long ago: Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.

Can I suggest that, as is written in the stained glass windows of this very parliament building, we are the watchmen and women who stand on the walls. We are guardians and protectors of the people. May we be enabled by God's grace to do so with distinction. I close by thanking the residents of Cleveland for their trust and support. I commit to working hard for their sake.

Mr SPEAKER: Before I call the honourable member for Aspley, I remind the House that this is the member's first speech in this place. Therefore I ask all honourable members to extend the full courtesies of the House to her. I call the honourable member for Aspley.

Ms DAVIS (Aspley—LNP) (8.18 pm): Mr Speaker, Winston Churchill once said, 'We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.' It is on that note that I thank the people of Aspley for according me the very great honour of representing them in Queensland's parliament. I know that others have said it before, but standing here reinforces just how humbling that honour is. Like many locals in Aspley I have worked hard and have had a good living. However, I hope to be measured not on what I have received or worked for to date, but, as Churchill said, to make a life by what I can give, in this job, in the future.

Mr Speaker, I will come back to some people I would like to thank, but I want to particularly devote my first speech in this place to my local area, which is a great area with great people but facing increased challenges. In discussing my plan for my time in this place I want to cover two broad themes—the importance of listening and the need to place more value on the lifestyle of people who live in many of our suburbs. I believe there is a strong link between these two things and how I come to be standing in this place today.

Politicians and commentators sometimes reflect on election-defining issues. There were several in Aspley. Many of our local issues reflect a concern of many people that they were not being listened to and that their lifestyle and aspirations were not being valued. The fight to save the Royal Children's Hospital at Herston is one such issue. It was said by one of my new colleagues in this place that the fight over the Royal Children's Hospital was based on deception. Nothing could be further from the truth. It reflects, with great respect to him, a continued failure to listen to people in our local communities.

When mothers, fathers, grandparents, professionals and other concerned citizens from places like Chermside West, McDowall and Bald Hills came to me and said, 'We believe that the best option for a well-resourced, world's best practice Children's Hospital is to keep it at Herston,' that is exactly what they meant and that is exactly what they wanted. These parents and residents were not being deceptive at all. I listened, I heard them and I thought about it. I agreed with them and I acted with them to fight on this issue. It was a grassroots movement, and many supporters of the Royal Children's Hospital had firsthand experience with the wonderful doctors and nurses and other staff of that fine establishment looking after our most valued assets—our children.

There is not one good reason why the additional investment could not have been made in the current Children's Hospital at Herston to make it an even better one. I remain committed to the belief that saving the Royal Children's Hospital was the right thing to fight for and I remain concerned that moving the hospital was a political decision influenced by considerations beyond the health of children. My suspicions were reinforced by the fact that the government had to scramble with a cobbled-together promise to provide paediatric emergency services at Prince Charles Hospital. I remain unswayed in my view that the best solution was, and still is, to invest the extra money at Herston, where the foundations and supporting infrastructure and world-class medical research facilities are already so strong.

Two other local challenges reflect a failure to listen and an increasing risk to the future lifestyle of our suburbs. The first is the proposed high-density, 10-storey housing developments at Fitzgibbon and Carseldine by the Urban Land Development Authority—more specifically, the ULDA's proposal to cut into the urban green space and education infrastructure of the QUT campus at Carseldine. Many locals feel they were misled by not being told the ULDA's 'Fitzgibbon Development Plan' actually affected Carseldine, and now they feel that they are not getting a fair say and are not being listened to by this unaccountable body.

I will have more to say about the flaws in the establishment and operation of the ULDA at another time. Today I simply want to point out that, although it is inevitable that we will have to accommodate reasonable growth and development, we have to balance that with a higher value on the aspirations and lifestyle of current and future residents.

Many residents agree that, while much of the Fitzgibbon development can and should proceed, the entire QUT campus should be preserved for future education purposes and urban green space. We also believe that before this development goes ahead there needs to be more investment and a better plan for local transport infrastructure which is not coping now—never mind with the influx of thousands more people from this development. Part of my plan for Aspley is to continue to work with and listen to all locals affected by this development and, if the government is willing, to work cooperatively with them to get a better outcome on density, on green space, on services and on traffic.

The second challenge I want to briefly discuss is the inadequacy of local traffic and transport infrastructure to help preserve and maintain local lifestyle into the future. Many local residents chose to live in Aspley, Bridgeman Downs, Carseldine and other local suburbs because it was a good balance between a safe suburban location to live and reasonable proximity to the CBD. That is at risk if we do not address the traffic challenges. Indeed, many feel we are already falling behind.

A local told me recently that he had been stuck in traffic while travelling to the CBD and it took over an hour to travel the 14 kilometres from Albany Creek Road to Eagle Street. He said it routinely takes 45 minutes and delays beyond that are getting more frequent. Ninety minutes to two hours a day in traffic to go to work just 14 kilometres away is simply not good enough and reflects very poorly on the efforts made by state governments for Aspley for some time. And neither is public transport filling the gap. Carseldine Railway Station, for example, is not coping now—and that is even before the extra impact of the massive Fitzgibbon urban development.

Just as we need to accommodate good and reasonable development while safeguarding local amenity, we have to accept that there has to be more road and transport infrastructure and the state has a role to make that happen. And there will be some impacts from doing that. What is not fair, however, is for Aspley to wear all the impacts—as many locals fear some proposals incur—with none of the benefits. So part of my future plan for Aspley will be to work constructively with locals and authorities to seek better suburban transport solutions that share the pain more fairly between areas of Brisbane and share the gain more fairly with places like Aspley.

Too much is said about Brisbane versus the regions, as if every community in Brisbane is the same. I believe in equity with the regions—we are one state after all—but I also believe in equity for people in places like Aspley and other electorates in the middle and outer suburban rings. These were areas populated in hope and optimism. Many of us chose to raise our families in places like Aspley—indeed, John and I did—because this area offers so much.

We should never forget that residents in electorates like Aspley are people who largely do all the right things. They pay their fair share in rates, taxes and even a little extra for petrol to sit in traffic. They are the small business people, the employees and the tradesmen our economy depends on. Households often have two people working, they have mortgages, they raise families. They are invariably the people who are the first to feel the ups and downs of recessions and they are often among the first to suffer unemployment.

When people from outside Brisbane say, 'Look at the stadiums, look at the Goodwill and Kurilpa bridges, look at the art galleries and look at the motorways,' I have to say that that is a long way from the reality of Aspley and other suburban electorates like it. I think the forgotten people in suburbs like Aspley, McDowall, Carseldine, Bald Hills and Chermside West deserve a bit more respect for their contribution and a louder voice. That is why I believe we have to place a higher value on the lifestyle of our suburbs and those hardworking families and taxpayers who live in them. I hope to be a champion for a better deal for our suburbs, and I will be asking locals to participate in a process to develop better local solutions.

I also want to recognise the importance of small and medium businesses in our local area, which is where the local jobs are. In the early days, along with the cattle, the orchards and the vineyards, some of the first local enterprises—at what was then known as Soldier's Flat and Little Cabbage Tree Creek—were the Royal Exchange Hotel and the first general store, located at what remains the commercial heart of Aspley at the intersection of Gympie Road and Albany Creek Road. The entrepreneurs of local industry were instrumental in establishing the Aspley State School in the late 1880s. So it was not business or community; it was business and community.

I am a small business owner. In these difficult economic times, I understand just how hard it is keeping cash going through the till and retaining your most valuable assets—your employees. When small business suffers, the community suffers. I want to ensure that Aspley and its small business sector in particular are not forgotten as government faces the challenge of job protection and creation. I also commit to helping locals in my area participate in any government programs that grow and retain jobs.

But the core part of my plan for Aspley is the commitment to listen—because I know George Street is in a different world to Maundrell Terrace. That is why I will be continuing my local community corners that were received so well during the campaign in order that I might stay in contact with local neighbourhoods throughout my term—not just at election time.

There are many people I would like to thank and I know you can never fit them all in. The first people I would like to recognise are my family. This was the third time I have put my hand up for election, and the challenges of running and the shared costs are borne disproportionately by our families. I simply would not even have had the courage to run without the love and support of John, my husband, who juggled his business and our lives to help me. We are a true partnership. It is an interesting bit of trivia that John's great-great-grandfather was William Pettigrew, an MLC in the Queensland parliament and the Lord Mayor of Brisbane in 1870, so our family connection with the aspirations of the people of this city and this state goes back a long way. I want to thank three amazing young adults—my children, Richard, Rowan and Alexandra. I am so proud of them and what they have already achieved in their lives. The joy they have brought to my life is immeasurable and I love them with all my being.

I want to acknowledge my mum and my dad. My dad, Jim, missed out on so much as we grew up. He was a sailor and, like all who serve our nation, he spent long periods away. As a child, it was hard to understand and, in our lack of understanding, we often resented the disruption of his returns and just as we all got used to living together again he would have to leave. I now know that that was very hard on him. While he loved the Navy, he left after 20 years service and went into small business but then had to ride the rough seas of the 'recession we had to have' and came off second best. But he kept on surviving, as ordinary Australians do.

My mum, Marjorie, more than held up her end as service mothers and wives do. She raised my brother, Michael, and me in a funny little community in south-west Sydney known as the East Hills Naval Estate, which was nestled precariously between dense scrub, the murky Georges River and the Holsworthy Army firing range. Our daily connection to school, shops and public transport was via a timber footbridge across the river, so she and the other mothers made a special effort to make this cluster of 72 homes a happy community and not just an isolated married quarters patch. My mother was a magnificent role model but it is not surprising given the woman that raised her, my late grandmother, Marjorie Hopkins—a glorious woman who gave me the life-lasting advice that if there was a job to be

done you just had to stop fiddling around and get on with it. I also want to recognise my brother, Michael Palmer, in Melbourne. Michael taught me that to enjoy the fullness of life you have to be true to who you are. I love him to pieces.

To the Davises, my in-laws: Judy and Daven, and John's siblings, Joanne, Andrew, Christopher and Susan, and their spouses, my fellow members of the Outlaws Club, Stephen, Amanda and Julie—thank you for your never-ending encouragement. My thanks go also to other family members: Leone and Ian Taylor, Jodie Taylor and Adam Bennett, all who came from interstate to help, and to my cousin, Dan Palmer, whose attitude to life is always 'pretty groovy'.

I want to thank the members of the Aspley and Chermside West branches, other local branches and the countless helpers, volunteers and friends who helped me during the election. There were hundreds, and their willingness to help and their enthusiasm for change was quite invigorating. I cannot list everybody, but in particular I mention Loris Barlow, Bill Richardson, Shirley Lehmann, Max Mathers, Len and Dorothy Smyth, Ken and Margaret Jackson, Jane Cowan, Tamah Brunckhorst and Steven Dregmans.

To my long-time personal friends, Aileen McGregor-Lowndes and Jacki Scott, who have been with me over the three campaigns, thank you. And there is a special thanks for the absolute commitment to two successive campaigns from two amazing people who put their lives on hold for me: Lacey and Stuart Perrett. Your unbelievable generosity will never be forgotten.

I also want to mention three people because they not only helped but offered advice, friendship and a tolerant ear during the campaign. They are Kevin Martin, Saleena Ham and David Moore—my little 'Kitchen Cabinet'. They shared and fostered my already deep passion for our local community and helped give a sense of order to what can be quite stressful campaigning.

I want to thank the LNP women's movement and before that the Liberal Women's Council. I participate in that body because I believe that our parliament will only truly be capable of listening to all concerns when the people are represented equally by men and women. I am not convinced of the merits of quotas because I think they can devalue and undermine the contribution of women, but I do support the efforts of the LNP women's movement to give more women a voice and a pathway. I particularly recognise the President of LNP Women, my close friend Melina Morgan, who contributes so much to that forum.

We have not come far enough, in my view, from when Irene Longman was the first woman elected to this place in 1929. She must have been a formidable woman. It was said she did not use a loudhailer as her voice carried well and she could deal with hecklers. The *Brisbane Courier* reported that when she was elected one supporter yelled out, 'She's the best man of us all!'

I would note that of the six elected MPs in Aspley three have been women—Beryce Nelson; my predecessor, Bonny Barry, whom I wish well in her future; and now me. People do elect women if they are given the opportunity, and the trick is to encourage more women to participate in the political process. On this note, while I have a different view from the Premier on many things, including the Royal Children's Hospital, I recognise that being the first woman Premier of the state of Queensland is a special honour and I congratulate Anna Bligh on achieving that.

Finally, I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to the member for Southern Downs, Lawrence Springborg, whose vision for a unified conservative force was realised in July last year and in no small way contributed to my being here today. To the other new members of the class of 2009, may I extend to all of you my very best wishes for your time in this place. I believe we bring diversity and enthusiasm to the 53rd Parliament and I look forward to working with you.

I am electrified by the challenges and opportunities ahead. In conclusion, let me leave you with a comment from Irene Longman and a comment from American poet Oliver Wendell Holmes. Mrs Longman, in her address-in-reply to the Governor's speech in 1929, said—

For fourteen years Queensland has wandered in the wilderness of socialist labour rule, lured by the bright promises of lands of ease and vistas of idyllic field where we would obtain the maximum comfort and prosperity by the minimum of effort. But it was a mirage leading to the morass of debt and to the slough of unemployment.

It is a comment that could equally apply today.

I have a plan that I will be discussing and developing further with locals to support their everyday aspirations and needs. At its essence is a commitment to value locals, listen to locals and act for locals for a better future. Oliver Wendell Holmes said, 'It is the province of knowledge to speak, and it is the privilege of wisdom to listen.' Thank you to the House for this opportunity to speak. To the people of Aspley, I am all ears.

Mr DICKSON (Buderim—LNP) (8.37 pm): Mr Speaker, in rising to address the House today, I would firstly like to congratulate you on your appointment. The role of Speaker is critical to the effective running of this parliament, and you have a hard act to follow in the previous Speaker. I think even in the

short time you have been in the chair you have shown that you will treat both sides of the House very fairly. I would like to acknowledge the previous Speaker, the Hon. Mike Reynolds. He did an excellent job and I valued the courtesy and even-handedness he always showed me.

I am a great believer in working together to achieve good outcomes, even if that is with the opposite side. I believe there are some fundamental issues we need to address as a parliament and I am committed to working in a bipartisan way using the ability of all members. I think this is a critical time to solve some of the big issues.

I am greatly honoured to be here as the inaugural member for Buderim and I would like to thank all of those who helped me and supported me in the election campaign. I look forward to representing the residents of the Buderim electorate. As always, my heartfelt thanks go to my wife, Debbie, for her love and support, and to my two sons, Christian and Zeik. My thanks go to my electorate staff who have such a great commitment to our constituents.

The Buderim electorate is fortunate to have one of the largest volunteer community organisations in Queensland, the Buderim War Memorial Community Association. The BWMCA was established over 60 years ago by a small group of volunteers. Today the association has over 70 affiliated organisations which contribute endless hours in community service. Another organisation I would like to mention is Bloomhill Cancer Help. Bloomhill is a highly regarded charity which provides much needed support for people affected by cancer. Support is also provided to family members and carers who save the government valuable man-hours and expenditure. These are just two of the very important organisations I am proud to be involved with.

I take pride in my role as patron of many local sporting and community organisations. Buderim is somewhat unique in the number of highly skilled volunteers who are willing to give their time and energy to support the community. As a politician, this certainly makes my role easier. I think my colleagues in the LNP organisation deserve congratulations on the gains we made in the campaign, and I welcome the talented new people who have joined our parliamentary team. They will play a vital role in working to deliver an LNP government for the people of Queensland.

The global financial crisis has delivered a major wake-up call, and if we ignore the lessons of the past they will come back and bite us. Major economic downturns like this appear to characterise every generation. This is ours. We do not have the time or luxury to apportion blame, but we must be aware of how the electorate views us as politicians and the functions we perform. We are not held in very high regard. In support of that statement, I refer to an article from the *Sunshine Coast Daily* newspaper. For the doubters, perhaps they should refer to the editorials and daily letters of the local newspapers in their area. The editor of the *Sunshine Coast Daily*, Bill Hoffman, said on 6 May this year—

Each week emails flow into my inbox from people whose expectations for the future are being adversely affected by the impacts of growth.

Whether it be those trying to ward off the ill-conceived Traveston Crossing Dam, those in the path of Powerlink's one-track energy delivery system, those awaiting the rollout of the northern pipeline to the proposed dam or the drive of rail duplication from the south, all are learning the vulnerability of dreams.

We seem to be always making way for a future about which we have no say and whose impact is delivered at the stroke of a pen wielded by someone over whom we have no influence.

There seems little commitment to the present. Community consultation is an expensive farce not driven by any genuine desire to solicit and consider the views of those impacted.

We were given the right on 21 March to sit here to represent and govern the state. In our oath of office we promised to well and truly serve the people of Queensland, and I think we should keep that at the forefront of our minds as we make decisions. Are they political decisions, or are they for the betterment of the people of Queensland?

We, and not the public servants, advisers, consultants or PR machines, were placed in a position of trust. Now we are collectively responsible for the positive outcomes that safeguard the lives, welfare and finances of the people of our electorates. This is not only a generational downturn but also a generational opportunity to place Queensland at the forefront of future economic activity, delivering long-term dividends to the state's bottom line which is now so dependent on taxes. We need to be looking to the future and how we can really make Queensland a better place for us all.

We should start by getting serious about our environment. In an additional demonstration of bipartisanship, why not reach agreement in principle during the next sitting of parliament to the environmental issues of removing plastic shopping bags? We use them every day of our lives as a convenience. Some are recycled, most are dumped but still millions find their way into our waters and oceans.

In February last year an article from the USA printed in the *Courier-Mail* warned about the pollution hazard of a floating rubbish dump in the Pacific Ocean full of tonnes of plastic. We do not need to go further than our nationally recognised tourism icon at the Sunshine Coast, Underwater World, to learn that plastic bag pollutants continue to kill more marine life. We have to clean up our oceans

because they play such a vital role in our food security. The legislation necessary for the implementation of this ban on plastic shopping bags could be identical to that enacted in South Australia this year. It would be cost efficient and a quick solution. Why not learn from good legislation and ideas being used in other states?

I note that this government's Go for 2&5 campaign, which encourages people to eat more fruit and vegetables, has been taken from a comprehensive campaign run in Western Australia. The Go for 2&5 campaign is part of the government's bid to make Queenslanders Australia's healthiest people. Health and lifestyle campaigns like this need to go beyond just advertising. Implementation of real initiatives have long-term lasting benefits to the people of the state. Queensland, like any Australian state, has significant issues with degenerative diseases arising from poor health choices by the population generally. Lifestyle diseases like diabetes, cardiovascular problems and obesity are increasing at disproportionate rates and are resulting in pressures on our health system.

Good health starts with what we eat every morning, every day and each day of the year. Food security is becoming an ever-increasing global problem. We have to empower individuals with the knowledge and the ability to utilise local land assets to nurture and produce food that enables healthy daily living. Whether it be schools teaching about the growing of food or communities being granted plots of land within cities and urban environments to share food production, the concept of urban agriculture is worthy of pursuit.

These things are already happening in communities across Australia. We need to be seriously looking at how they can be adopted on a wider scale. The possibilities are endless providing we stop for a moment and get off the treadmill that we have become accustomed to travelling on which has evolved into a cycle of stress, tension and a multitude of social and health issues. Think of the school garden. This example is pertinent as it could be easily implemented as part of the education initiative. The school garden encompasses a range of positive outcomes for children. Socially they learn to explore concepts of group work and cooperation. Through reward for effort they learn about motivation and achievement. Agriculturally, they learn skills such as planning and tending vegetable gardens. They learn the lessons around seasonal growth, what to plant and when, and how long the cycle for food production takes.

The program can be extended into the kitchen classroom where they prepare and consume the food they have grown. The rewards are many. This is not just a concept; it has been done successfully interstate including at Elwood Primary School in inner-suburban Melbourne. Community gardens also provide endless benefits to the community across Australia in terms of health and social connectivity levels. At a recent forum held at Kelvin Grove Village, I had the privilege of learning about Food Connect. Led by Robert Pekin, Food Connect provides a link between local farmers and city people that provides a weekly delivery of farm fresh product. Food is local, seasonal and fresh, having only been picked within the previous few days. These farms are either organic or are in the transition of becoming organic, and are within 500 kilometres of Brisbane. This is important because it limits the food kilometres travelled and therefore carbon emissions.

The aim of this organisation should be adopted as a comprehensive policy for long-term sustainability for agriculture, health and the environment. It represents a holistic approach to planning, not the current disconnected model under which we operate. Our health care and maintenance starts the day we are born. Our children are our most important asset, and we need to make them conscious of the importance of fresh food, preferably organic or at least sustainably grown. We hear a lot about the problems of fast food but even many of our packaged and prepared foods that fill our supermarket shelves are full of preservatives and chemicals.

We should also look at taking water out to Western Queensland, opening up some of the best agricultural land in this state. This would also be an opportunity to create more affordable housing, and I am sure that the Prime Minister's \$42 billion would have been better spent on this type of project rather than handouts.

When it comes to other fundamental issues in our state, we need to be equally imaginative. Let us try to find some new solutions. Tourism is one of the biggest contributors to our economy but will continue to suffer from the global financial downturn. According to the recent tourism transport forum, our promotional campaigns are missing the mark. Recently an initiative was suggested on radio that may have some merit. It would see Queensland Tourism supervising a fund of \$100 million, \$60 million from the federal government, \$30 million from the state government and \$10 million from participating local authorities. It would target international tourism through committed prebookings valued at a minimum of \$5,000. In return, travellers would receive a paid air ticket. This formula could be adopted to promote interstate tourism. It would stimulate the industry and bring immediate economic return.

One of the big drawcards to our tourism industry is physical security for travellers. We should capitalise on that. While we are a very safe place to visit when compared to many parts of the world, I am still concerned about the violence in our society. Of particular concern is the way those in the front line of law and order in our society are at risk. We can no longer condone half-hearted punishments that do not act as a deterrent. Assaults on police, ambulance and fire officers should automatically attract a

minimum sentence of three months imprisonment. The short-term cost to the penal system would probably be offset by the long-term benefit of deterrence and, more importantly, the positive impact on emergency services personnel in terms of their physical and psychological health and retention in the services.

As a society we should also have zero tolerance for crimes against individuals that seem to be on the increase—glassings, nightclub attacks, road rage and other cowardly assaults. Given that alcohol so often plays a part in these crimes, I think we should take a stand on applications for extending hotel trading hours. Why do we allow gaming and drinking after three o'clock in the morning in suburban areas? We should be putting the health of our community before profit. All of these issues have relevance in the bigger financial equation of our state and its future. Restoring the fabric of our society would allow some of our resources to be reallocated where they are most needed, in health and education.

Those who have worked and saved should not be treated as a source of funding to save the broader community when it suffers under financial stress. A tax is a tax whatever name you give it—a levy, a fee, a charge or a toll. Local authorities please take note: we have now entered an era of unprecedented economic upheaval.

To convey to the House the urgency with which we must act as a parliament, I table the *Weekend Australian* of 16-17 May, which contains on page 16 an Opinion article titled 'Too much politics, not enough policy: The budget ducked our economic problems'. In support of this is an article from the same publication of the same date and which appears on the front page titled 'Kevin Rudd plan to raid super for projects' by Adele Ferguson.

Tabled paper: The Weekend Australian newspaper dated 16-17 May 2009 containing article titled 'PM plan to raid super for projects' [\[259\]](#).

With this in mind, with respect to the House and its members, may I commend the following points for urgent consideration as part A of a three-step financial solution to economic recovery. There should be no payroll tax in Queensland for new businesses incorporated after 1 July this year. Existing payroll tax should be halved by January 2010 and removed completely by the end of 2010. The current payroll tax rate of 4.75 per cent is nothing but a negative for the creation and maintenance of jobs.

Almost as big a problem is the endless legislation relating to compliance that burdens business with extra regulation and cost. From 1 July, any new commercial and industrial building constructed to a six-star standard should be exempt from stamp duty on all relevant state and financial transactions. This would provide simplicity and transparency in a financially turbulent time as well as encourage good environmental practices.

There should be a series of trigenerating gas-fired power plants within South-East Queensland to reduce long transmission lines and their inherent inefficiencies which result in unnecessary carbon emissions. The trigeneration plants will provide replacement energy and ensure energy security on a local level. This will help protect against the impact of natural disasters that are likely to result from climate change. This system will fully utilise by-products such as heat and steam in manufacturing, industrial complexes, hospitals and so on. The state government must retain and not privatise further its energy portfolio. It should be giving consideration to rebates or discounts for retirees and invalid pensioners, who were completely ignored in the March election campaign.

All primary producers with family owned and operated properties should be exempt from stamp duty when they on-sell working farms—that is, they should receive a minimum of 75 per cent income from those farms. To promote sustainable farming through organic and biodynamic techniques, farms should receive a 25 per cent discount from government rebate on general rates payable to the local authority. This would benefit the whole community by helping to ensure long-term food security.

We continually hear complaints from the private sector and government about the need for a pool of savings for lending—now very evident—and the lack of work ethic amongst our young. A first home loan formula that is self-sustainable and will create a consistent level of demand in the building industry will remove some of the peaks and troughs that have always plagued this industry.

Other benefits to be delivered would be: development of a simple approach that sees everyone treated equally regardless of background; motivation and reward and promotion of a good lifelong work ethic; all tax from employment to be held in a special first home owners account administered by the Reserve Bank, with interest on deposits paid at 80 per cent of the 10-year bond rate; no tax on accounts with interest compounding—the savings must be used for a first home prior to the age of 35; if not, it would be rolled into superannuation at the normal employee contribution rate—all tax contributions to be accepted only on Australian based employment, with the earliest age of 15 and terminating six years after completing high school. This could be a state and federal government opportunity to operate a first home buyers initiative that is self-sustaining, has long-term consistency and provides for individual goals to be set.

There cannot be any further privatisation of state assets. This is just another toxic creature of decades of illusory financial theory that delivered us the global financial crisis. Do we go for short-term gain or long-term financial security that will give us dividends and ensure we can look after our society? We particularly need to be able to fulfil our unwritten contract to look after the wellbeing of our aged and infirm. It is a well-known fact that we have an ageing population and we will need to support them into the future. The cost of selling public assets with ever-increasing charges is a double hit for the people of Queensland as profits are transferred to the private sector. This is truly an opportunity of a lifetime for the people of Queensland. We should buy, not sell, assets.

There is a company called Asciano that has been written about in the *Australian Financial Review*. It is an example of a wonderful opportunity to pursue an asset which is compatible with the management and operation of Queensland Rail. Incidentally, this company has an outstanding debt of \$4.8 billion—the same figure as the cost to build the BrisConnect Airport Link. One is a hole in the ground; the other is a dominant player in rail and port activity. As the economy turns, massive dividends will bring cash flow to Queensland's bottom line. What is better than not only taking the initiative now as a leader but also operating a corporation that sets market trends?

Urgent and decisive action with clear direction is what is required to establish confidence and put our state back on track. The alternative is stop-start, with backflips in policy and a continued downward spiral of confidence. Will history show the financial crisis as a trigger for a re-evaluation of who we are and what we need, against what we want and what is destined? In concluding, may I remind the House that, as of now, we are collectively responsible for our failure or success in securing our parents', children's and grandchildren's futures. Thank you.

Hon. PJ LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading) (8.55 pm): Firstly I congratulate the member for Logan on his election as Speaker of the parliament. As other members have mentioned, he has brought new standards to the chamber. For instance, one can no longer refer to the opposition as 'you jokers', as a member whose name escapes me used to do quite often. I congratulate him on his elevation to the position of Speaker.

Many times over the past eight years I have spoken of the economic and social pressures on people living in Southport. I have spoken of their concern for the cost of living generally, the cost of accessing health care, the need for children to get a good education, the importance of training, job security and the creation of new jobs, the effectiveness of community policing, the protection of our environment and public housing issues. These concerns still exercise the minds of Southport residents, which is not surprising given the rapid growth of the area. Since I spoke in the last address-in-reply these concerns have been exacerbated by the global financial crisis.

I thank the people of Southport for choosing me to represent them in this parliament for a further three years. As with previous elections, this was not a victory for me but for the branch members, family, staff, community members and groups and friends who worked so hard for success. I extend my particular thanks to my children, Ali, Jane and Phil, and my son-in-law, Clive, for their support. In the case of Jane and Phil, that support consisted mainly of phone calls from Dubai and London at all times of the day and night with advice and encouragement. Ali and Clive assisted on election day with setting up election booths, manning a booth all day and then scrutineering when the polls closed. Given that they have two energetic and exhausting young boys in Henry and Zac, it probably seemed like a holiday to them.

Thanks to my staff members, Sharon Masters and Tim Nairn, who are a great support and who work so effectively under, at times, stressful conditions. I also thank my campaign manager, Terry Callaghan, branch members and friends, especially John and Meg Coonan and Don Dwyer, who worked so hard on election day and helped me celebrate the next day. Special thanks to Pat Jackson, Terry Dyson, Penny Klinge and Desley Monsour for keeping the troops fed and watered. Lindesay Jones was again a great support and adviser, as he has been to me for almost 20 years.

Much of the credit for the return of the government must, of course, go to the Premier, as has been mentioned by many people on this side of the House. She showed fortitude and stamina and fought to the very end for every last vote. Through all that, she was pleasant and even kept her sense of humour in the face of certain sections of the media abandoning even the facade of objectivity. By inference she was blamed for the Moreton Bay oil spill, for instance. She was also belted for the downgrading of the state's AAA credit rating.

I do not underestimate the benefit of a AAA rating. However, I would prefer, as the government does, to continue with our Capital Works Program and the budget deficit that results in order to protect and indeed increase the number of Queensland jobs. One really has to ask oneself about the rating agencies and about how much credibility they have. One wonders why anyone would really listen to them. All the investment banks and companies in the USA that were given AAA ratings—Lehman Brothers, Merrill Lynch, Bear Stearns—where are they now? Rating agencies make weather forecasters look good, I reckon. I offer my commiserations to my opponents Graeme Hill, Mark Tull, Stephen Dalton, Brian Morris and Tania Wright. It is no fun getting beaten at anything, especially an election.

An opposition member: You have plenty of experience at that.

Mr LAWLOR: I know I have had plenty of experience because I stood three times for Southport before I finally won in 2001. That is where pig-headedness will get you to.

An opposition member: No disagreement from me.

Mr LAWLOR: There is no need to agree with that. Despite the meltdown of the world economy, Southport continues to grow, with almost 50,000 people now living in the area. This government has recognised and taken the steps needed to preserve what makes Southport such an attractive place in which to live. During my last term I oversaw the completion of a number of important projects. Traffic congestion has been alleviated with the completion of the Frank Street stage 1 and with the duplication of the Loder Creek bridge at a cost of over \$20 million. The second stage has commenced, which continues into the seat of Broadwater. That second stage is going to cost \$55 million and is underway as we speak. The upgrade of Smith Street, one of Southport's arterial roads, was completed last year with the inclusion of a T3 lane in both directions and the replacement of a dangerous roundabout at High Street with traffic signals. I also look forward to the completion of the Gold Coast rapid transit system, which will provide public transport to a number of key facilities and areas, making Southport one of the most accessible areas for everyone on the Gold Coast.

Southport is home to the Gold Coast's major health facility in the Gold Coast Hospital and will soon be home to the new Gold Coast University Hospital which, at a cost of \$1.55 billion, is due to open in 2012. Cancer, cardiac, neurosciences, neonatal intensive care and trauma services will be offered at the new facility. It is located just across the road from Griffith University. The hospital will provide a learning environment for the next generation of nurses and doctors. It will contain 750 beds—approximately 300 more than the current hospital—and, importantly, it has room to grow as the demand for services in the region increases over time.

The Arundel Police Beat was completed, as was the new Southport Fire Station upgrade at a cost of \$3 million. There was a new fire truck and also three new ambulances and additional ambulance officers and paramedics. Maintenance funding for all schools continues as does the actual work itself. The enterprise centre at Southport State High School has been completed at a cost of \$2.5 million. The government also contributed \$18 million to the Broadwater Parklands project, which is being completed by the Gold Coast City Council.

An important part of the campaign, of course, was the \$60 million committed to the Carrara stadium. That will provide 300 jobs in the construction phase and 400 jobs thereafter. Of course, it is an important piece of tourism infrastructure on the Gold Coast. There are other issues which I intend to address in the term of this government and they include a review of body corporate legislation, particularly the issue of lot entitlements and the ability to adjust lot entitlements.

Mr Hinchliffe: Hear, hear!

Mr LAWLOR: I acknowledge the interjection from the Minister for Infrastructure, who takes a personal interest in that matter as well. Dredging of the Broadwater has commenced and the issue there that we must address is a permanent funding source.

I congratulate all members of this parliament on their election or re-election. It is also appropriate at this time that we remember several good friends who did not make it back: Bonny Barry, Phil Weightman, Stuart Copeland, Phil Gray, Andrew McNamara, Di Reilly and John English. I also wish Ken Hayward, Pat Purcell, Kev Lingard, Chris Bombolas, Rod Welford, Jim Pearce, Gary Fenlon, Linda Lavarch and Warren Pitt all the best in their post parliamentary life.

Debate, on motion of Mr Lawlor, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. PJ LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (Acting Leader of the House) (9.03 pm): I move—
That the House do now adjourn.

Schoolchildren, Safety

Mr BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (9.03 pm): I rise in this chamber tonight to discuss an issue which is very important to me as my eldest daughter, Taylor, is in year 1 at Meridan State College. How appropriate it is that I am able to address this issue tonight, the day after the Queensland teachers' strike, which highlighted the inability of the government to resolve disputes and also highlighted this government's continual failure to take a proactive stance on issues. It always chooses the reactive approach or, as I like to now refer to it, the 'we've completely run out of ideas, so let's go with the flow'

approach. One particular issue that this government has failed to address is the safety of our schoolchildren outside of their schools. Whether it is the parking facilities for the parents and teachers or the road network which surrounds schools, the state government has continually ignored this issue.

In my electorate of Kawana this issue is one that is spoken about at every P&C meeting that I have attended. To highlight my point, recently during the state election campaign, there was an issue involving illegal U-turns outside a local school. The Department of Main Roads and the Sunshine Coast Regional Council were not interested in erecting a sign on the traffic light that would indicate to drivers that U-turns were illegal. The parents of this school were outraged as this intersection was the main exit and entry point for the school and the local community. Despite repeated requests by the P&C, no sign was erected and we resorted to me standing on the side of the road with a no U-turn sign to educate the parents. To save the Table Office the pressure, I will not table the metal sign, but I will make it available to the Minister for Main Roads and invite him to attend this dangerous intersection with me to erect the sign. That is, of course, if the current minister sets himself apart from the now Minister for Health and is actually interested in local issues. I cannot give the Minister for Main Roads mice, but I can give him a great sign worthy of two Main Roads sign bolts.

Having realised the frustration of parents around my electorate, I am determined to bring some awareness to their plight. As a result, on behalf of the Kawana electorate schools, I take pleasure in announcing the launch next Thursday, 28 May of the Kawana Electorate Schools Road Safety Awareness Month. For the purposes of this program, the month of June will be divided into Traffic Safety Week, Pedestrian Safety Week, Responsible Driving Week and Child Safety Week. The idea of this awareness month is not only to draw attention to the issue of road safety around our schools, but to the broader issues of stranger danger, drug and alcohol awareness and the responsibilities of younger drivers.

I note that no representatives from the government visited my electorate during the recent election campaign. However, now that the election is out of the way, I extend an invitation to the ministers for Education, Main Roads, Transport and Child Safety—

Mr Reeves interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister for Child Safety!

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. I invite the ministers to the electorate of Kawana so that perhaps this government will take seriously its responsibility in ensuring that our schoolchildren are protected, particularly on the roads around their schools.

National Volunteer Week

Ms JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (9.06 pm): Last week was National Volunteer Week and an opportunity to thank the amazing people who give the precious gift of their time to make our communities a better place to live. Over five million people volunteer their time across Australia. When we stop to think about what that means, the mind begins to boggle. Without volunteers, there would be no junior sport, no festivals or school fetes, no op shops or Vinnies to support the most vulnerable, no museums and marine rescue services or SES to respond when emergencies like flash floods occur. I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that society as we know it would grind to a halt without our volunteers.

When the Premier announced as part of the government's *Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland* policy direction that we would set a target to increase by 50 per cent the number of people volunteering their time by 2020, I decided it was time to act. I have declared 2009 to be the Year of the Volunteer in my electorate and have set about shining a spotlight on the wonderful contributions made by volunteers in communities across the electorate and encouraging more people to take up volunteering which, after all, offers a wonderful way to meet new people, feel part of the community and boost self-esteem by making a difference.

The first job was to find a way to promote volunteering that was practical and local. Using my website, www.janjarratt.com, I have created a slice of cyberspace dedicated to volunteering. I call it my 'dating service for volunteers' because it aims to put would be volunteers in touch with the organisation or group of their choice. This has been a very popular site with more and more not-for-profit groups and sporting organisations listing their details.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, last week was National Volunteer Week and in the Whitsundays we celebrated in style. On Thursday I joined forces with the Whitsunday Community Services to host a volunteer information forum at which local not-for-profit and volunteer organisations shared information and stories with members of the community.

This was a successful forum, with new volunteers being signed up and the buzz of networking illustrating the energy with which volunteers approach life. On Friday I was pleased to host a thankyou lunch for a group of 70 volunteers. This was a great occasion, made even more special because it was

held at the Cannonvale TAFE College training restaurant called Palmers. Our meal was cooked by a cast of international students from our English college and we were served by year 10 hospitality students from the Whitsunday Christian College. The students excelled in their respective roles and a really enjoyable lunch was overshadowed only by the act of fellowship that the occasion allowed. I salute all volunteers whose efforts enrich our community and I look forward to the next event in the local Year of the Volunteer.

Superior Jetties

Dr DOUGLAS (Gaven—LNP) (9.09 pm): Superior Jetties is a Gaven based company that has lost a contract to supply a pontoon to the large, \$36 million Southport Broadwater Parklands project. The winning tenderer, Bellingham Corporation, is a wholly US owned Melbourne based Brisbane factory. This part of the contract is being paid by Queensland Transport. Abigroup is the project manager. The Gold Coast City Council is being paid by the state government to supervise the project manager. Queensland Transport has made these funds available for the pontoon construction with a state government stimulus allocation as long as the job was done by 30 June 2009. The project is a much-desired parklands project for the Southport foreshore.

The pontoon is a critical part of a larger, \$2 million main pier project. It originally was a \$6 million project. Abigroup shaved \$4 million off the price because they spent so much on the original design plan. The prices offered by both companies—Bellingham and Superior Jetties—were identical, only Superior offered more piers, was local and had proven QT tender expertise. But the contract was awarded to the other firm. Three local Gold Coast boilermakers may lose their jobs. I ask: why is Queensland Transport welsing on Gold Coast workers when they are vulnerable to the vagaries of the market? Infrastructure stimulus payments by the government and spending were meant to be awarded to local companies.

To give members a rough idea of what local companies are capable of, particularly Superior Jetties in this case on the Gold Coast, the losing subcontractor had delivered a world-class, 600-berth marine docking facility at Abu Dhabi in time for the 2008 International Boat Show. The construction time was seven months, the installation time was three months, and Superior Jetties made it with six weeks to spare. Superior Jetties was awarded the contract only nine months previous. That was one of many major international contracts that this company has completed. It was one of three that Superior Jetties had done in the 16 months prior to losing this contract.

Queensland Transport's marine division had many tenders successfully completed by Superior Jetties, despite, in many cases, withholding payments and making it difficult for Superior Jetties to do its job. Many people struggled to maintain their jobs as a result. The local company deserves the support of the state government.

Morayfield Electorate, Anzac Day Ceremonies

Mr RYAN (Morayfield—ALP) (9.12 pm): Anzac Day means different things to different people. Officially, Anzac Day is a national day of commemoration for the service of Australians in past and current conflicts throughout the world. Both my grandfathers served in the military during the Second World War. Both were conscripts, but both answered their nation's call to serve. They sought no accolades for their service and very rarely spoke of their experiences. On the rare occasion that they spoke of their experiences, they said that war was a tragedy. They said that war was not about winners or losers, victory or defeat; war is about the total failure of the human condition to make peace work. So on Anzac Day, we commemorate the brave and dedicated individuals who served and continue to serve our nation but also remind ourselves of the destruction and loss caused by war.

This year, I was honoured to attend a number of local Anzac Day ceremonies in the Morayfield electorate. I congratulate Principal Ross Mackay, teachers, staff and students of the Narangba Valley State High School on a respectful commemoration service. In particular, I acknowledge the role of the school captains, the Narangba Valley Army cadets and the Narangba Valley State High School string quartet on their involvement with the service. I also acknowledge the contribution made by Mr Des Kearton from the Caboolture-Morayfield sub-branch of the RSL.

I also attended the Jinibara State School Anzac Day service. Again, I acknowledge the respect and interest shown by students during the service. I congratulate the principal, Mr Ray Bloxham, the senior band, conducted by Mrs Wilkinson, and the Jinibara senior choir, conducted by Mrs Foat, on their respective contributions to the commemoration service. I particularly acknowledge the magnificent skill displayed by the bugler on her playing of the last post.

I attended the mateship day activities held at the Burpengary Meadows State School. The principal, Mr Peter Black, and the teachers and staff of the school are to be commended on this tremendous initiative, which honours Anzac Day through activities that teach teamwork, leadership, trust and discipline.

Finally, I attended both the dawn service and the main service at Caboolture on Anzac Day—

Mr Watt interjected.

Mr RYAN: I was busy—a hardworking local member. It was reported that 1,700 people attended the dawn service and 1,500 participated in the main service. I acknowledge the contribution made by the sub-branch president, Mr Glenn Willmann, and other members of the sub-branch including Mr Peter Lawlor and Mr Des Kearton. I also acknowledge Mr Geoff Murray for his kind invitation to enjoy a flavoured milk with other attendees of the dawn service.

Palmwoods

Mr POWELL (Glass House—LNP) (9.15 pm): The past couple of weeks have been hard for my home town of Palmwoods and the neighbouring towns of Woombye and Nambour. At the outset, I would like to pass on my sincerest condolences to the families and friends of those tragically killed in the horrific accident on the Nambour Connection Road just under two weeks ago. As a father of young children myself, I can only begin to imagine the pain and distress that these families must be experiencing. Yet, in their grief the same families have responded with a level of maturity and clarity that I would struggle to emulate by calling on all drivers to pause as they turn the ignition to ensure their head is focused on the task at hand. I echo their caution and call on all road users to take extra care, even extra time if that is necessary—arrive late if you have to—but remain alert and remain safe on our roads.

This evening, I would like to pay particular tribute to the staff and teachers of Palmwoods State School and the Sunshine Coast education district. I have been in contact with these dedicated individuals over the past couple of weeks and commend their quick, caring and child focused response on behalf of, and to the benefit of, the students of Palmwoods State School. I believe these students, particularly those in the prep classes and year 6, are better prepared to deal with the trauma they are currently experiencing and may confront again in the future.

I would especially acknowledge Mr Rob McAlpine, the regional executive director of the education department on the Sunshine Coast. It is my understanding that Rob and his team, along with parents and members of the broader community, met to discuss how to best support and counsel the students on their return the Monday following the accident. Parents were also provided with information outlining how to identify behaviour changes that might indicate that their child is experiencing trauma and grief.

I would also acknowledge Ms Sharyn Rieger, the principal of Palmwoods State School, and her staff. Many of the local children have shared with me their experiences of the school's memorial service held last Friday. Clearly, Ms Rieger and her staff had gone to considerable lengths to provide an opportunity for the school community to grieve the loss of their classmates and students in a sensitive and child-appropriate manner.

On behalf of the broader Palmwoods community, I pass on my thanks and gratitude to Mr McAlpine, Ms Rieger and all of the staff associated with Palmwoods State School. Their efforts have not gone unnoticed or unappreciated.

Morningside and District Country Women's Association

Ms FARMER (Bulimba—ALP) (9.18 pm): I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the 60th anniversary of the Morningside and District Country Women's Association. Over the past 60 years, Bulimba has changed from a rural village, a small pocket of country on the river, to join the growth and development of Brisbane. Through this time, the CWA has remained a constant presence in the community. In fact, as one member of the branch remarked, 'We have been here so long they've changed the street names around us.'

I have previously spoken in this House about the sense of community that so defines the Bulimba electorate and I believe that community groups such as the Morningside and District Country Women's Association have been instrumental in fostering that spirit. The group's regular meetings at the Morningside School of Arts allow members to participate in cookery, crochet, knitting, public speaking and charity work. Like so many groups in the Bulimba electorate, this group thrives on its involvement with the wider community. It has worked tirelessly to assist and raise monies for charities. From making care bears for the local police, firefighters and ambulance officers to distribute to the young people they encounter, to raising funds for the Flying Doctors Service, the Morningside and District CWA has worked tirelessly to assist others in the local community and across the state. One member has knitted 38 blankets for premature babies as part of a program that sees members use their skills to improve the situation of the families of premature babies in Brisbane and Logan. The CWA also has a strong focus on education and has developed an important relationship with local schools, engaging with students in varying ways to encourage their studies. To its members, the CWA is a group that creates a sense of community, teaches new skills and empowers women.

The group may not be in a position to celebrate such an impressive anniversary without the dedicated work of its members, and I would like to briefly cast attention on two of the group's longest-serving members, who will be stepping down from their positions in June this year. Daphne Johnstone has served in alternate roles as president and treasurer of the Morningside and District CWA for the past 50 years. After being encouraged to join by her sister-in-law who was keen to put Daphne's cooking skills to work, Daphne embraced the CWA, winning numerous awards for her cooking and handiwork. Daphne also served a term as the state handicraft chairman for the CWA, during which time she travelled the state at her own cost, teaching women handicrafts ranging from wood veneer to oil painting.

The other noteworthy member of the CWA is Peg Gladstone. She has been secretary of the group for the past 12 years and I think has been a CWA member for most of that time. Peg has been involved with the CWA in varying places across Australia, has brought a lifetime of experience to the local branch and has worked to pass her skills on to the local community. I would like to thank Daphne and Peg especially, but also all the members of the Morningside CWA and I look forward to working with them for many years to come.

Air Ambulance

Mr MALONE (Mirani—LNP) (9.21 pm): Central Queensland Rescue is a community funded rescue helicopter service that has performed 4,000 missions since its commencement in 1994. The current chairman of the board is Dr Peter Bastable and the operational CEO is Phil Downer. They have a contractual arrangement with EMQ to provide 600 flying hours per annum. Those missions are mainly primary responses and interfacility transfers, with some search and rescue, urgent police tasks and other responses.

For a number of years the demands on the service have significantly exceeded 600 hours. Those extra hours are mainly due to multiple interfacility transfers, many to Townsville and other areas outside the local area. Over the past 12 months, for instance, there have been over 50 flights to Townsville at an actual cost of \$20,000 per patient. In essence, those transfers are subsidised by sponsors and individual donations from community members who would expect the transfers to be funded through their taxes using a fixed-wing aircraft. Currently, Mackay is not a base for a fixed-wing aircraft. In addition, long-haul transfers remove the helicopter from the local area for lengthy periods, sometimes for up to six to eight hours, and it is not unknown for that to be extended to 12 hours, meaning that the helicopter is unavailable for tasking within the subscribed area during that time.

These missions create fatigue issues for the crew, with associated penalty costs and increased maintenance costs. The authorities would consider a fixed-wing aircraft a more appropriate transport over these sorts of distances. With these thoughts in mind and with the added knowledge that there have been significant ongoing problems with bed blocks in the regional and tertiary hospitals, some two years ago the board began to investigate the option of extending the service to include a fixed-wing asset.

After careful research, including visits to numerous overseas providers in Europe and Canada, it was decided to lease and fit out a Beechcraft 1900D. The Beechcraft 1900D was selected for the following reasons: it is a large aircraft capable of multipatient transfers; it is a cost-effective and reliable Big Brother to the Kingair that we all know; its cruise speed is twice that of a 412 helicopter and fuel consumption is three-quarters the hourly consumption of a 412; it provides an efficient and cost-effective capability to remove bed blocks both in regional and tertiary hospitals, helping to free up beds for acute patients who require urgent transfer; and it provides the ability to respond to multicasualty disasters, bringing in medical teams and equipment, and transferring multiple patients.

The air ambulance would solve the problem of interfacility transfers to Townsville that remove the community funded helicopter from the area, leaving our subscribers without a service for lengthy periods on a regular basis. More than 50 per cent of the costs for CQ Rescue are raised from individual and corporate donations. I ask that the government support the concept of an air ambulance in the Mackay district.

Domestic Violence Prevention Month

Mrs SMITH (Burleigh—ALP) (9.25 pm): Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month is held during May each year to raise community awareness of the social and personal impacts of such violence and the support available to those affected by it. Domestic and family violence imposes a huge cost upon the community. It primarily impacts upon women and children, but ultimately the whole community suffers. Research demonstrates that children exposed to violence are more likely in time to offend themselves. Much hangs on our putting a stop to this destructive cycle of offending. We must not shirk the difficult task of addressing domestic and family violence.

The Gold Coast Domestic Violence Integrated Response has been successfully operating since 1996. It was developed following community discussions about the high incidence of domestic violence and domestic homicides on the Gold Coast. The local Magistrates Court currently records the highest number of applications for domestic violence protection orders in Queensland. The Gold Coast DVIR is a community based integrated multi-agency response to domestic violence. It focuses on services working together to provide coordinated, appropriate and consistent responses to domestic violence within a justice reform model. The project includes court assistance and follow-up support for victims and their children, men's groups and a system of interagency information sharing, monitoring and tracking.

The Chief Magistrate, Judge Brendan Butler, was the guest speaker at a meeting on the Gold Coast last week. He stated that the domestic and family violence jurisdiction is a challenge for the courts, constituting one of its busiest areas. In the year ending 30 June 2008, there were almost 24,000 applications for protection orders lodged in Queensland. That represents a 36 per cent increase in applications over the last seven years. The busiest centre in the state was Southport. A further 223 applications were lodged at Coolangatta.

Mr Speaker, I think you will agree these are frightening statistics. The Gold Coast Domestic Violence Prevention Centre is working towards the establishment of a specialised domestic violence court on the Gold Coast. Currently, there is such a court being trialled in Rockhampton. The aims of the Rockhampton trial were to develop a procedure to reduce the amount of unnecessary appearances required by the parties by having applications, hearings and breach proceedings heard on the one day in the one court. I look forward to the day when a specialised domestic violence court is established on the Gold Coast.

I would particularly like to acknowledge Donna Justo, Director of the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre, and the staff at the centre for their untiring commitment to victims of domestic and family violence. Also, I congratulate the members of the Domestic Violence Integrated Response team: the Gold Coast Police, Southport Magistrates Court, Community Corrections, the Department of Child Safety and the local women's refuges. Without their support, many more victims would be at risk of further harm.

Watson, Sir Bruce; Martinuzzi, Mr A

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (9.28 pm): I rise to pay tribute to two life members of the former Queensland National Party who we have lost in recent times. The late Sir Bruce Watson, a former long-serving trustee of the Queensland National Party, passed away on 1 November 2008 aged 80. Sir Bruce was born in Stanthorpe in 1928. Educated at Toowoomba Grammar and the University of Queensland, he graduated with degrees in Engineering and Commerce and worked in the power industry in Tasmania and North Queensland before joining the Mount Isa Mines subsidiary, Copper Refineries Pty Ltd, in 1956. He was involved with the Mount Isa expansion program in the early 1970s until moving into the mining industry in Western Australia in 1975. Sir Bruce returned to Brisbane as a director of MIM in 1977. He was appointed managing director in 1980 and succeeded Sir James Foots as MIM's chief executive officer in July 1981 and as chairman in November 1983. He stepped down as CEO in December 1990 and as chairman of the board in 1991.

Sir Bruce served as a director of the National Australia Bank and as chairman of the Gas Corporation of Queensland. Sir Bruce served as president of the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy in 1992 and was national president of the Australian Institute of Company Directors in 1993. In 1985 he was knighted in recognition of his service to Queensland industry and in 1989 the University of Queensland conferred on him an Honorary Doctorate of Engineering.

I do not claim to have known Sir Bruce Watson well, although I did know him and I did share with him membership of the former Queensland National Party and the Sir Samuel Griffith Society. I think Sir Bruce Watson was a great Queenslander and I wanted to put that on the record in the Queensland parliament along with my condolences to Lady Watson and the Watson family.

Alfred Martinuzzi was a life member of the former Queensland National Party who passed away on 8 May 2009 aged 94 years. He was born in Mourilyan, a small town in my electorate of Hinchinbrook, in 1914. Alf was educated at Mourilyan, Herberton, Nudgee College and the University of Queensland, where he read arts and law. Alf returned to North Queensland, where he worked his parents' farm and was employed by the Shell oil company. Unfortunately, during World War II Alf was interned with many other people of Italian heritage, despite being born in Australia and having never been to Italy. A generous man, Alf held no grudges and assisted Italians to migrate to Australia in search of a new life after the war.

Alf was very committed to the Roman Catholic Church and was a life member of the Knights of the Southern Cross. Alf was very committed to the arts and was instrumental in setting up the North Queensland Conservatorium of Music, successfully serving as chairman for many years. Alf was

awarded an MBE in 1982 for his services to cultural activities in Queensland. Alf was also a strong supporter of the Innisfail and District Historical Society. Alf was a long-serving member of the management committee of the former Queensland National Party, and I was privileged to present to him in 2007 his 50-year membership certificate. Alf Martinuzzi was a great North Queenslander and I offer my condolences to the Martinuzzi family.

HUSH for Homelessness Appeal

Ms GRACE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (9.31 pm): I am sure members would all agree that there are many people who would pay to silence a politician even for just an hour. Well, I had the pleasure last Friday of being silent for one hour when I participated in the Mission Australia HUSH for Homelessness appeal. HUSH for Homelessness symbolises the 'invisible' and 'voiceless' lives that homeless Australians lead. I was one of 150 HUSH for Homelessness heroes, who included the Queensland Firebirds, the Queensland Roar, the Hon. Karen Struthers, former test cricketer Michael Kasprovicz and Councillor David Hinchliffe.

Ms Spence: And was it very hard for you?

Ms GRACE: Well, I do not know how the other heroes went, but my supporters were obviously pretty keen to keep me quiet as my sponsorship raised over \$1,000, even though my target was only \$500. In fact, the total raised by Mission Australia nationwide currently stands at over \$70,000. This was a wonderful opportunity for me to help provide awareness and much-needed funding for the voiceless people in our community. All donations go directly to Mission Australia homeless services, providing crisis and transitional accommodation and support services to homeless people across the country.

Tragically, almost 105,000 Australians have no place to call home. Of these people, 10,000 are children under 12, which I find an almost unbelievable statistic. The year 2009 marks the 150th year Mission Australia has been working with disadvantaged Australians. It shares its birthday with Queensland. Mission Australia provides vital services to the homeless and disadvantaged in my electorate such as Cafe One on Wickham Street in Fortitude Valley—which was recently renovated and reopened—where people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness can access a range of services, including low-cost meals, referrals, flexible and informal case management, crisis counselling and advocacy.

Roma House in Spring Hill—another Mission Australia operated facility funded by the Queensland government—provides a 24-hour intensive support base for the state's homeless men, women and families, helping them transition from the streets to a more independent, sustainable and safe mode of living. I would very much like to congratulate Mission Australia for the excellent and worthwhile work it does in my electorate and throughout Queensland. I thank all my supporters and all the sponsors who donated so generously to assist in the vital work of Mission Australia.

I am positive that they thought paying to keep me quiet for an hour, even though they may have thought it was impossible, was money well spent. The money goes to a great cause, and I think more politicians next year should sign up to help the homeless and participate in the HUSH for Homelessness that Mission Australia runs nation-wide.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 9.34 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Attwood, Bates, Bleijie, Bligh, Boyle, Choi, Crandon, Cripps, Croft, Cunningham, Darling, Davis, Dempsey, Dick, Dickson, Douglas, Dowling, Elmes, Emerson, Farmer, Finn, Flegg, Foley, Fraser, Gibson, Grace, Hinchliffe, Hobbs, Hoolihan, Hopper, Horan, Jarratt, Johnson, Johnstone, Jones, Keech, Kiernan, Kilburn, Knuth, Langbroek, Lawlor, Lucas, McArdle, McLindon, Male, Malone, Menkens, Messenger, Mickel, Miller, Moorhead, Mulherin, Nelson-Carr, Nicholls, Nolan, O'Brien, O'Neill, Palaszczuk, Pitt, Powell, Pratt, Reeves, Rickuss, Roberts, Robinson, Ryan, Schwarten, Scott, Seeney, Shine, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Spence, Springborg, Stevens, Stone, Struthers, Stuckey, Sullivan, van Litsenburg, Wallace, Watt, Wellington, Wells, Wendt, Wettenhall, Wilson